Ethos: The authority and credibility of a speaker (or writer) is known as his or her ethos. Ethos derives from a speaker’s knowledge as well as his character—as Aristotle notes, an audience will believe a good man more readily than others. As a result, a speaker must consider how she presents her argument and herself. She must convince her audience that she is reliable, truthful, and knowledgeable. For example, in order to demonstrate her ethos to a new patient with whooping cough, a doctor might tell the patient that she is has a PhD in communicable diseases, that she has experience treating whooping cough, that she has conducted several studies on the disease, and that she herself had whooping cough as a child. Sharing this information with her audience might help the doctor establish authority in order to convince her patient to follow a treatment plan.

It is also important to keep in mind that ethos can be augmented or undercut by other aspects of the speaker’s character or behavior. If the doctor is curt, sarcastic, or cold, or if she wears ripped jeans and an old t-shirt under her lab coat, the patient may ignore her credentials and focus instead on her character. However, if the doctor is friendly and warm, she may add to her ethos.

Finally, the audience itself plays a role in ethos. If the speaker is widely considered an expert, or if he shares the beliefs and values of the audience, he may be able to convince the audience by name or reputation alone. For example, a scientific paper on physics by Albert Einstein is automatically seen as credible, even though modern readers do not know Einstein personally. However, despite the fact that he is the President of the United States, Barack Obama is not always considered a credible speaker. He garners respect in some circles and ridicule in others.

Pathos: Pathos refers to emotional appeals a speaker makes to his audience, based on the beliefs, values, fears, desires, and hopes of that audience. As Aristotle explains, an audience understanding and assessment of a speech depends on its mood, its relationship to the topic, and/or the stakes or consequences embedded in the argument. Print and broadcast advertisements provide countless examples of pathos. For example, a commercial for floor cleaner that shows a baby crawling around on a kitchen floor will play on a mother’s fear of disease or infection for her baby. She may be convinced she needs to product in order to have a germ-free floor. Political campaign ads also rely on pathos to appeal to a candidate’s audience. In this case, the ads attempt to show that the politician shares the beliefs and values of the voters.

In traditional academic writing, emotions tend to be dismissed in favor of reason, facts, and logic. However, using pathos in writing can be an effective (or ineffective) way to craft an argument. Think of pathos as a way to reach out to readers and establish a bond with them. Citing personal experience or feelings can assure the audience that the speaker understands a specific issue or can help the audience identify with the speaker.
**Logos:** When a speaker uses logic or reason to make an argument, he is making an appeal to *logos*. Commonly described as evidence, support, and/or logic, logos is any kind of appeal or support that an audience finds provable or probable. Some appeals to logos seem more fact-based and therefore more powerful; for example, logical syllogisms, physical evidence, and concrete examples are often considered most convincing. However, even “probable” evidence can support an argument effectively. Consider the use of testimony, maxims, common sense, and gossip as support for particular types of argument.

A speaker’s audience also plays a role in what qualifies as “logical.” If an audience doesn’t trust the “facts” or doesn’t understand the reasoning involved in an argument, the appeal to logos is ineffective. For example, if the patient (above) identifies as a Christian Scientist, no amount of research, evidence, or examples of healing by the doctor will convince him to accept treatment for whooping cough. For the Christian Scientist, the Bible and the teachings of his church provide a more logical argument than that offered by science and medicine.

The rhetorical appeals work together to form a text. The speaker’s ethos can affect the emotional response of the audience as well as the kind of logos it finds convincing. Likewise, the type of logic used to make an argument can support or erode a speaker’s character and an appeal to pathos can make an audience accept or disregard a speaker’s knowledge or her logical appeals.

The triangle below is a useful representation of the interaction between the appeals as they form and inform a text.