



WRITING PERSUASIVE TEXTS

# Focus lessons for teaching persuasive writing

## 1 Introductory paragraph

### STATEMENT OF POSITION: THESIS STATEMENT

A thesis statement provides an overview of the topic or question and a statement of the basic position to be taken. An introduction should capture the reader's attention and give a preview of what is to follow and is sometimes referred to as a lead, hook or grabber. These can include:

- strong statements eg Homework should be banned
- quotes eg 'Let them eat cake' some people believe was Marie Antoinette's solution to feed the starving thousands in France
- statistics or facts which add credibility, emphasis or interest eg 9 out of 10 lung cancers are caused by smoking
- questions eg Is global warming a figment of our imagination?
- exaggerations eg Life without mobiles is no life at all
- unusual details eg When Jacques Brandenberger developed the thin transparent material applied to tablecloths to make them waterproof, he could never have imagined the resulting environmental hazard of cellophane.
- brief and concise anecdotes providing amusing or attention-grabbing openings; and
- addressing the reader directly eg Imagine a world without television.

### INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH: MODELLING AND SHARING

- Read aloud persuasive texts with a variety of types of opening sentences eg a quote, a question, a statistic. Discuss the way each lead has been written.
- Create a class chart of the types of leads discovered. Add further examples as they arise.
- Model an introductory paragraph. Identify the type of opening and the thesis statement.
- Select an issue eg Are zoos necessary? The teacher demonstrates the writing of the introductory paragraph, including the thesis statement. This text will be added to in future lessons to construct the body and concluding paragraphs.

### INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH: GUIDED PRACTICE

- ① Pairs or groups write effective opening sentences for a relevant topic. Share with other groups which discuss the lead used and identify reasons for one being more effective than another.

### INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH: OTHER RESOURCES

First Steps Writing Map of Development, Second Edition, 2005.

- ⌘ **Let's start at the beginning**, Conventional phase p 240  
Students read a selection of persuasive texts. Words, phrases and sentence stems used in the introductory paragraphs are identified. Discuss the style, characteristics and effectiveness of each beginning. Students use these as models for their own writing.
- ⌘ **What's your opening line?** Transitional Phase, p 196  
Similar to 'Let's start at the beginning'

## 2.1 Body paragraphs

### ARGUMENTS OR ASSERTIONS

Each of the body paragraphs provides a new argument or reason to support the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. The body should consist of at least three paragraphs; each including a topic sentence; supporting arguments or evidence and a closing statement. Many effective examples of persuasive writing leave the reader with the strongest argument in the final body paragraph, before the concluding paragraph. Most issues have sound arguments on both sides of the question. A good persuasive writer tries to anticipate opposing viewpoints to prove, through the use of factual information, why their argument is better. Encourage students to use powerful connective words and phrases (also referred to as transition or signal words and phrases) to link each argument.

## 2.2 Teaching topic sentences

Each paragraph in the body of a persuasive text contains a topic sentence, supporting arguments or evidence, and a closing sentence. Introductory (thesis statements) and concluding paragraphs are organised using a different pattern. A topic sentence summarises the main idea of the body paragraph and should include a subject, verb and a controlling idea. Students are used to thinking of topics as words and phrases and need support to develop topic sentences that summarise the main idea of a paragraph.

**TEACHING TOPIC SENTENCES: MODELLING AND SHARING**

- Using an enlarged persuasive text, identify the thesis and concluding paragraphs. Discuss the main idea for each of the remaining body paragraphs. For each of these paragraphs highlight the topic sentence, supporting details and concluding statements.

For example:

Society's demand for wood products is rapidly depleting forests of trees.	—————>	<b>Topic sentence</b>
Hardwood trees such as jarrah and mahogany take dozens of years to grow.	—————>	<b>Supporting detail 1</b>
Unwanted furniture and other wooden items are being dumped or burned.	—————>	<b>Supporting detail 2</b>
Recycling and refurbishing hardwood and softwood products will help conserve the dwindling forests.	—————>	<b>Supporting detail 3</b>
	—————>	<b>Concluding statement</b>

- Select a topic and then brainstorm possible arguments. Select one argument and write the topic sentence, supporting details and concluding statement. Explain that supporting sentences provide more information about the topic. Encourage students to mentally transform the topic sentence into a question and then to think: How can I prove this is true? What examples can I give?
- The teacher continues adding to the text begun when learning about thesis statements and introductory paragraphs ie Are zoos necessary? Discuss possible arguments then model each paragraph to include a topic sentence with supporting arguments, points or explanations. Stress the importance of including facts from reliable sources. Demonstrate the use of connectives to add coherence to the text eg *firstly, secondly, next*. Keep this text to write the concluding or summarising paragraph at a later date.

**TEACHING TOPIC SENTENCES: GUIDED PRACTICE**

- Write each sentence of a paragraph on a sentence strip. Students read each strip to identify the main idea then re-assemble the supporting arguments in their logical order.
- Students highlight the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding statements in paragraphs in a text provided or a persuasive text they have written.
- Students are given a choice of topic sentences. They select one and write at least three sentences supporting the topic sentence.
- Groups or pairs are given a prompt eg School uniforms should not be compulsory. They list their arguments and write a topic sentence for each.
- Provide students with a paragraph framework to develop an argument for a given topic.

**GRAPHIC ORGANISER FOR A PERSUASIVE PARAGRAPH**

Topic sentence (state your argument)

---

---

---

Reasons to support your argument

1

2

3

Closing sentence (restate your argument)

---

---

**OTHER RESOURCES FOR TEACHING TOPIC SENTENCES**

[First Steps Writing Map of Development, Second Edition, 2005.](#)

- ⌘ **This Goes with that**, Early Phase, p 174  
Brainstorm facts and information related to a given topic. Students cluster related facts and information together. Give each group one of the clusters to read through the information and write an appropriate topic sentence.
- ⌘ **What is a topic sentence?** Early phase, p 174  
Students match topic sentences to the appropriate paragraphs.
- ⌘ **Follow the lead**, Proficient Phase, p 296  
This activity supports the development of cohesion within paragraphs. Groups are given a topic sentence. The first person adds the next sentence and passes it on. The next person reads the information and adds another sentence and passes it on. When the paragraph is completed, students collaboratively construct an ending then discuss the cohesion of the paragraph.

### 3 Conclusion or summary paragraph

The final paragraph of a persuasive text summarises the main points of the argument and reiterates the thesis. This paragraph may also include a:

- call for action
- personal comment
- question which encourages the reader make their own prediction or conclusion
- prediction as to what the results may or may not be in the situation
- recommendation that stresses the actions or solutions that should be taken and
- quotation that summarises, predicts, questions or calls for action.

#### CONCLUSION OR SUMMARY PARAGRAPH: MODELLING AND SHARING

- Continue developing the modelled text begun in the lessons for thesis and body (arguments or assertions) paragraphs ie Are zoos necessary? The teacher models an appropriate concluding or summarising paragraph; explaining the choices made while composing the text. Remind students:
  - ⊗ to avoid introducing new information in the closing paragraph
  - ⊗ summarise the arguments
  - ⊗ reiterate the thesis
  - ⊗ close with a powerful statement relating to the original issue.

#### CONCLUSION OR SUMMARY PARAGRAPH: GUIDED PRACTICE

- Groups are given the thesis and body (arguments or assertions) paragraphs and instructed to write the concluding or summary paragraph. Compare paragraphs to determine the most effective.
- Students edit persuasive text they have written, focusing on the inclusion of elements of a concluding paragraph.

### 4 Text connectives

Connective words and phrases, also known as signal or transition words, provide cohesion within paragraphs eg as a consequence, meanwhile; and across texts eg next, finally. They also provide fluency to an argument and make it easier to compare and contrast viewpoints, an important skill in persuasive writing.

**COMMONLY USED CONNECTIVE WORDS AND PHRASES:****TEXT STRUCTURE PATTERNS****CONNECTIVE (SIGNAL) WORDS TO LOOK FOR****Cause and effect  
(causal)***makes, causes, leads to, results in, forms, creates, because, so, consequently, so that, if, then, therefore, as a result***Compare and contrast  
(comparative)***although, whereas, yet, however, compared with, unlike, like, different, similar, while***Problems and solutions***dilemma, solution, to prevent, question, answer, solve, difficulty, trouble, crisis, explanation, resolution***Listing logical or chronological  
sequence (temporal)***in/on(date), not long after, before, after, when, to begin with, firstly, secondly, then, next, most important, for instance, as well, furthermore***Collection of details***several, many, some, as follows, such as, examples*

Source: *First Steps Reading Map of Development, Second Edition, 2004. p 245*

**TEXT CONNECTIVES: MODELLING AND SHARING**

- Using an enlarged text, the teacher highlights and discusses the function of each connective word eg temporal, causal, comparative and additive. Discuss the connectives used in different stages of an argument eg 'firstly', 'secondly', 'thirdly'. 'In conclusion', 'finally' signals the concluding statement. Chart examples of connective words for future reference. See 'Childhood is too important to waste time in school.'

**CHILDHOOD IS TOO IMPORTANT TO  
WASTE TIME IN SCHOOL.**

Firstly, it is a law that children must attend school. Did anyone consult them? After all, they are the ones who spend so much time in school *therefore* it is only fair they should be consulted.

Secondly, very little of what is learnt is useful. *By the time* children have grown up, most of what they learned in school will be forgotten.

Thirdly, research shows that children learn and remember more when they are 'doing' the task *instead of* just sitting and listening. Children would learn more if they did the things they needed to do by themselves *while* getting on with life.

Time wouldn't be wasted at school if children were there because they wanted to be *and* learning was related to everyday life.

**CONNECTIVES****Temporal (logical sequence)***firstly secondly thirdly  
by the time***Causal (Cause and effect)***because  
instead therefore***Comparative***while***Additive***and*

## TEXT CONNECTIVES: GUIDED PRACTICE

- Delete connectives from a persuasive text. Students complete the cloze by inserting appropriate connectives.
- Students highlight connectives (signal or transition) words used in their own written persuasive texts. Encourage them to use a variety and more sophisticated connective words eg furthermore, consequently, resulting.
- Students brainstorm, then categorise, connectives under their function eg to compare, to indicate time. Discuss how some connectives may belong to more than one category, depending on their function in that particular sentence.

## OTHER RESOURCES TO DEVELOP THE USE OF TEXT CONNECTIVES

*Department of Education Year 6/7 Grammar and Punctuation Connect online resources*

The links below provide information to further develop cohesion within and across paragraphs in students' writing.

- [Cohesion within paragraphs](#) page 41
- [Cohesion across paragraphs](#) page 44

### First Steps Second Edition, Reading Map of Development

- **Signal (Connective) words**; Transitional Phase, p 244  
Students highlight the connective words within texts then jointly construct a reference chart recording the signal words and their function.

## 5 Pronouns

Pronouns are words that can take the place of nouns to make writing less repetitive and add cohesion to the text. It is important writers choose whether their persuasive text is written in **first person** eg I, me, we, us, mine, our, ours, **second person** eg you, your, yours or **third person** eg he, she, him, it, her, its, they, theirs, them, his, hers. Careful selection of pronouns can be a way to include or exclude writers (and speakers) from others. eg I think we should have longer recess. The use of 'we' and 'I' potentially represents agreement with this statement. However, the personal voice is used through the personal pronoun 'I' to disguise a subjective opinion.

### PRONOUNS: MODELLING AND SHARING

- Highlight pronouns used in a persuasive text. Discuss the way pronouns:
  - ⌚ create a relationship with the writer thereby closing distance and difference of opinion eg I think **we** should have longer recess.
  - ⌚ set the 'person' or 'voice' used by the writer eg **You** should not litter!
  - ⌚ link noun references within and between sentences and paragraphs eg **We** need to reduce **water** consumption in the home. Making us pay according to our usage of **this limited resource** would force us to reduce, recycle and re-use **water**.

- On a large photocopied text, draw lines linking pronouns with the related noun or noun group. Use different colours to track the different noun-pronoun subjects within the text eg water/this limited resource; we/us/our.

### PRONOUNS: GUIDED PRACTICE

- Using their own written persuasive text, students identify the nouns and noun groups. With different coloured pens, track the pronoun references to each one. If necessary, transform related nouns and pronouns to ensure clarity and cohesion.
- Students are given a persuasive text with pronouns deleted. Edit by substituting pronouns to identify the noun or noun group eg There are too many cars on the road. If people continue to buy cars at the rate \_\_\_\_\_ are currently doing \_\_\_\_\_, within the next fifty years \_\_\_\_\_ will run out of roads to put \_\_\_\_\_ on.

### OTHER PRONOUN RESOURCES

Department of Education Year 6/7 Online Grammar and Punctuation Connect online resources

- [Pronouns](#) page 17

## 6 Modality (See background notes)

Writers purposefully select vocabulary to position and persuade readers. Modality words are expressions of how the world might or should be. They can be used to express:

- obligation eg Wearing school uniforms **should** be compulsory.
- probability eg Wearing school uniforms **could** mean that students lose their individuality.
- usuality eg Wearing school uniforms **always** looks smart.
- inclination eg Students **willingly** wear school uniforms.

To persuade a reader to a particular point of view, students need opportunities to read and compose texts for different audiences and purposes; and explore how word choice can be used to increase or decrease the degree of certainty or obligation. Low modality words persuade people politely eg You might consider low income families who possibly cannot afford school uniforms. High modality words are strong, definite and convincing and leave little room for discussion eg It is undeniably beneficial for all students to wear school uniforms.

### MODALITY: MODELLING AND SHARING

- Highlight high and low modality words in a text and discuss their meaning. Explore changing the language and note how this positions the reader.

## USING MOBILES IN AUTOMOBILES

## EXAMPLES

There **should** be tougher consequences when people are caught using mobile phones while driving. **Incredibly, all too often** motorists are seen driving recklessly while trying to hold onto their miniscule phones and talk. One hand holds the phone to the ear, and the other hand **attempts** to steer. **More** worrying are those drivers who take their eyes off the road and hands off the steering wheel and text messages!

—————→ *There could be tougher...*  
 —————→ *Motorists are seen...*  
 —————→ *...the other hand steers.*  
 —————→ *Sometimes there are drivers who...*

Existing laws banning the use of mobile phones while driving **have not** deterred this **undeniably** dangerous behaviour. A study has shown that more accidents are caused by people using mobiles while driving than by people who are drunk while driving.

—————→ *...rarely stops this behaviour.*

'Hands-free' and 'speaker phone' technology is available for all cars. Hefty fines or demerit points **will** encourage drivers to use this technology.

—————→ *Bigger fines or demerit points might encourage drivers to...*

Better still, why not **completely** immobilise these lawbreakers by confiscating their automobiles and mobiles!

—————→ *Better still, we could stop these...*

- Students sort modality words into high eg strong and convincing; or low eg polite and approximate categories. See background notes for a list of suggested words.
- Model how to change statements to increase or decrease the degree of certainty or obligation. Discuss how changing high modality words to low modality words (and vice versa) impact on the meaning of the statements eg 'I **wouldn't** talk on the phone while driving a car.' can be changed to: 'There is **absolutely no way** I would **ever** use a phone while driving.' Or 'You **must** stop **immediately!**' can be changed to: '**Please stop.**'
- Students role-play scenarios using high and low modality words to persuade eg Convince a parent to give you more pocket money; convince a teacher not to give homework.

## MODALITY: GUIDED PRACTICE

- Students highlight high and low modality words in their own written work. They then edit these words to increase or decrease their impact.
- Students write a paragraph on something they believe using high modality words and phrases. Students read their paragraph in a dramatic way.

## 7 Fact or opinion

Effective persuasive writing relies on facts, not opinions. Providing opportunities to distinguish between fact and opinion helps students judge the validity of a writer's ideas and to select appropriate sources when researching for their own writing.

### FACT OR OPINION: MODELLING AND SHARING

- Identify facts, opinions and reasoned judgments in a text. Discuss each in terms of the following points.
  - ⌚ A fact is true and can be proved eg Perth is the capital city of Western Australia.
  - ⌚ Some facts never change; some facts change and opinions can be changed.
  - ⌚ An opinion is someone's point of view, belief, or a way of thinking about something eg Cats are better than dogs.
  - ⌚ Facts may add credibility to an opinion.
  - ⌚ An opinion may be widely accepted but that does not make it a fact ie a reasoned judgment.
  - ⌚ An opinion is not necessarily wrong; it is merely not a proven fact.
- • Using enlarged texts, locate and discuss:
  - ⌚ facts and opinions and how these convince the reader
  - ⌚ words that hint there is an opinion present. Begin listing 'Opinion words' on chart eg maybe, perhaps, best/worst, experts agree, successful, necessary, apparently, probably
  - ⌚ statements which sound like facts, but are disguised opinions or points of view eg The trees look beautiful in the street; Banjo Paterson is Australia's greatest poet; The breeding programs of bald eagles in zoos is the only reason these eagles exist today.
  - ⌚ where a writer states an opinion or position and supports that opinion position with facts.
- Using an enlarged text, underline facts and shade (bold) the phrases which contain opinions. See the following text sample. Some sentences are neither fact nor opinion. Do not mark these. Discuss how facts are used to add credibility to opinions. Discuss how the italicised phrase lacks credibility of the sources and it lacks details.

### USING MOBILES IN AUTOMOBILES

**There should be tougher consequences** when people are caught using mobile phones while driving. **Too often** motorists are seen driving recklessly while trying to hold onto their miniscule phones and talk. One hand holds the phone to the ear and the other hand attempts to steer. **More worrying** are those drivers who take their eyes off the road and hands off the steering wheel and text messages!

Existing laws banning the use of mobile phones while driving **have not deterred** this dangerous behaviour. A **study** has shown that more accidents are caused by people using mobiles while driving than by people who are drunk while driving.

'Hands-free' and 'speaker phone' technology is available for all cars. Hefty fines or demerit points **will encourage** drivers to use this technology.

Better still, **why not** completely immobilise these lawbreakers by confiscating their automobiles and mobiles!

- The teacher writes a topic sentence stating an opinion or position eg Zoos are cruel to animals; and then composes supporting details for the remainder of the paragraph. Edit to ensure any facts that need to be added are added.

**FACT OR OPINION: GUIDED PRACTICE**

- • Students write statements pertaining to a topic currently under study eg circulatory system. Groups discuss whether they are fact or opinion.
- • Students identify statements with 'F' for facts or 'O' for opinions. For example:
  - Ⓜ \_\_\_\_\_ The platypus is a monotreme.
  - Ⓜ \_\_\_\_\_ Australia is the best country in the world.
  - Ⓜ \_\_\_\_\_ There is no life on Earth's moon.
  - Ⓜ \_\_\_\_\_ Summer is the best season.
  - Ⓜ \_\_\_\_\_ There are icebergs in Antarctica.
- Students view a selection of commercials and then write two facts and two opinions for each. Discuss persuasive devices used eg exaggeration, repetition, use of famous people, appeal to the emotions. Students write and act out their own commercial which includes facts, opinions and a persuasive device.
- Provide students with possible facts. Students identify a reliable authority to authenticate this information.

FACT	POSSIBLE SOURCE
John Curtin was Prime Minister from 1941-1945	History book, Internet search
The adult human body has 206 bones	Human biology book, Internet search
18 is the legal drinking age in Perth WA	State government laws, Internet search
The population of Australia is 22 million	Australian census, Internet search

- Pose a position or opinion eg Society needs to stop adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Use the following scaffold to consider other points of view.
  - I (agree/disagree) with this position.
  - 4 facts why I agree/disagree
  - 4 reasons why people may not feel the same way

**8 Nominalisation**

Nominalisation is changing verbs or clauses into nouns. They can be formed by:

- using the present participle of the verb eg electing, preserving, banning
- adding suffixes eg argue – argument, elect – election, refuse – refusal.

Effective persuasive and other information texts use nominalisation to:

- construct compact, precise and abstract texts eg 'Lying in the open for a long time causes the metal to rust' can be changed to: 'Prolonged exposure to the elements oxidizes metal.'
- avoid mentioning those who performed the act. This allows the writer to avoid attributing responsibility eg by transforming the verb 'beat' in 'police **beat** rioters' to: 'the beatings were regrettable' enables the writer to avoid or shift blame; and
- refine simple explanatory phrases to technical terms eg 'Vegetables are good for you' changes to: 'Vegetables are beneficial to your health.'

Knowledge of nominalisation and its effect on writing assists students to make the transition from speech-oriented; which is heavily action or verb based; to a noun based written construction.

### NOMINALISATION: MODELLING AND SHARING

Use a shared text to:

- locate and discuss examples of nominalization and
- transform simple, explanatory phrases to noun based terms eg 'We need to keep zoos so that animals can live and breed in safety' can be changed to: 'Zoos are needed for animal preservation.'

### NOMINALISATION: GUIDED PRACTICE

- Students identify action verbs in their own persuasive writing and transform them into noun forms where appropriate eg 'Students should refuse to wear school uniforms' can be changed to: 'Refusal to wear school uniforms is...' or 'We can argue the right and wrong of this issue...' can be changed to: 'Arguments from both points of view will be...' or 'You should consider this issue...' can be changed to: 'Consideration of this issue is vital.'

### OTHER RESOURCES RELATED TO NOMINALISATION

Department of Education Year 6/7 *Grammar and Punctuation* Connect online resources

- [Nouns](#) page 15

#### COPYRIGHT TERMS OF USE

© The School Curriculum and Standards Authority 2015

Material on the School Curriculum and Standards Authority website—apart from any third party copyright material contained in it—may be freely copied, or communicated on an intranet, for non-commercial purposes in educational institutions, provided that the School Curriculum and Standards Authority is acknowledged as the copyright owner, and that the Authority's moral rights are not infringed.

Copying or communication for any other purpose can be done only within the terms of the Copyright Act 1968 or with prior written permission of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority. Copying or communication of any third party copyright material can be done only within the terms of the Copyright Act 1968 or with permission of the copyright owners.

Any content on this website that has been derived from the Australian Curriculum may be used under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Australia licence.

Cover page image from the State Library of Victoria historical images collection ([www.slv.vic.gov.au](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au)) by John Harvey.

