

Rhetoric Toolbox



Repetition

If you want something to stick in the reader's mind, repeat, repeat, repeat! It could be a whole phrase, or as simple as a powerful word.

Example: Teachers may think their homework is easy, but in reality the homework may be hard—three hour hard; not get to bed until midnight hard.

Alliteration

The repetition of a specific sound that will stick in a reader's mind.

Example: Homework can help or hurt depending on how much is given.

Cause and Effect

This is where look into the future, and tell the reader what *could* happen if they don't agree with you. It can be as simple as an "if . . . then . . ." statement.

Example: If teachers continue to assign too much homework, then students might be forced to quit extracurricular activities just to keep up. They may not even have any time left to spend with family!

Rhetorical Questions



Ask a question that you know the reader will answer the way *you* want. The answer is obvious . . . and so is your point.

Example: Are students really learning when they are too stressed, tired, or discouraged? Can students come to school focused if they didn't get enough sleep because of homework?

Establish Common Ground

Show that you and the reader are alike—even if you talk about simple things. If the reader can relate to you, then he or she will be more open to your ideas.

Example: Everyone has experienced a time in life when there is just too much to do, and not enough time to do it. This is the experience of the modern day student: too much homework, and not enough time.

Concede and Compare

Show that you are willing to see the other side of the argument, but that your side is still more beneficial.

Example: It is true that homework can help students get extra practice with the skills they are learning. However, there is a point in which practice becomes counterproductive because the mind gets fatigued.

Logical Appeal

Take the reader through your arguments step by step, showing how your reasons lead to your conclusion.

Example: Students have seven classes every day at Example Middle School. It is possible for students to have homework in each of those classes. That means that if each teacher assigns only 20 minutes of homework, students could have almost 2 ½ hours of homework! This makes it difficult to participate in activities or even to simply spend some time with family.

Emotional Appeal

Carefully stir your readers' emotions. Consider how you want them to feel: Angry? Sad? Find the examples and words that will strike a chord.

Example: Students are dealing with school stresses unlike those of any previous generation. The pressure to perform is higher than ever. Think of our students' health. Any given day could be the breaking point for a student. Think of children as young as kindergarten drowning in unnecessary amounts of work.

Establish Credibility

Support your arguments with facts from credible sources such as news articles and government reports. This includes direct quotes and numerical data. This shows your readers that other experts agree with your solution.

Example: According to a poll by the U.S. Department of Education, 87% of students reported having more than 2 hours of homework each night.

Figurative Language

Figurative language puts specific images into a reader's mind. Often, you use words and comparisons that shape the reader's feelings about the issue. The most common form is the simile.

Example: Teachers who give too much homework *are like* thieves, *stealing* precious hours of sleep from their students.