

# Persuasive Techniques in Advertising

The persuasive strategies used by advertisers who want you to buy their product can be divided into three categories: **pathos**, **logos**, and **ethos**.

**Pathos**: an appeal to emotion.

An advertisement using **pathos** will attempt to evoke an emotional response in the consumer. Sometimes, it is a positive emotion such as happiness: *an image of people enjoying themselves while drinking Pepsi*. Other times, advertisers will use negative emotions such as pain: *a person having back problems after buying the "wrong" mattress*. **Pathos** can also include emotions such as fear and guilt: *images of a starving child persuade you to send money*.

**Logos**: an appeal to logic or reason.

An advertisement using **logos** will give you the evidence and statistics you need to fully understand what the product does. The **logos** of an advertisement will be the "straight facts" about the product: *One glass of Florida orange juice contains 75% of your daily Vitamin C needs*.

**Ethos**: an appeal to credibility or character.

An advertisement using **ethos** will try to convince you that the company is more reliable, honest, and credible; therefore, you should buy its product. **Ethos** often involves statistics from reliable experts, such as *nine out of ten dentists agree that Crest is the better than any other brand* or *Americas dieters choose Lean Cuisine*. Often, a celebrity endorses a product to lend it more credibility: *Catherine Zeta-Jones makes us want to switch to T-Mobile*.

Practice labeling **pathos**, **logos**, and **ethos** by placing a **P**, **L**, or **E** in the blank :

- \_\_\_\_\_ A child is shown covered in bug bites after using an inferior bug spray.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tiger Woods endorses Nike.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sprite Zero is 100% sugar-free.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A 32-oz. bottle of Tide holds enough to wash 32 loads.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A commercial shows an image of a happy couple riding in a Corvette.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cardiologists recommend Ecotrin more than any other brand of aspirin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Advil Liqui-Gels provide up to 8 hours of continuous pain relief.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Miley Cyrus appears in Oreo advertisements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ People who need more energy drink Red Bull Energy Drink.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A magazine ad shows people smiling while smoking cigarettes.

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The following are some more specific strategies that advertisers use. Often, they overlap with the rhetorical strategies above.

## **Avante Garde**

The suggestion that using this product puts the user ahead of the times. *A toy manufacturer encourages kids to be the first on their block to have a new toy.*

## **Weasel Words**

“Weasel words” are used to suggest a positive meaning without actually really making any guarantee. *A scientist says that a diet product might help you to lose weight the way it helped him to lose weight. A dish soap leaves dishes virtually spotless.*

## **Magic Ingredients**

The suggestion that some almost miraculous discovery makes the product exceptionally effective. *A pharmaceutical manufacturer describes a special coating that makes their pain reliever less irritating to the stomach than a competitor’s.*

## **Patriotism**

The suggestion that purchasing this product shows your love of your country. *A company brags about its product being made in America.*

## **Transfer**

Positive words, images, and ideas are used to suggest that the product being sold is also positive. *A textile manufacturer wanting people to wear their product to stay cool during the summer shows people wearing fashions made from their cloth at a sunny seaside setting where there is a cool breeze.*

## **Plain Folks**

The suggestion that the product is a practical product of good value for ordinary people. *A cereal manufacturer shows an ordinary family sitting down to breakfast and enjoying their product.*

## **Snob Appeal**

The suggestion that the use of the product makes the customer part of an elite group with a luxurious and glamorous lifestyle. *A coffee manufacturer shows people dressed in formal gowns and tuxedos drinking their brand at an art gallery.*

## **Bribery**

Bribery offers you something “extra.” *Buy a burger; get free fries.*

## **Bandwagon**

The suggestion that you should join the crowd or be on the winning side by using a product—you don’t want to be the only person without it!