

Ten Steps to PERSUADING when you write

1. Picture your audience -- is it active or passive?
2. Establish what you can make happen
3. Recognize possible objections
4. Stress the rewards of your plan (idea, suggestion)
5. Use familiar words and language
6. Always be clear and precise
7. Decide what you want -- and ask for it
8. Instill the right tone
9. Never leave them hanging
10. Give readers something to remember you by

Questions for reviewing your persuasive copy

Does the message I am using speak in the public interest or my district's interest?

Is my message believable?

Does my message clearly position my programs or services or is it confusing?

Am I relying on specific information or am I making unclear pronouncements?

Does my message sound truthful? Believable?

Is my message consistent with my strategy?



Mr. Willis' Sure-Fire Tips on "Being Explicit"

Or ...

"Where'd You Learn All Those Words!?"

Be a first-degree writer

General copy won't accurately convey what you had in mind. **Solution:** Climb the so-called ladder of distraction. **Examples:**
Third degree: "situation" in our school.
Second degree: "dispute" in our school.
First degree: disagreement over discipline policies.

Use specific (concrete, precise, exact, explicit!) words

Fuzzy: The students' interview included many complex items.
Explicit: The students' interview included many thorny (probing, tough, tricky, harsh) questions.

Fuzzy: We selected this software because of its quality.
Explicit: We chose this software because it got top ratings from both leading computer magazines.

Tell readers exactly what you want

Shun the "nice-guy" syndrome of not being direct.
Fuzzy: Parents should return the forms as soon as convenient.
Explicit: Parents should return the forms by Friday, Nov. 12.

Fuzzy: The district will make this decision a top priority.
Explicit: The district will decide on this before the end of the month.

Avoid those wishy-washy words

Fuzzy: It *appears* that the budget committee *may possibly* be able to review your request.
Explicit: The budget committee will do its best to review your request.
Some wishy-washy words to watch: appears, apparently, generally, may, perhaps, possibly, seems.

Strike those add-nothing words

Some common offenders: issue, case, situation, factor, condition, basis, nature, process, problem. **Examples:** Students receive grades on a quarterly *basis*. Another troublesome *issue* is school security. Another interesting *case* in point is how many parents don't attend school meetings.

Find a positive approach

"Our office closes at 4 o'clock." *versus*
"We're open until 4 o'clock."
"We can't release the data until we have both parents' signatures." *versus*
"We'll release the data as soon as we have both parents' signatures."

Double-check those hidden messages

Unintended double meanings can confuse the reader – and embarrass the writer. They happen more often than many realize. **Some all-too-real examples:**
"Volunteers sought for sexual assault service."
"Man arrested for driving while suspended."
"There will be a short administrators' meeting each morning."