## [Rhetorical Appeals](http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/rhetorical-appeals/583-rhetorical-appeals)

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| **Rhetorical Appeal** | **Abbreviated Definition** | **Reflective Questions** |
| [**Ethos**](http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/rhetorical-appeals/161-writing-commons-book/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/585-ethos) | appeal to credibility  *You may want to think of ethos as related to "ethics," or the moral principles of the writer: ethos is the author's way of establishing trust with his or her reader.* | * Why should I (the reader) read what the writer has written? * How does the author cite that he or she has something valid and  important for me to read? * Does the author mention his or her education or professional experience, or convince me that he or she is a valid, educated, and experienced source? |
| [**Pathos**](http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/rhetorical-appeals/161-writing-commons-book/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/591-pathos) | appeal to emotion  *You may want to think of pathos as "empathy," which pertains to the experience of or sensitivity toward emotion.* | * How is the writer trying to make me feel, or what has he or she written that makes me want to do something? * What specific parts of the author's writing make me feel happy, sad, inspired, dejected, and so on? |
| [**Logos**](http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/rhetorical-appeals/161-writing-commons-book/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/593-logos) | appeal to logic  *You may want to think of logos as "logic," because something that is logical "makes sense"—it is reasonable.* | * What evidence does the writer provide that convinces me that his or her argument is logical—that it makes sense? * What proof is the author offering me? |

[Pathos](http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/rhetorical-appeals/591-pathos)

*"Let's not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives, and we obey them without realizing it."*  
– Vincent Van Gogh

Remember those after-school specials that aired on TV when you were a kid? They always had some obvious moral (like "don't drink and drive"). And they were often really emotionally driven.

At the end of the show, the camera would pan out, showing the protagonist alone and suffering for the poor decisions that he or she had made. When you were a child, that sort of heavy-handed emotionalism was effective in getting a point across. Now that you're an adult, it becomes easier to feel frustrated, and even manipulated, by an overload of emotion. Emotion, or "pathos," is a rhetorical device that can be used in an argument to draw the audience in and to help it connect with the argument. Relying too much on pathos, though, can make your writing sound like an after-school special.

[Logos](http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/rhetorical-appeals/593-logos)

"*Logic is the anatomy of thought.*"  
– John Locke

"Logos" is the appeal to logic. Logos isn't logic like the formal logic in math, philosophy, or even computer science; it is the consistency and clarity of an argument as well as the logic of evidence and reasons.

In formal logic, in abstraction, the following is the case: if A is true and B is true and A is an instance of B, then the repercussions of B will always be true. The problem, however, is that this kind of logic doesn't work for real-life situations. This is where argument comes into play. Formal logic would say that speeding, for example, is a violation of traffic laws. A repercussion of violating a traffic law is a ticket; therefore, every person who speeds gets a ticket. However, in real life, not in abstract theory, things aren't that cut and dried. Most people would not agree that all speeders, in every circumstance, should receive a ticket. In an argument about a real-life situation, the audience needs particulars to make their decisions. Sometimes there's an exception. Why was that person speeding? Well, if an eighteen-year-old is speeding to show off for his friends, then yes, most people would agree that he deserves a ticket. However, if a man is driving his pregnant wife to the hospital, then maybe he does not deserve the ticket. One could, and probably would, make the argument that he should not get a ticket.

[Ethos](http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/rhetorical-appeals/585-ethos)

I've always wondered why candidates have to "approve this message"; I mean, if President Obama is on camera talking about himself, then can't I assume he approves the message? Why does he have to state that he approves it at the end?

There's certainly a law that governs what must be said at the end of a political advertisement, or else President Obama wouldn't say exactly the same thing as every other politician at the end of an ad, but there's also an element of persuasion at work here. By appearing on camera saying that he approves the content, the President is giving the ad credibility. It's about him, his work, and his beliefs, and by saying he has approved the ad, President Obama is saying, "You can trust this information about me."

This appeal to credibility is known as "ethos." Ethos is a method of persuasion in which the speaker or writer (the "rhetor") attempts to persuade the audience by demonstrating his own credibility or authority.