Ethos

Ethos is all about credibility—is the source coming from research that is reliable and has a good reputation? A writer can use ethos to show readers why they are the best person to be writing or talking about a particular topic or issue. Sometimes, ethos can be established through a writer’s experiences, education, work, or research.

Take this biography that was posted in the article “What They Take with Them: Findings from the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project” published in the Writing Center Journal. Since the Writing Center Journal is a peer-reviewed, academic source, the name of the journal also has a positive ethos appeal. However, this biography gives the reader an understanding why Dr. Hughes is the right person to write about this particular topic.

Logos

Although many people will associate using numbers and statistics with logos, logos also includes logic and reasoning. In this way, logos appeals can be more subtly communicated. Note that logos appeals are different from logical fallacies, which contain flawed reasoning or logic and should be avoided.

The survey itself is deliberately open-ended and flexible because we wanted to give alumni room to respond in ways we could never anticipate, and because we want colleagues who participate in the PWTARP to replicate or adapt our survey design to their own institutions and to their own research goals. We tried to design open-ended questions that would elicit full responses, not too scripted, we hoped, by the questions.
Pathos

Unlike logos, pathos appeals rely heavily on emotional manipulation. Pathos can trigger any kind of emotions in the reader ranging from sadness to anger. These appeals are particularly effective in terms of connecting with the audience, and giving the message a personal and relatable touch.

Tips for Incorporating Rhetorical Appeals in Your Writing

- Consider your audience and rhetorical situation to make smart choices.
- Be mindful of your tone and word choices—small word choices can have big consequences!
- Use appeals together—just because you are presenting a logical argument doesn’t mean you have to avoid emotional appeals as well. The best arguments blend appeals together for a multi-layered effect.
- Sometimes you can drive audiences away if you use too much of a certain appeal. For example, if using too much pathos, your audience may have a less sympathetic response or may feel manipulated.
