



Exploring Leadership

COMMUNICATION: PERSUASIVENESS

Persuasion is a powerful skill that is often misunderstood. While movies and media sometimes portray it as manipulative, true persuasion is about positive influence. It's a tool to inspire, unite, and communicate effectively. As Blaschka wrote in Forbes Magazine, "Persuasion isn't about manipulation; it's about influence." When used well, persuasion can open doors and create meaningful connections.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

How many remember your parents trying to persuade you to eat broccoli? What were they hoping to achieve? Can you think of a time when persuasion convinced you to do something?

Persuasion is more than just changing minds—it's about inspiring action and bringing people together. When used positively, it can boost confidence, strengthen teamwork, and help share great ideas. Whether you're talking to friends, leading a group, or preparing for the future, persuasion is a valuable tool for creating opportunities.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Learn how to identify when and how to use persuasive techniques.
- Understand how persuasion can be a positive and powerful tool.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Copies of the Appendix for all participants
- Pencils or pens and paper
- Timer

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

Persuasion is a powerful skill! In this activity, you'll craft and deliver a short speech to convince others of your point of view using strong words and solid reasoning.

- Hand out copies of the Appendix to each participant.
- Discuss the Elements of a Persuasive Speech and how Words That Wow can make a speech more powerful.
- Divide participants into small groups of 3-5.
- Each person chooses a fun topic for a short, persuasive speech. Examples: "Why you should love dogs," "Why pizza is better than burgers," or "Why chocolate is the best dessert."
- Plan your speech: Write down key points and be sure to include each of the Elements of a Persuasive Speech. Use strong, positive words from the Words That Wow list to make your speech more impactful.
- Take 2-3 minutes to prepare a 30-second to 1-minute speech.
- Each person presents their speech to their group.
- After each speech, group members can ask questions or challenge points in a respectful, friendly way.
- Optional Challenge: Groups can vote on the "Most Persuasive Speech," and the winners present to the entire class.

FACILITATION TIPS:

- Encourage participants to keep discussions respectful and focus on learning instead of competition. Remind them to avoid negative or degrading arguments and maintain a positive tone.
- If appropriate, add excitement by letting groups vote for the "Most Persuasive Speech" to increase engagement and participation.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What made some speeches more engaging than others? Which techniques were the most effective?
- What similarities did you notice between different speeches? Why do you think these elements were common?
- Which speech had the greatest impact on you? What made it memorable?
- If you could revise your speech, what would you change to make it even stronger?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- When is persuasion helpful, and when can it be harmful?
- How do you use persuasion in daily life? What are appropriate situations for it?
- What personal experiences have shaped how you view persuasion?
- How can persuasion be used positively to build connections and solve problems?
- Think about an upcoming situation where persuasion could help you—how can you prepare for it?



CONCLUSION:

When used effectively, persuasion helps in conversations with peers, leaders, and even potential employers. The ability to persuade others can open doors, build strong relationships, and shape the direction of your life. Practicing this skill can make a real impact—not just for you, but for those around you.

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REFERENCES

- How to Teach Middle School Students the Art of Debating and Persuasive Writing: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teaching-content/game-persuasion/>
- Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/amyblaschka/2019/02/11/the-one-in-demand-soft-skill-that-many-leaders-still-get-wrong/#5fc97d003523>



APPENDIX:

ELEMENTS OF A PERSUASIVE SPEECH

- **Start With a Strong Hook:** Grab the listener's attention with an interesting fact, question, or bold statement.
 - Example: "Did you know chocolate can instantly boost your mood?"
- **State Your Position:** Clearly explain your idea or point of view.
 - Example: "That's why I believe chocolate is the ultimate dessert—it's better than anything else you could choose."
- **Give Reasons:** Support your idea with 2–3 strong reasons, using examples or facts to back it up.
 - Example: "Not only does it taste amazing, but studies show that chocolate can reduce stress, increase energy, and even improve brain function. It's both a treat and a benefit!"
- **Use Words That Wow:** Add powerful, positive words to make your speech memorable.
 - Example: "Chocolate is undeniably the most comforting, incredible, and irresistible treat."
- **End with Action:** Encourage your audience to take a specific action or consider your idea.
 - Example: "Next time you're craving dessert, make the unbeatable choice—chocolate every time!"

WORDS THAT WOW

Note: These words add energy and confidence to your speech, making it more persuasive and ensuring your message is unforgettable.

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|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| • amazing | • glorious | • superb |
| • brilliant | • tremendous | • dazzling |
| • spectacular | • memorable | • tantalizing |
| • comfortable | • breathtaking | • outstanding |
| • fascinating | • wonderful | • first class |
| • gigantic | • excellent | • tranquil |
| • gorgeous | • stunning | • appealing |
| • incredible | • worthwhile | • exceptional |
| • magnificent | • splendid | • irresistible |
| • marvelous | • creative | • lovely |
| • charming | • impressive | |