

Name _____

Persuasive Letter Writing Format

This is the persuasive writing format taught to students at Columbia University in New York City. Students of all ages can use it to help them write effectively and persuasively. (*See modifications for younger students below.*)

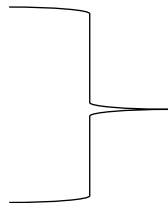
Why you?

Why me?

Why now?

Why this?

Call to action!



Basic 5-Paragraph Persuasive Letter Writing Format

- 1) Use the worksheet below to help students think about the issue and what they want to say. At this stage of the writing process, they'll do more thinking than writing, but it's important they put some ideas down in each section, without worrying about the exact wording.
- 2) Next, have them write a paragraph that answers each question. Remind them to begin each paragraph with a topic sentence (not a question). The first and last paragraphs must stay in this order for a cohesive letter. They can feel free to switch around the order of the middle three paragraphs to help their argument flow.
- 3) "Call to action" options: meet with class in classroom; meet with class at powerful person's office/place of business; meet with class via Zoom; take a specific action; vote a specific way; etc.
- 4) Provide contact information: teacher's email or school address (not student's personal email).
- 5) Proof-reading: by writer first; then by at least one other person.
Is your case stated clearly? Is it compelling? Is it respectful? Any grammar or spelling mistakes?
- 6) Writer modifies as needed, and writes good copy.
- 7) Teacher checks before the letter is sent off to person/organization/newspaper/website, and keeps a copy.

MODIFICATIONS

If this is a **class project**, it may be better to send **one letter from the whole class (or group of classes)**, rather than inundating the person with letters (which could be quite annoying). For example, if you want a person of power to meet with your group (in person or live), it's better to send one letter. On

the other hand, if you're trying to get a government official to vote a particular way, it's better to send many letters.

If sending one class letter, still begin with each individual writing a letter. Next, synthesize the best information into one letter to send to the powerful person. If working with younger students, this job will probably be done by the teacher. If this assignment is being completed by older students, consider having a small group of student-editors complete this task. In either case: Step 1, highlight best phrases on the set of letters; Step 2, synthesize that best information, adding and deleting as needed to write the most compelling letter.

If working with very young children, gather the ideas for each part of the persuasive letter orally. Consider tape-recording or jotting down exact quotes from some of the students. Then use just one or two of those super-cute quotes in the letter, e.g., One of my students said.....

Consider having a student hand-write the final letter (rather than using the computer) – it's more personal and a reminder to this powerful, very busy person, that this request is from kids (even if they are big kids in high school). Work it!

If sending one letter, have all students sign their names at the bottom of the letter (perhaps first names only). Make sure to include teacher contact information for the reply (and keep a copy). Post, or scan and send as an email attachment, or both!

Let us know how it works out! Students can tell us on [Kids Against Climate Change](#).

See worksheet on next page.

Recipient _____

Why you? _____

Why me? _____

Why now? _____

Why this? _____

Call to action! _____

Cordial sign-off _____

Name _____

c/o (Teacher's school email) _____