

Grade 6 English Language Arts
Week of December 14 – December 18

Lesson 1: Persuasive Letter – Strong Position

Preview

Writing Goal: Persuasive Letter

The persuasive letter is a powerful tool. You can use it to request a change or an improvement in an organization, company, community, or government. You can use it to complain and ask for compensation or better service in the future. You can state your case during a difficult situation and request for extra help or time.

Knowing how to write a persuasive letter can save you money and time. It can lead to changes that provide you with greater service and satisfaction. You can also write to help others or to make a change in your world -- be it locally or globally.

For example:



Back in 1961, a British lawyer named Peter Benenson read an article about two students getting seven years in prison -- just for raising their glasses in a toast to freedom in Portugal. He was shocked and wanted to do something to help. So he wrote about this injustice in a newspaper article and asked people to join him in writing to the Portuguese government.

Not only was there interest in Britain, but people from around the world joined in. This was the start of Amnesty International. It's now a global organization that uncovers facts about

human rights violations and then, through a network of members, writes letters to governments requesting change. (-image by Richard Potts via Flickr)

Today, more than 7 million people write letters through Amnesty International worldwide. Over the years, this has brought help to thousands of people around the globe. People have been set free or granted access to lawyers and medical help. Families have been reunited and others protected from torture and abuse. In 1977, Amnesty International won the Nobel Peace Prize for its positive impact on the world.

That's the power of persuasion!

You are going to get to practice your formal letter writing skills. You are going to find a problem or issue that you think can be fixed. Then you will write to someone in power who might be able to help.

Workshop Overview: The Writer's Workshop consists of 2 parts.

Writer's Notebook:

1. First, you need to learn about techniques and features of persuasion.
2. Second, you need to choose an issue of importance to you, your family, your community, or your country that you have an opinion about. You want to convince someone to agree with your opinion.
3. Then, you need to identify your position on the issue.
4. Next, you need to research information about your issue to include in your argument and outline a plan for your letter.

Writer's Notebook:

1. You need to write your letter.
2. You will add an opening that will hook the reader.
3. You will add a strong conclusion.
4. You will learn to format it and to revise it to make it even stronger.
5. You may even decide to send your letter.

Writing Targets:

By the end of this workshop you will have incorporated the following into your piece:

- A clear opening statement.
- At least three supporting points that are supported by facts, examples, statistics, quotations, and occasionally emotional appeals.
- You have identified and responded to an opposing view (called a counterargument).
- A clear closing statement.
- A highly persuasive argument.
- Proper letter format.

Strong Position

Persuasive writing takes a strong stand. The message is clear.

Read the following statements. Do they sound very persuasive?

"I sort of think that the pipeline maybe isn't a good idea."

"It could possibly help me if you would maybe vote for me as Kindness Club secretary. I might be able to do some stuff."

"It might be an idea to visit the Eco-Store. Maybe you could bring your friends. We offer a discount."

These statements sound weak and wishy-washy. They are not very convincing.

So how can they be written to be more convincing?

1. DELETE "I THINK" AND OTHER "I STATEMENTS".

Sentences become stronger when "I-statements" are removed.

I-statement examples are:

- I think...
- I believe...
- I know...
- I say...

Using I-statements makes your persuasive writing weaker because it highlights this information as your opinion. Also, by saying, "I think" or "I believe," it shows a level of uncertainty. By cutting out I-statements, it makes your writing feel more like a fact. People are swayed more by facts than opinion.

Example: I think it is a good idea to read a book every day for at least 30 minutes.

Change to:

Example: It is a good idea to read a book every day for at least 30 minutes.

2. MAKE CAREFUL VERB CHOICES.

Sentences become stronger when strong modal verbs are used. Modal verbs are used when we believe something is certain, probable, or possible.

Commonly used modal verbs are **can**, **could**, **may**, **might**, **will**, and **must**.

WEAKER MODAL VERBS

Could, **might**, **can**, and **may** are used when you think something might happen in the future, but you're not positive:

- Based on the forecast, it **might** rain.
- You **may** want to buy this.
- It **could** be a good idea.
- It **can** be hot in summer. (= It is sometimes hot in summer)

STRONG MODAL VERBS

Must and **will** show **we are sure** about our beliefs or that something has to happen:

- You **must** buy this.
- You **will** buy this.
- Based on the forecast, it **must** rain.
- Based on the forecast, it **will** rain.

3. USE STRONG ADVERBS.

Sentences become stronger when strong adverbs are used. **Possibly, perhaps, maybe, possibly,** and **definitely** are all adverbs. They change the power of a verb in different ways.

- It will **possibly** rain. (small chance of rain, think 10-30% chance)
- **Perhaps** it will rain. (think 30-40% chance of rain)
- **Maybe** it will rain. (think 50% chance of rain)
- It will **probably** rain. (chances are good it will rain, think 80-90%)
- It will **definitely** rain. (for sure it will rain, think 100%)

If you want to be persuasive, make sure to cut out weak adverbs. It is better to just have a strong verb on its own. **Definitely** is definitely the best choice.

Now complete the following activity.

1. Strong Position

Read the weak and wishy-washy writing. Your job is to create strong persuasive sentences out of the weak sentences. Take out the weak wording. Add and make up information to make it persuasive.

1. I believe this might be an orange juice you'd like. I heard a lot of people like Orette's Orange Juice.

2. Maybe you would be interested in a Zoomy vacuum cleaner. It's got a lot of buttons, but it's very expensive.

3. I think you should get a Sleepy Time bed. People sometimes say they like them.
