

## Means of Persuasion.

The term used by Aristotle and other Greek rhetoricians here is *pistis* (plural *pisteis* [πιστεῖς]), a noun indicating “that which gives confidence.” You might think of *pisteis* as “persuaders.” They are the methods (means) by which arguers “appeal” to their audience, attempting to gain the confidence of their audience.

I. **Technical means**— [ἐντεχνῆ πιστεῖς] Our word “technical” is derived from the Greek noun “*techne*” [τεχνῆ], meaning art, skill, craft, or even cunning (in both its positive and negative sense). At one point, Aristotle defined “*techne*” as a reasoned habit of mind. Technical means of persuasion are those methods that lie within the art or craft of rhetoric.

A. **Logos**—appeal to reason or logic [this means of persuasion is dealt with in greater depth in a separate document]

1. **Inductive**—the use of **specific** facts, examples, observations to establish **general** conclusions, either hypotheses or generalizations. In ordinary rhetoric, the use of example (rather than full induction) is the most common means.

2. **Deductive**—the use of **general** laws and definitions to establish **specific** conclusions. In ordinary rhetoric this is usually done by enthymeme rather than full sylogism.

B. **Ethos**—appeal to character (the character of the arguer, a trust issue)

C. **Pathos**—appeal to emotion (the audience’s)

II. **Non-technical means** [ἄτεχνῆ πιστεῖς]—these “means” of persuasion consist of those things that exist outside of the art of rhetoric. Under this heading we should include anything that might be called “evidence” (facts, records, artifacts, laws, contracts, treaties, witnesses, etc). Because such evidence comes from “reality” rather than the fruitful imagination of the rhetorician, it has a powerful persuasive effect. In law, science, philosophy, psychology—in all fields—evidence is a key element of argumentation. When a student writes a research paper, the bulk of the work is precisely in gathering and presenting this type of material.

The key to gathering evidence is, first of all, knowing what you are looking for. What argumentative points are you trying to make? Until you know that, you do not know what evidence you need. You have jumped in your car in search of an unknown destination. How will you know where to stop?

That is why you must develop a clear rhetorical goal (a thesis) and a general plan of approach (an outline of the argumentative points to be made).

Once you have done this, you will have a better idea of what you are looking for where to look for it. Common sources for student work are books, periodicals, surveys, encyclopedias, and the internet. Learning to do research is more complex than most people realize. There are some good suggestions in most English handbooks. Your instructor can provide some suggestions. Of course, the reference librarian is the real expert.