

Introduction and Pretest

Your students should be familiar with the proofreading and technology skills in the advanced level of the Writer's Guide before beginning this unit.

Introduction

Introduce the students to the unit with an explanation like the following: *We're going to have fun learning to be authors who can write many different kinds of things. Sometimes authors work with other authors to produce a piece of writing. Authors who write together work in a cooperative group. They enjoy sharing ideas. Sometimes we'll work cooperatively to write arguments and sales pitches. When we write arguments and sales pitches, I'll write our ideas and our compositions on chart paper or on an overhead transparency. A composition is an organized piece of writing. Everyone will contribute ideas to our class compositions.*

Sometimes authors work alone. After we practice together, you'll produce a piece of writing of your own.

For the next few lessons, you'll be learning about persuasive writing. The purpose of persuasive writing is to convince people an idea is a good one. When you write persuasively, you use opinions supported by facts, statistics, examples, and expert opinions to get others to believe what you say is important. When you try to persuade people that what you believe is true, you must be convincing but polite. In other words, you must use nonconfrontational language. You provide proof to convince others to believe what you want them to believe. Arguments, sales pitches, and advertisements are types of persuasive writing because their purpose is to persuade the reader.

Beginning Writing Sample

PREPARATION Write the following prompt on the board or on an overhead transparency: **The city council is considering a law to ban bicycle riding in all city parks. Do you agree or disagree with this plan? Write an argument of three hundred to five hundred words to persuade the city council to support or reject this plan.**

Each student will need a copy of page 6, lined paper, a folder to use as a writing portfolio, and a dictionary.

Explain to the students that before they learn about persuasive writing, you'd like a sample of their writing. Tell them you'll save this sample so you and they can see how their writing improves as they learn more about persuasive writing.

Read the prompt to the students. *Sometimes a writing prompt has words you don't understand. Are there any words in this prompt you don't understand?* Ideas: *City council, considering, ban, agree, disagree, argument, persuade, support, reject.* Ask the students to look up the words. Discuss their meanings with the students. Ideas: *City council—a group of people elected to make the laws that govern a city; considering—thinking carefully about something; ban—to forbid; agree—to believe the same; disagree—to believe differently; argument—a reason for an opinion; persuade—to urge or advise to take action; support—to agree with, to vote yes; reject—to disagree with, to vote no.* Tell the students that three hundred to five hundred words equals about one word-processed page or two handwritten pages.

Give each student a copy of page 6. A pros-and-cons sheet presents information that can be used to support either side of an argument. You must read carefully to find information to use to defend your argument. When you defend an argument, you give reasons to support your opinion. Read aloud the information on the pros-and-cons sheet.

Ask the students to write an argument on lined paper to persuade the city council to support or to reject the new rule. Tell them they may also include information from their own knowledge or experience to support their arguments. Ask them to edit, proofread, and write a final copy of their arguments. Evaluate the students' writing using the rubric on page 7.

Pros-and-Cons Sheet

Ban Bicycle Riding in Parks	Do Not Ban Bicycle Riding in Parks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycles can be dangerous. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – More than 500,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year for bicycle-related injuries (Consumer Product Safety Commission). – Approximately 140,000 children are treated each year for head injuries as a result of bicycle accidents (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). – Two hundred children die each year because of bicycle accidents. – More than 400,000 children under the age of fourteen are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year because of injuries received in bicycle accidents. • Alameda, California, has banned the use of bicycles in some public parks, on playgrounds, and on school property. • Many national parks permit bicycling only on certain paved, gravel, and dirt roads within the park. • Bicycles are considered vehicles in all fifty states, and riders must obey the same laws drivers obey. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lawyer Bob Mionske says a city has the right to ban bicycles from public parks. – Alderman George Zettler of Savannah, Georgia, says bicycles are the same as any motor vehicle. Bicycle riders have no right to ride through parks. • Many parks have paths and trails for pedestrians only. • A parks commissioner in Queens, New York, said Alley Pond Park was a public park, not a racing ground. • A park ranger in Palos Verdes, California, said many hikers were no longer hiking because of problems with mountain bikers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to a 1998 report from the American Medical Association, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sixty percent of Americans get no exercise. – Forty percent of Americans are overweight. • People who cycle are physically active. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Benefits include reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, and other diseases. – People who exercise regularly have a more positive mental outlook. • Schoolchildren who engage in regular exercise have better health and get better grades. • Bicycling is fun. • Healthy People 2000 reports these facts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bicycling helps relieve stress. – Bicycling fights depression and anxiety. – Bicycling enhances one’s sense of well-being. • Bicycles do not emit pollutants. • Parks are safe places to ride bicycles. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Twenty-seven percent of all cyclists killed in traffic accidents in Pennsylvania are between five and fifteen years old. – Only nine percent of bicycle accidents occur on trails or other off-road paths. • Dr. Richard A. Schieber, a childhood injury prevention specialist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the leader of a national bicycle safety initiative, said public health officials were realizing that in addition to promoting helmet use, safety officials must teach good riding skills, promote good riding practices, and provide safe places to ride. • Some national parks have special bicycling routes. In some national parks, cyclists share hiking trails with pedestrians. • Hillsborough County, Florida, has many trails shared by cyclists and pedestrians.

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RUBRIC**Pretest****Posttest****Scoring the Samples**

Give the student a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.

Give the student a score of 1 for each element at the emergent or minimum level.

Give the student a score of 3 for each element at a satisfactory level.

Give the student a score of 5 for each element at the mastery level.

Evaluating the Elements of a Piece of Persuasive Writing

	The author of this argument . . .	Points Earned
O R G A N I Z A T I O N	Uses correct format according to instructions.	
	Uses a logical sequence.	
	Uses an opening paragraph that clearly and concisely presents the topic.	
	Develops related paragraphs to produce a middle.	
	Uses a final paragraph that brings closure to the argument.	
C O N T E N T	Clearly states his or her position in the opening paragraph.	
	Uses supporting statements that include facts, statistics, examples, and expert opinions.	
	Evaluates and uses pertinent information to support position.	
	Restates position in concluding paragraph.	
	Anticipates and addresses readers' concerns and counterarguments.	
S T Y L E	Argues convincingly.	
	Captures readers' interest in an introduction.	
	Uses language appropriate for intended audience.	
	Revises text to improve word choice and phrasing.	
	Persuades readers using nonconfrontational language.	
M E C H A N I C S	Uses the conventions of capitalization.	
	Uses the conventions of punctuation.	
	Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
	Employs standard English.	
	Indents paragraphs.	
Total Points		

If the student scores . . .

85–100 points	The student has mastered the skills and concepts taught in the advanced level of Persuasive Writing.
20–84 points	The student is properly placed in the advanced level of Persuasive Writing.
0–19 points	Administer the pretest for the intermediate level of Persuasive Writing.