

Writing with Pathos, Logos, Ethos, and Kairos

APSU Writing Center Handout

Pathos – Appeal to Emotion

Pathos occurs when a writer draws on the audience's emotions, values, or sympathies to support the argument.

Example: A charity ad showing heartfelt stories.

- Does it evoke emotion?
- Are vivid details and imagery used?
- Does it generate sympathy or other feelings?

Logos – Appeal to Logic

Occurs when a writer persuades using facts, evidence, and reasoning to support an argument.

Example: Data-driven graphs that support a claim.

- Are facts, statistics, or historical knowledge included?
- How does the author provide reasoning to support the claim?
- How well can the audience follow the author's reasoning?

Ethos – Appeal to Credibility

Occurs when a writer establishes authority and trustworthiness with an audience.

Example: “As a scientist with decades of research...”

- How does the writer establish their authority or credibility on the topic?
- What makes the audience trust the writer's knowledge or position?

Kairos – Appeal to Timing & Context

Occurs when a writer takes advantage of the right moment, situation, or circumstances to support an argument.

Example: A speech about climate change given immediately after a major natural disaster.

- Does the writer explain why the issue matters in that particular moment?
- Does the writer connect the argument to current events, historical context, or relevant circumstances?
- Does the timing or context of the argument create a sense of urgency or relevance for the audience?

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