

# Types of Evidence in Persuasive/Argument Papers

**Support your position or thesis with evidence.** Remember that your evidence must appeal to reason. The following are different ways to support your argument:

- ◆ Facts
- ◆ Statistics
- ◆ Quotes
- ◆ Examples

1. Using **facts** is a powerful means of convincing. Facts can come from your reading, observation, or personal experience. **Facts** cannot be disputed. This makes them a strong form of evidence. **Note:** Do not confuse facts with truths. A "truth" is an idea believed by many people, but it cannot be proven. For example:

- Grass is green.
- All cats are animals.
- Jumping out of airplanes without a parachute is hazardous.

However, facts can be interpreted or presented in skewed ways, which may result in skewed or erroneous conclusions. Personal opinions (such as "Dustin Hoffman is the best actor who has ever lived") are never facts, they are claims. For example...

- Grass is green. (in the winter?)
- Stalin was a famous man, loved by many people.
- It's a fact that the French are smelly and snobbish.

2. Using **statistics** can provide excellent support for your argument. Arguments employing amounts and numbers are concrete and therefore support claims because they use logic and facts. Be sure your statistics come from good sources, which you will cite. Examples:

- Over 61% of Americans are overweight.
- Unemployment in Illinois is at 5%.
- During each game, Sean Hill of the NY Islanders spent an average of 20:09 minutes on the ice.

3. Using **quotes** from leading experts or authorities in their fields will support your position—this is a logical appeal and is accepted by other academics as a good way to back up your claims.

- Dr. Kenneth P. Moritsugu, U.S. Surgeon General, described long term problems associated with underage drinking: "Research shows that young people who start drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol-related problems later in life."
- Samantha King, a noted forensic specialist, stated that DNA evidence is usually indisputable.

It is EXTREMELY important to make sure that the authoritative information you choose is actually accurate and relevant to your point. Sometimes, so-called authorities are not what they seem or information is misleading.

- My two friends in Florida think that Miami's a better place to visit than Chicago. (Note: these are biased sources.)
- My grandmother, who has property worth over \$2 million, believes that estate tax laws need overhauling. (Note: she's probably not an expert in tax law, and she has a vested interest.)
- Movie critic Eleanor Lyttle writes that *Star Wars Revenge of the Sith* is "wondrous" and "a must-see." (Note: the actual quotation read: "*Revenge of the Sith* is a horrific film. It is a wondrous waste, but it is a must-see if you want to understand what a truly bad movie looks like." In this case, obviously, the quotations are used out of context.)
- Dr. Petrelli endorses energy drinks to boost metabolism. (Note: who is Dr. Petrelli?)

4. Using **examples** or anecdotes from your own experience can enhance your meaning and also engage the reader. Personal examples make your ideas concrete. These real-life examples allow a reader to relate to the issues personally.

- For many years, my best friend's husband beat her—the police did nothing about it; therefore, we need better laws so domestic abusers can be punished more stringently.
- After living in Iceland for a decade, I can honestly say that the people are kind and warm.
- Immigration laws should allow amnesty to illegals—my father came here from Mexico twenty years ago, and he has worked 50 hours a week to support us. If he is deported, he will leave behind his children, who are citizens. I do not think this is fair to all of us.

For personal experience to be convincing, however, it must also be applicable, present reasonable background understanding, show a universal or general situation, and be related to the thesis somehow.

- I've never been to Australia, but it seems from all the movies I've seen about the place that they all like to drink and barbecue.
- My experience in visiting Canada on a high school trip showed me that their medical system is superior to ours.
- Cats are not friendly. My neighbor's cat never comes to me when I call it.