Persuasive Writing Revision

When you are persuading people, you usually use a different style. You don't need to show both sides - all you have to do is present your ideas. For instance, imagine you had to persuade people to buy a certain toothpaste. You could write about the great taste, or how clean your teeth feel or how white they are. It doesn't really matter what you find to write about as long as you get them to buy it.

But you wouldn't write about other makes of toothpaste. You don't persuade like this, because it sounds like you aren't sure. So the first thing to remember is:

- **Be definite** - if you are writing about how great chips are, keep repeating the idea. Convince yourself how good they are - they might even be a healthy option, because lots of doctors are bound to like them and chips wouldn't be so popular if they weren't really great, would they? Once you have convinced yourself, it's much easier to convince others. So next you need to remember to...
- **Be positive** - it's always better to hear how good your idea is rather than how bad other people's are. So write about the things that show your ideas in the best light. For instance, aren't chips just great for a quick snack? Why were chips voted the most popular option in our school at lunchtime? And finally don't be frightened to...
- **Be pushy** - If you don't seem too sure, or if you can't make your ideas stand out, then you aren't really persuading as much as you can. And if that is the case, you need The Persuaders' Toolkit.

The Persuader's Toolkit

- **Repeat yourself** - don't worry about saying the same thing again and again - people forget, so repeat yourself and they will remember. Even when you think they might remember, you can always repeat yourself another time.
- **Be personal** - using words such as "we" or "I" always sounds a lot more convincing. We all know that, don't we?
- **Use questions** - why would you use questions? Well, they make people think. They also get your readers involved in what you are writing. So will you use them when you persuade? If not, why not?
- **Use feelings to push ideas** - words are your ammunition. In seconds, they can make your friends laugh, or your teacher angry, so why not use them properly to persuade your readers?
  For instance, don't just write "the pressure of doing school work", because there is no real feeling there. Instead, how about: "the endless trauma, the desperation and the mindless suffering that school work inflicts on students".

Once you persuade, it should be easy to advise. The trick is to be gentle - it's no good pushing your ideas at your readers, or trying to impress them. Instead, you should come across as friendly, as someone who just wants to help.

For instance, imagine you're writing to advise someone in Year 9 who is moving house and has to change schools. We know that it won't be easy - they'll have to make new friends and cope with all sorts of changes. So you need to be sympathetic and give some ideas you think could help.

The first thing might be to plan each main idea in a separate paragraph because it's easier to follow like this. Then think about how you want to present your ideas. It might be fine to give some information as an order, such as:

If you're not sure what to do on the first day, ask someone.

You can add information to this - perhaps explaining why and giving an example of what to do, so now your paragraph looks like this:

If you're not sure what to do on the first day, ask someone. Most people will be glad to help and it's the quickest way to make friends. You can ask a teacher, but it might be better to ask one of the other pupils. Choose a friendly face if you can, and don't be shy - it might be their first day too.

It is not just the information that makes this a good piece of advice, it's also the style. It includes words like "might" and "can". These make the ideas softer - they are not in your face and pushing you to agree, they just guide you. And they are very simple to use, so make sure you include words like "should, can, could, might, ought to and may" - each one turns an idea into a piece of advice.

Speeches

The key to presenting the perfect speech/ piece of persuasive writing is preparation and practice. World leaders don't just stand up and make up a speech on the spot - they carefully prepare beforehand. They even employ people to write their speeches, although remember, this is not an option at school!

An effective speech needs to:

- Use the English language skilfully - as you have time to prepare your speech in advance, you can show off your English language skills and vocabulary.
- Be memorable - former prime minister Tony Blair was famous for making a speech that included the phrase "Education, education, education". This use of repetition made the speech memorable and helped his audience identify his key point.
- Make people think - you may have heard of Martin Luther King who repeated the phrase "I have a dream" when he campaigned for equal rights for black Americans. This was a speech designed to inspire and connect with his audience.

Excerpt from Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.
I have a dream today!
I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right there in Alabama little black boys and little black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.
I have a dream today!

A good speech might contain the following:

- Rhetorical questions
- Repetition
- Lists of three
- Contrast
- Emotive language
- Direct address
- Evidence (statistics, quotations, examples)

Here is an example of a speech to a group of students.

Fellow students, **have you ever felt afraid to walk around the school by yourself?** 1 In a recent survey carried out by the school council, **70 percent** (2) of us have been bullied at some time in our life at school.
The bullies are vicious, violent and vindictive (3 4) . Unfortunately, they are getting away with it. **Can this be fair?** (5)
We, the victims, **are afraid of wearing the wrong trainers. We are afraid of being too smart or too stupid. We are afraid** (6) of anything that might draw attention to ourselves. The time has come for the fear to stop.

The bullies **terrify other students, and yet they are cowards** (7) themselves. If we pull together we can **fight this fear. Join me and fight this fear** (8) today.

1
Direct address - The speaker is addressing the audience directly, asking them to think about their own experiences.
2
Evidence - This is an example of evidence to make the argument more convincing.
3
Lists of three - A list of three words together sounds really powerful when it is said out loud.
4
Emotive Language - These three words are examples of emotive language.
5
Rhetorical Questions - The audience aren't expected to give an answer, but the speaker wants them to think about what he is saying.
6
Repetition - It is effective to repeat the word 'afraid' in a speech about bullying.
7
Contrast - 'Coward' contrasts with 'terrify'.
8
Repetition - Another example of repetition!