

Essay #1 asks you to analyze key rhetorical strategies and the concerns shaping them. To start, know what a *rhetorical strategy* is and *locate as many as you can* in the readings. After choosing your texts, mark relevant passages and **closely** analyze them.

Rhetoric: the art of speaking or writing effectively, as in persuasion. We all use rhetoric to provoke action (e.g., to teach, change someone’s mind, urge her to vote or donate, etc.) *Rhetorical strategies* are tactics a speaker or writer uses to appeal to an audience, e.g., by logic, emotion, establishing personal authority or integrity, invoking religious or other values, etc. Ask yourself, what makes this text effective? Whom does it address and how does it aim to affect the audience: to act, to think, to believe differently, to sympathize, or to respect the author’s opinion? On what basis (or bases) does it try to sway readers?

Collect data--**Analyze** (identify key strategies)--**Organize** (evidence for claims)--**Draft**
(to analyze: examine the role of one part within a whole)

Identify words and phrases where these key tactics (approaches and language) appear. In your essay, identify the audience; consider its values and assumptions as you discuss strategies. In a *thesis statement*, specify *kinds of strategies* vs. just “strategies.”

Examples of rhetorical strategies:

**Diction*, or word choice: does the author use specific language to impress the audience, seem familiar, inspire, scare, or other? Do certain words recur, creating a theme or emphasizing values? Identify, characterize, and discuss these words.

**Syntax*, or sentence structure: does the author use repetition, short strong sentences, complex or compound ones, questions with implied or explicit answers, parallel structure, or other? Identify powerful syntax; name its probable effects. (Go beyond saying, “X uses syntax.”) Is it varied, simple, complicated?

**Figures of speech*: does the author use comparisons that reflect well or badly on their targets? How do similes (using “as” or “like”) or metaphors (discussion of one thing in terms of another: “my love is a red, red rose”) try to shape audience responses? Quote figures of speech and explain their significance.

**Tone*: does the author use humor, irony, a declared refraining from criticism that nevertheless carries a barb? Does the use of a serious tone strengthen the points? Discuss the way tone might affect the audience (i.e., by deprecating opposition).

Caveat: We cannot know the exact effect an author produced (at least not without research), so **avoid claiming** that the strategies “**makes the audience do X, Y, or Z.**” Instead, state that the authors or strategies “**appeal to audiences by doing A, B, or C.**”

1. State your *thesis in the first paragraph*, ideally at the end. Writers often arrive at the clearest formulation of the thesis after writing a paper, so you may be tempted to put the thesis in the conclusion. Resist; steal your thesis from the end or other. *Specify strategies* instead of saying authors “use diction, tone, imagery, and syntax.” (See previous page.)

Ex.: X’s speech uses **elevated diction**, a **sad tone**, **legal references**, and **simple syntax**.

2. *Name the texts and authors* in the first paragraph; use full names. Later you may use the last names of authors and abbreviations you introduce for the texts (e.g., “D.o.I.”).

A good introduction covers the “5 W’s”: *who, what, when, where, and why* (even how).

3. Each paragraph should advance the argument. Add a sentence that connects with the thesis if the paragraph does not explicitly address that organizing idea.

4. *Focus paragraphs on one main point* each. In general, follow the “Goldilocks” principle: not too small (< three sentences) and not too large (> half a page). To deserve a paragraph of its own, an idea probably needs a *topic sentence* to introduce it, a second sentence to *explain or elaborate* it, and a third sentence offering an *example*. Some ideas (claims) may need several sentences of explanation, several examples, or both. Some writers should combine short paragraphs even if it requires finding and stating their common ground. Others should spare readers the “boa constrictor” experience of confronting a page-long paragraph. Divide it into two (+) main ideas (topic sentences).

5. **INTRODUCE** *quotations* and *state explicitly their relevance* to your argument. Use *introductory tags* that identify the author (and perhaps the text) and highlight the reason you quote. Often you will use a comma before a quotation; a colon might also work.

Ex.: Sojourner Truth repeats a question to emphasize her status: “Ain’t I a woman?”

Avoid quoting several sentences in a row if it means you leave them for the reader to interpret. Refer to at least one phrase in each sentence you quote to state its significance.

6. *Strong conclusions pull the major points together and consider their implications*. If you have “stolen” your thesis from the conclusion (see 1 above), you need to fill the hole it leaves. Merely repeating a thesis gains more points than stopping without a conclusion; a strong paper ends with a new idea or application, such as a statement of contemporary relevance, a new characterization of the rhetorical strategies and audiences, thoughts on their significance, or a synthesis of the main points.

7. **PROOFREAD**, ideally by reading out loud. For most people, the combination of eye and ear catches more errors than eye alone. Finishing before the deadline gives you a chance to ensure you have inserted your final, most nuanced thoughts. Asking another person to read your paper gives you a fresh pair of eyes (and a sense of gaps to fill).

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