Persuasive Language Techniques

1. Attacks
Attacks are a version of playing the man, not the ball. If you can make your opposition seem less credible, you may be more likely to get a reader to agree with your side of the argument. At the least, attention can be taken away from the issue itself and put on to the personality. Attacks can attempt to belittle or embarrass or just plain insult an opponent. The idea is that the weaker you can make your opposition appear, the stronger you and your contention will appear.
Example text:
That’s the sort of suggestion I’d expect from a nose-in-the-air-tuff like Turnbull.

2. Colloquial Language
Colloquial (slang) language can be used in different ways. It can set the writer up as knowledgeable, on the inside of a social group. A writer may also use slang in a sarcastic manner, to attack an opponent or mock an argument. It may also be used to appeal to a reader’s own sense of cultural identity, or reinforce a writer’s overall tone.
Example text:
She’s a top shellie that Jessica Rowe. Channel Nine are stark raving to give her the boot.

3. Emotive Appeals
Like many persuasive techniques, emotive appeals aim to engage people’s feelings, not logic or reason. If a writer can manipulate a reader to feel a certain way, that reader should be more likely to agree with the writer’s overall contention. Often writers will use other forms of persuasive language techniques in order to appeal to people’s emotions.

There is a huge variety of emotive responses that can be aimed at by writers, such as:

- Democracy
- Family values
- Hedonism
- Reason and logic
- Charity
- Fashion-sense
- Hip-pocket nerve
- Safety
- Compassion
- Fear of change
- Morality
- Self-interest
- Environmentalism
- Freedom
- Nostalgia
- Sense of justice
- Fairness
- Group loyalty
- Patriotism
- Vanity

Example text 1:
Soon we will see civilians lying dead in our own streets if we do not act against terrorism.

Example text 2:
In our society today there are people living without food or adequate shelter. Such basics of life can be provided if those of us who can afford to, give to organisations such as the Salvation Army, to help those unable to help themselves.

4. Inclusive Language
Inclusive language aims to directly address the reader, either personally or as a member of a shared group. This involves using such words as us, we, you, our.
Example text:
It is time for us to show our belief in the value of mateship and a fair go, and give generously to the Good Friday Appeal.

5. Rhetorical Question
A rhetorical question is one in which the answer is so obvious it is not required. The idea here is not to receive an answer, merely to reinforce a point.
Example text:
Should footballers be treated as above the law?