Ethos

"Ethos"

**• References to work experience or life experience related to the topic.** When an author writing about the stock market talks about his years working for an investment bank, that's an appeal to credibility.

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**• References to college degrees or awards related to the topic.** When your biology instructor makes clear in the syllabus that he has a PhD in biology and that you'll be using the textbook he's written for the class, he's reminding you of his authority and credibility on the subject.

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**• References to the character of the writer.** When a politician writes in a campaign brochure about his years of public service and the contributions he's made to the community, he's letting you know he's trustworthy, a good person, and a credible source of information about the community and the issues that affect it.

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**• The use of supporting sources written by authorities on the subject.** When a student writes a paper about why school hours should be changed and uses quotations from principals, teachers, and school board members (all of whom know something about the topic), he's borrowing their credibility and authority to increase his own.

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**• References to symbols that represent authority*.*** When a candidate gives a speech in front of an American flag, he or she is associating him- or herself with the symbol and borrowing the authority it represents.

PATHOS

* **Anecdotes or other narratives**. When a writer employs a narrative or anecdote, he or she is usually attempting to connect with the reader emotionally. For example, beginning an essay about human trafficking by relaying the personal story of a victim captures the attention of the audience because it humanizes the problem and draws on readers’ empathy.
* **Images or other forms of media**. When a writer uses images, songs, and other types of nontextual media, he or she is often attempting to engage a reader’s emotions. Songs and pictures produce emotional responses. For example, Toby Keith’s post-9/11 anthem, “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue,” seems to embody the nation’s anger after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. While you may not agree with the song’s sense of justice, the lyrics recall a painful time in our nation’s history. For many, that recollection prompts an emotional response.
* **Direct quotations.** Though quotations are used for a myriad of reasons, direct quoting from an individual who has been personally affected by an issue is usually an appeal to the emotions of a reader. For example, if I were writing an essay about breast cancer and I quoted a cancer patient, that quotation would be an attempt to humanize the topic and appeal to the sympathy of my readers.
* **Humor.** When a writer uses humor in order to illustrate a point, he or she is employing pathos. Though there is logic to satirical humor (as used on *The Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report*), the main appeal of such television shows is that they make viewers laugh.

LOGOS

As you now know, logos can be defined as a writer’s or speaker’s attempt to appeal to the logic or reason of her audience. Let’s look at some examples of logos that you might commonly find when reading texts of various media:

• **Statistics.** When a writer employs data or statistics within a text, you can probably assume that he  
or she is attempting to appeal to the logic and reason of the reader. For example, an argument in favor of keeping abortion legal may cite the May 2011 Pew Research poll that found 54 percent of Americans in favor of legal abortion. This figure makes a logical argument: abortion should be legal because the majority of Americans support it, and in a democracy, the majority makes the decisions.

• **Causal statements.** When you see an “if-then” statement, with credible supporting evidence, the writer is likely appealing to your reason. Consider an argument about lowering the drinking age from 21 to 18: a writer might suggest that, if the legal drinking age were 18, then people between 18 and 21 would be less likely to drive under the influence. If the writer offers evidence that the reason that some between the ages of 18 and 21 drive drunk is that they fear calling a friend or parent because they have illegally ingested alcohol, then this causal statement would be an appeal to a reader’s sense of reason.

• **Relevant examples or other evidence.** You might begin to think about logos as evidence that doesn’t involve an appeal to your emotions. Even expert testimony, which would certainly be an example of ethos, also could be an example of logos, depending on its content. For example, in a discussion about recent cuts in education funding, a statement from the Hillsborough County, Florida, superintendent would be an appeal to authority. But if that statement contained a discussion of the number of teachers and classes that would have to be cut if the state were to reduce the district’s funding, the statement from the superintendent could also be an appeal to logic.