

Rhetorical Strategies



Writers often employ strategies (both consciously and subconsciously) in order to help make their arguments more persuasive to their readers. When analyzing arguments, it's crucial to not only name **what** strategy is being employed, but to also adequately illustrate **how** the strategy is used, and comment on **why** the author likely chose to use the strategy (usually commenting on the desired effect on the intended audience).

Some strategies authors employ when presenting claims:

- a) Presenting claims as informed conclusions rather than personal opinion (presenting claims authoritatively, often making claims through other authorities or research).
- b) Using qualifiers (aka hedging: language or phrases that limit a claim) so that the claim doesn't appear general or absolute. If an author claims, "The Chargers will win the Super Bowl," he or she could appear too sure about the claim and unrealistic about other possibilities. Adding a qualifier helps claims appear more reasonable: "The Charges will *likely* win the Super Bowl." Qualifying words: limiting time (*often, usually, frequently, sometimes, etc.*), limiting conditions (*may, might, could, should, probably, possibly, virtually, etc.*), limiting quality/quantity (*more, less, harder, easier, seems, appears, etc.*).

Some strategies authors employ when presenting evidence:

- a) Providing a greater amount of evidence in support of the claim versus contrary evidence.
- b) Providing commentary on preferred reader-interpretation of presented data.
- c) Providing context to field research (who conducted the research, where, when, and how).
- d) Providing imagery (vivid descriptions) that illustrates a particular point or example.

Some strategies authors employ when organizing the text:

- a) Using subtitles, transitions, metacommentary, and/or summary to help guide readers.
- b) Using repetition to enhance or highlight a concept or claim.
- c) Developing content in a linear, fragmented, chronological, and/or theme-based fashion.
- d) Putting contrary claims after claims that readers will find easier to accept.
- e) Strategically placing the main claim in the beginning, middle, or end of an argument.
- f) Putting contrary evidence after evidence that readers will find easier to accept.
- g) Beginning or ending the argument in a non-traditional way (e.g. with an anecdote).

Other Strategies often employed by authors:

- a) Acknowledging the strengths of the opposition's argument.
- b) Anticipating and addressing possible exceptions or objections to a claim.
- c) Conceding to (acknowledging) some of the claims made by the opposition and then rebutting (counter arguing) those claims.
- d) Using a tone or writing style to appeal to audiences by seeming trustworthy and unbiased.