

Which Argument Is Stronger?

Suppose every student at your school had to play an after-school sport. Would you be for or against the rule?

Listen to two arguments in support of the rule. List the strengths and weaknesses.



Evaluate the Arguments



[Extend Page](#)



The Power of Argument

An **argument** is a claim supported by reasons and evidence. Strong arguments appeal to logic, not our emotions. However, not all arguments are effective.

Knowing how to evaluate arguments will help you:

- 1 distinguish weak reasons from those that are valid and logical
- 2 recognize empty support that, on the surface, may seem compelling
- 3 question whether enough evidence has been provided to persuade you
- 4 better understand your own position on an issue
- 5 make well-informed decisions



[Extend Page](#)



What Makes a Strong Written Argument?



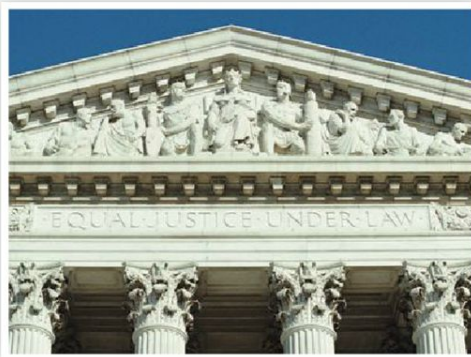
Find Out

- A strong written argument
- includes a clear claim
 - provides solid reasons and evidence
 - anticipates and addresses other viewpoints
 - appeals more to reason than to emotions

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Elements of an Argument

Click to review the elements of an argument.



Argument

As you've just learned, an **argument** is a claim supported by reasons and evidence. Sound arguments appeal to logic, not to emotions.



Argument



Claim



Reasons



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Elements of an Argument

Click to review the elements of an argument.



Claim

A **claim** is a writer's position on a problem or issue. An effective argument has a clear claim. Readers should not have trouble understanding exactly what the writer believes.

Example: All middle-school students should volunteer a few hours every month.

Navigation bar for the 'Claim' slide. It includes a left arrow, a thumbnail of a classical building labeled 'Argument', a thumbnail of the woman on the beach labeled 'Claim', a thumbnail of a town labeled 'Reasons', and a right arrow. At the bottom left are home and user icons. At the bottom right is a status bar showing '5 of 22' and various system icons.

Elements of an Argument

Click to review the elements of an argument.



Reasons

Reasons are statements that explain why a writer believes his or her claim. In a strong argument, the reasons are **logical** (they make sense as support for the claim).

Example: Volunteering helps students become more aware of their communities.

Navigation bar for the 'Reasons' slide. It includes a left arrow, a thumbnail of a classical building labeled 'Argument', a thumbnail of the woman on the beach labeled 'Claim', a thumbnail of the town labeled 'Reasons', and a right arrow. At the bottom left are home and user icons. At the bottom right is a status bar showing '5 of 22' and various system icons.

Elements of an Argument

Click to review the elements of an argument.



Evidence

Evidence, such as facts, statistics, examples, and anecdotes, support the writer's reasons. Effective evidence is **relevant**, or related, to the reason it supports. There should be enough evidence to sufficiently prove the point.

Example: One volunteer said, "I had no idea that my help would make such a difference. If I hadn't contributed my time, the community garden project would not have been as successful."

Navigation bar for the first slide. It includes a left arrow, a home icon, a person icon, and a right arrow. Below the arrows are four thumbnail images: a building, a person on a beach, a crowd of people, and the garden scene. The 'Evidence' thumbnail is highlighted. A status bar at the bottom right shows '5 of 22' and various system icons.

Elements of an Argument

Click to review the elements of an argument.



Counterclaims

Counterclaims attempt to answer likely opposing claims, or objections, to the writer's position. A strong argument anticipates and responds to at least one opposing claim.

Example: Some students may claim they don't know where to volunteer, but there are many people who can direct you. Your city hall and library are good places to start. Or search online for volunteer opportunities in your community.

Navigation bar for the second slide. It includes a left arrow, a home icon, a person icon, and a right arrow. Below the arrows are four thumbnail images: a building, a crowd of people, the garden scene, and the man and boy. The 'Counterclaims' thumbnail is highlighted. A status bar at the bottom right shows '5 of 22' and various system icons.

Identify the Claim

You can evaluate an argument in four steps. First, identify the claim. Is the writer's position clearly stated?

Read the beginning of this argument. Then highlight the claim.



He thinks he can read e-mail while he listens to you. She thinks she can text while she drives. But can they? **Actually, our overuse of electronic devices is increasingly taking our focus away from the here and now with harmful results.**



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Analyze Reasons and Evidence

Next, examine the reasons and evidence the writer provides.

Click each item to help you analyze the support.

- Original Text
- Analyze Reasons
- Analyze Evidence

The writer focuses on three reasons. Each reason shows one of the "harmful results." How logical are the reasons?

He thinks he can read e-mail while he listens to you. She thinks she can text while she drives. But can they? Actually, our overuse of electronic devices is increasingly taking our focus away from the here and now with harmful results.

Instead of totally focusing on driving, 49 percent of all adults admit to talking or texting on their cell phones. What's the big deal? "Forty-four percent of all adults say they have been in a car when the driver used the cell phone in a way that put themselves or others in danger," according to a Pew Research Center study. **Drivers put lives in jeopardy when**



Extend Page

Analyze Reasons and Evidence

Next, examine the reasons and evidence the writer provides.

Click each item to help you analyze the support.

Original Text

Analyze Reasons

Analyze Evidence

Reread the highlighted statistics and examples. How relevant is the evidence? Does it sufficiently support the reasons?

He thinks he can read e-mail while he listens to you. She thinks she can text while she drives. But can they? Actually, our overuse of electronic devices is increasingly taking our focus away from the here and now with harmful results.

Instead of totally focusing on driving, 49 percent of all adults admit to talking or texting on their cell phones. What's the big deal? "Forty-four percent of all adults say they have been in a car when the driver used the cell phone in a way that put themselves or others in danger," according to a Pew Research Center study. Drivers put lives in jeopardy when

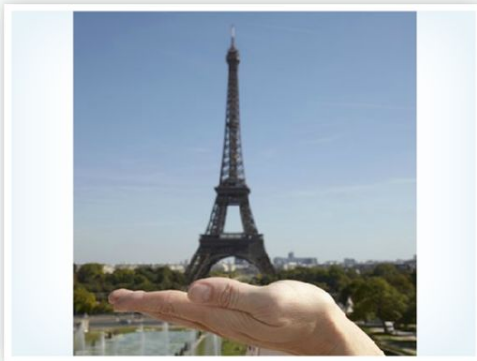


[Extend Page](#)



Analyze Reasons and Evidence

Part of analyzing support involves looking out for logical fallacies.



Logical Fallacies

A **logical fallacy** is a statement that is given as support but is really an error in reasoning. Sometimes a writer will intentionally try to mislead readers. At other times, a writer simply makes a mistake in reasoning. Be on the lookout for different types of logical fallacies.



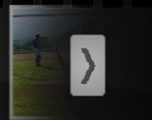
Logical Fallacies



Circular Reasoning



Either/Or Fallacy

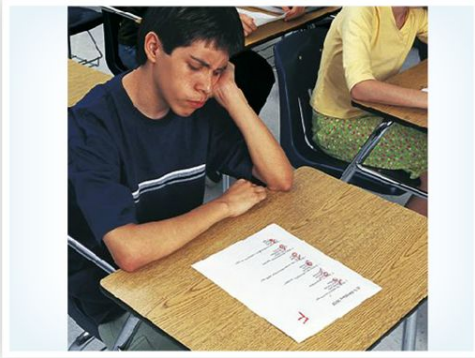


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Analyze Reasons and Evidence

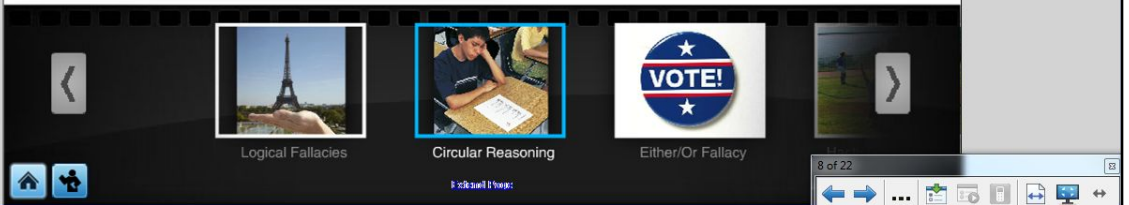
Part of analyzing support involves looking out for logical fallacies.



Circular Reasoning

Circular reasoning is restating an opinion or conclusion in different words and trying to pass it off as a reason or as evidence.

Example: I shouldn't have flunked the test because I never get F's.



Analyze Reasons and Evidence

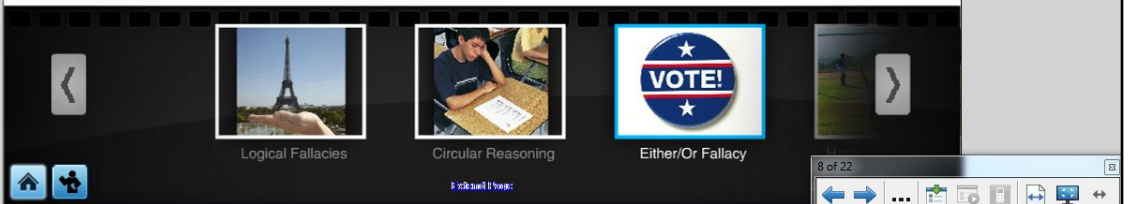
Part of analyzing support involves looking out for logical fallacies.



Either/Or Fallacy

An **either/or fallacy** provides only two possible choices or outcomes of a situation. By giving only two extreme choices, writers ignore other points of view and possibilities.

Example: Either we re-elect Mayor Ruiz, or watch our city fall to pieces.



Analyze Reasons and Evidence

Part of analyzing support involves looking out for logical fallacies.



Hasty Generalization

Hasty generalizations are statements that are too broad. They are not true, do not apply in all cases, or are not based on enough evidence.

Example: I hadn't practiced at all before the first game but still made the winning goal. So, regular practice isn't as important as people claim.

Navigation bar for the slide. From left to right: a back arrow, a thumbnail of a person reading labeled 'Fallacies', a thumbnail of a person at a desk labeled 'Circular Reasoning', a 'VOTE!' button with stars, a thumbnail of a soccer player labeled 'Hasty Generalization', and a forward arrow. At the bottom right, a status bar shows '8 of 22' and various system icons.

Analyze Reasons and Evidence

Part of analyzing support involves looking out for logical fallacies.



Overgeneralization

An **overgeneralization** is a conclusion that does not take into account obvious exceptions.

Example: Everyone who likes pizza likes pepperoni.

Navigation bar for the slide. From left to right: a back arrow, a 'VOTE!' button with stars, a thumbnail of a soccer player labeled 'Hasty Generalization', a thumbnail of a pepperoni pizza labeled 'Overgeneralization', and a forward arrow. At the bottom right, a status bar shows '8 of 22' and various system icons.

Analyze Reasons and Evidence

Reread this paragraph from the argument. What logical fallacy does the writer use?

Click the tile that names the logical fallacy. Then highlight the fallacy.

Our inconsiderate use of electronic devices also damages personal relationships. Just think about how you felt the last time a friend ignored you to check e-mail, text, or surf the Web on a handheld device. Treating the people we're with as if they were invisible could send a harmful and hurtful message. The choice is yours: Will you keep your gadgets or your friends?

circular reasoning ❌	either/or fallacy ✅
hasty generalization ❌	overgeneralization ❌



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Weigh Counterclaims

Next, notice whether opposing claims are addressed with strong counterclaims.

Some people claim that electronic devices enable them to stay in closer touch with family and friends. "When I use Skype on my laptop," my friend Gina said, "I can talk face-to-face with my friend in Mexico!" She had a point, but while she was busy Skyping, she also burnt the almonds she was toasting. That's my point. This happens with everyone. Whenever people are virtually with someone else somewhere else, they are less aware of their immediate surroundings, and that can have negative consequences.



Your Choice:



Yes, the counterclaim is weak. The writer does not directly address the opposing claim about technology.



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Evaluate the Argument

Now read the complete argument about electronic devices.

Click each item to evaluate the argument as a whole.

Original Text

Reasons

Evidence

Persuasive Language

Strength of Argument

He thinks he can read e-mail while he listens to you. She thinks she can text while she drives. But can they? Actually, our overuse of electronic devices is increasingly taking our focus away from the here and now with harmful results.

Instead of totally focusing on driving, 49 percent of all adults admit to talking or texting on their cell phones. What's the big deal? "Forty-four percent of all adults say they have been in a car when the driver used the cell phone in a way that put themselves or others in danger," according to a Pew Research Center study. Drivers put lives in jeopardy when



[Extend Page](#)

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Evaluate the Argument

Now read the complete argument about electronic devices.

Click each item to evaluate the argument as a whole.

Original Text

Reasons

Evidence

Persuasive Language

Strength of Argument

Research Center study. Drivers put lives in jeopardy when they put cell-phone use before safety.

Our inconsiderate use of electronic devices also damages personal relationships. Just think about how you felt the last time a friend ignored you to check e-mail, text, or surf the Web on a handheld device. Treating the people we're with as if they were invisible could send a harmful and hurtful message. The choice is yours: Will you keep your gadgets or your friends?

Those who use gadgets to listen to music wherever they



11 of 22

Evaluate the Argument

Now read the complete argument about electronic devices.

Click each item to evaluate the argument as a whole.

Original Text

Reasons

Evidence

Persuasive Language

Strength of Argument

Those who use gadgets to listen to music wherever they go don't hear what's happening around them, so they miss out on a lot. They aren't soothed by lapping waves at a beach or alerted to danger on a city street.

Some people claim that electronic devices enable them to stay in closer touch with family and friends. "When I use Skype on my laptop," my friend Gina said, "I can talk face-to-face with my friend in Mexico!" She had a point, but while she was busy Skyping, she also burnt the almonds she was toasting. That's my point. This happens with everyone.



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Evaluate the Argument

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Original Text

Reasons

Evidence

Persuasive Language

Strength of Argument

was busy Skyping, she also burnt the almonds she was toasting. That's my point. This happens with everyone. Whenever people are virtually with someone else somewhere else, they are less aware of their immediate surroundings, and that can have negative consequences.

Our electronic devices may keep us closer to faraway friends, but our excessive use of those devices diminishes our connection to the here and now—often with disastrous results. Isn't it time we put our gadgets down and started being more present?



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Persuasive Techniques

Some arguments use *persuasive techniques* to sway people's hearts and minds. Here are some common techniques. Which ones are at work in the argument on the pull tab?

Read the Argument



Loaded Words: Words with strong positive or negative meanings



Name-calling: The practice of attacking the person who makes an argument rather than showing the flaws in the argument



Emotional Appeals: The practice of persuading readers by appealing to such feelings, as vanity, pity, or fear



Ethical Appeals: The practice of linking specific claims to commonly held beliefs or values, or a sense of "what's right"



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Persuasive Techniques

Some arguments use *persuasive techniques* to sway people's hearts and minds. Here are some common techniques. Which ones are at work in the argument on the pull tab?



How will the school **survive** without an art program? We, in the painting club, were



... **distraught** to learn that the die-hard sports fans who make up the school board care more about saving the track team than saving the art program. Fellow students, you are all intelligent, reasonable people. You recognize that creativity, ingenuity, and self-esteem are qualities that should be nurtured in young people. Art programs do just that. Please help save our art classes! Sign the petition now!



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that should be nurtured in young people.

Read the Argument



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Read the Argument



How will the school **survive** without an art program? We, in the painting club, were **distraught**. . . .



. . . the die-hard sports fans who make up the school board care more about saving the track team than saving the art program.



"Fellow students, you are all intelligent, reasonable people."



You recognize that creativity, ingenuity, and self-esteem are qualities that should be nurtured in young people.



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Tips for Evaluating Arguments

Use these sentence frames to evaluate any argument you read.

The writer's claim is _____
_____. The claim is / is not clearly stated.

Reasons and evidence that support the claim include _____
_____.

The writer misleads readers with a logical fallacy by stating that _____
_____.

The writer addresses the opposing claim _____,
with this counterclaim: _____.

Overall, this argument is strong / weak because _____
_____.



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Evaluate Reasons and Evidence

Which version provides the best support for each claim? Check your answers.



Claim: It's better to exercise before school than after school.

Version 1

Reasons and Evidence

- In most locations, the morning is cooler than the afternoon.
- Exercise is a good reason to get up early.
- Seventy-five percent of students interviewed said that they don't have time to exercise in the morning.

Version 1

Version 2

Version 3



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Evaluate Reasons and Evidence

Which version provides the best support for each claim? Check your answers.



Version 2

Reasons and Evidence

- Homework and other commitments make exercise difficult after school.
- A poll states that most people who exercise in the morning can pay attention for longer periods of time than those who don't exercise in the morning.
- Research shows that morning athletes are more likely to stick to an exercise routine than late-day athletes.

Version 1

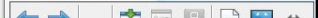
Version 2

Version 3



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Evaluate Reasons and Evidence

Which version provides the best support for each claim? Check your answers.



Version 3

Reasons and Evidence

- Body strength and endurance gradually increase over the course of a day.
- Most senior citizens prefer to walk and exercise in the morning, not late in the day.
- Results of a university survey state that students who exercise in the morning are less likely to play after-school sports.

Version 1

Version 2

Version 3



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Evaluate Reasons and Evidence

Which version provides the best support for each claim? Check your answers.



Claim: It's better to exercise before school than after school.

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Version 1



Version 2

Version 3

Yes! This version has a solid reason and two relevant pieces of evidence to support the claim.



[Extend Page](#)

Evaluate Reasons and Evidence

Which version provides the best support for each claim? Check your answers.



Claim: Children should be paid for doing household chores.

Version 1

Reasons and Evidence

- Most parents work outside the home and have little time to do household chores.
- If kids aren't paid to do household chores, the jobs will never get done.
- If kids don't earn money, they can't buy things.

Version 1

Version 2

Version 3



[Extend Page](#)

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Evaluate Reasons and Evidence

Which version provides the best support for each claim? Check your answers.



buy things.

Version 2

Reasons and Evidence

- Forcing children to do household chores without pay is morally wrong.
- Children can usually do household chores as well as or better than their parents.
- Most parents have more than enough money to pay their kids to do chores.

Version 1

Version 2

Version 3



[Extend Page](#)

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Evaluate Reasons and Evidence

Which version provides the best support for each claim? Check your answers.

money to pay their kids to do chores.

Version 3

Reasons and Evidence

- Household chores should be rewarded with money, just as work in the real world is.
- Children who are paid for a job well done learn good work habits.
- Two-thirds of parents surveyed who pay their children to do chores reported fewer family arguments than before the payments began.

Version 1

Version 2

Version 3



[Extend Page](#)

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Evaluate Reasons and Evidence

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- Two-thirds of parents surveyed who pay their children to do chores reported fewer family arguments than before the payments began.

Version 1

Version 2

✓ Version 3

You got it! This version provides two logical reasons and a piece of relevant evidence.



[Extend Page](#)

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Weigh Counterclaims

Read the claim and opposing claim on the pull tab.
Then choose the strongest counterclaim.

Regular clothes

Claim: All students in our middle school should wear school uniforms.

Middle-school students

Opposing Claim: Students need to express their individuality by choosing their own clothes to wear to school.

Students that they

wear clothes

School uniforms



[Extend Page](#)

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Weigh Counterclaims

Read the claim and opposing claim on the pull tab.
Then choose the strongest counterclaim.

Regular clothes are twice as expensive as school uniforms.

Middle-school students are not interested in expressing themselves.

Students will have many opportunities outside of school to wear clothes that they choose.

School uniforms promote a sense of community.



[Extend Page](#)

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Weigh Counterclaims

Read the claim and opposing claim on the pull tab.
Then choose the strongest counterclaim.

Regular clothes are twice as expensive as school uniforms.

Middle-school students are not interested in expressing themselves.



Students will have many opportunities outside of school to wear clothes that they choose.

School uniforms promote a sense of community.

Yes! This is the most effective counterclaim. It answers the opposing claim in a logical, believable way.



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Analyze Reasoning

Read each argument. Identify whether the reasoning is solid or faulty.

Elections for class president will be held tomorrow, and I'd like you to vote for Juan Gomez. Juan is by far the best candidate. He's worth voting for because he's so much better than all the other candidates. So please vote for Juan!



SOLID REASONING

Your Choice:



FAULTY REASONING

Correct! This is an example of circular reasoning. The writer provides no real support for the claim.



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Analyze Reasoning

Read each argument. Identify whether the reasoning is solid or faulty.

Schools should operate year-round and eliminate summer vacations. Currently, during the long summer off, students forget everything they learned the year before. So, in September, it's back to square one to learn everything all over again.



Your Choice:



Yes, this is an overgeneralization. While students may forget some of what they learn, they may not forget everything.



[Extend Page](#)

Analyze Reasoning

Read each argument. Identify whether the reasoning is solid or faulty.

The city council could solve a number of problems by restricting automobile traffic downtown. The bus system cannot work quickly and efficiently because the streets are choked with cars. The heavy traffic creates pollution, dirt, and noise. Furthermore, the heavily used streets need frequent repairs, which the city cannot afford.



Your Choice:



Yes! The writer gives solid reasons why traffic should be restricted.



[Extend Page](#)

Analyze Reasoning

Read each argument. Identify whether the reasoning is solid or faulty.

How often have you been at the movies when a stranger's cell phone rings right at the most exciting moment? It's happened to me a lot. I think movie theaters and other public venues should ban cell phones altogether. Customers who are caught with ringing cell phones should be asked to leave the premises. If we don't clamp down on cell-phone use now, all our public entertainment venues will be ruined.



Your Choice:



Yes! This reflects faulty reasoning—an either/or fallacy. The writer does not want you to consider any other choices.



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Identify Persuasive Techniques

Advertisements use persuasive techniques to capture potential customers.

Examine this ad for bottled water. Circle examples of persuasive techniques.

The Purest Water on Earth.

Purity.

As a health-conscious consumer, it's what you expect from water.

Purity.

As an eco-friendly and socially conscious company, we're determined you'll have it.

High in the mountains, a spring runs fast and free. Far from the city's pollution, the water is pure and clear.

In fact, it's the purest water on Earth. That's why we call it Purity.

Purity.

Good for You. Good for the Earth.



[Extend Page](#)

Analyze Persuasive Techniques

Review the examples you circled, and analyze their intended effects on consumers.

Complete your analysis by filling in the graphic organizer.



Example	How It Persuades
Purity/The purest water on Earth	These loaded words have strong positive associations.
As a health-conscious consumer	This phrase taps into readers' vanity. It's desirable to be a "health-conscious consumer."
As an eco-friendly and socially conscious company	This phrase works as an ethical appeal by linking the company to widely accepted positive values.
Far from the city's pollution	This loaded phrase brings to mind a negative image that contrasts with the spring—the source of Purity.
Good for You. Good for the Earth.	This slogan reflects an ethical appeal.

