

Appeals: logos, pathos, ethos

In essay writing, there are three traditional approaches to arguing your points. When you are making a claim, the basis of your argument usually relies on logic, emotion, or ethics (logos, pathos, and ethos, respectively). Good writers tend to touch on all three of these appeals in the course of their essays. That is not to say that an equal emphasis on logos, pathos, and ethos makes for a good essay, but experienced writers understand that to prove a point they often have to approach it in a variety of ways.

So let's look at each appeal. In the examples, each appeal is trying to argue the premise that teachers need to be paid more.

Logos – reasoning from logic.

Here you aim at the reader's head by arranging your thoughts into patterns that most people would find reasonable and convincing.

There are four common strategies of organization:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasoning from consequences. The outcome of an idea guides your reasoning about its merit. 	<p><i>If we don't pay teachers more, then the good teachers will be forced to find work elsewhere and we will be left with people who can't get any other work elsewhere becoming teachers.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasoning from comparisons. Here you argue for or against a point of view by comparing it to another situation. 	<p><i>A school district in Texas raised teachers' salaries and found that it was easier to attract higher qualified teachers and that overall worker morale was higher.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasoning from authority, testimony, and statistics. Here you use the ideas and evidence from experts in the field you are writing about and the insights of first-hand witnesses to prove your point. 	<p><i>According to the Rand corporation study, after teacher pay stagnated and many teachers left the profession school districts were so desperate to attract new teachers that in 2003 15% of all the teachers in California were hired without a credential.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasoning from examples. Here you draw upon specific events or situations to demonstrate your point. The more specific and concrete the illustration, the better. 	<p><i>I first noticed the effects of teacher pay when I was sixteen and found myself driving to school in a nicer car than any of my teachers had.</i></p>

Pathos- reasoning from emotion.

Here you aim at the reader's heart by using language, quotations, examples, and images that provoke an emotional response.

When I went to my teacher's home, I was shocked to discover that she was only able to afford a run-down apartment. The fixtures were old and worn. The carpet was badly stained. And the noises from the neighbors came through the walls and floor. Since the heater didn't work, we sat in the cold as we talked. I hardly heard her words. Instead, I was asking myself again and again how my favorite teacher could give so much to her students and yet live in such a squalid hole.

Ethos- reasoning from values and beliefs.

Here you appeal to the reader's sense of fairness by discussing the ethics, morals, and values behind the situation in question.

If we truly value our children, as we often say we do, then we should also value those we entrust to furthering their intellectual development. In other words, if we care about our kids, then we should care about their teachers.

