

# The Devastating Consequences of Distracted Driving

»»» by Zoe Franklin »»»

**A few seconds** can change a life forever. It was April 18, 2010, when Aaron Brookens, then age 19, was driving home after spending the weekend with his girlfriend, Kelly. As he sped down Interstate 90 at 75 mph, he decided to send her a quick text. When he looked up from his phone, he saw a towering wall of white zooming toward him as his truck slammed into the rear of a slow-moving semi. His vehicle slid almost entirely underneath the semi and it took first responders nearly an hour to free Aaron from the wreckage. He was airlifted to a local hospital with two broken femurs, a fractured knee and ankle, cuts to his internal organs, and nerve damage to both of his legs. He was told he may never walk again.

According to a new survey released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, approximately

387,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver. In recent years, many states have banned texting and limited the use of cell phones while driving. However, as our nation's laws are getting tougher on one of the most common sources of driver distraction, distracted driving continues to cause fatalities and permanent injuries.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood (2009–2013) captures the essence of this seeming paradox when he says, "You see it every day: Drivers swerving in their lanes, stopping at green lights, running red ones, or narrowly missing a pedestrian because they have their eyes and minds on their phones instead of the road. Yet, people continue to assume that they can drive and text or talk at the same time." Despite these new driving laws, people's attitudes toward

**"You see it every day: Drivers swerving in their lanes, stopping at green lights, running red ones, or narrowly missing a pedestrian because they have their eyes and minds on their phones instead of the road."**

—U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood (2009–2013)

660,000 American drivers text, tweet, make phone calls, or otherwise use technology in a way that distracts them from driving. And this is only a fraction of the problem. A 2012 AAA driving study found that while 6.7% of teen drivers drove while distracted by an electronic device, more than twice as many drivers (15.1%) drove while engaged in other distracting activities, including adjusting controls, grooming, eating or drinking, reaching for an object inside the car, communicating with people outside of the car, turning around to see the backseat, and reading. Any activity that takes a driver's eyes off the road and hands off the wheel endangers the driver, passengers, and bystanders.

Driving while distracted can have devastating consequences. In 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver. An additional

multitasking while driving have yet to change. Clearly, reducing the number of distracted drivers will take more than the efforts of law enforcement alone.

Preventing the hundreds of thousands of life-altering crashes caused by distracted driving begins with each individual deciding to focus on driving safely each time he or she enters a vehicle. And it is the responsibility of passengers, friends, and family members to speak up when they observe distracted driving.

After numerous surgeries and a lengthy rehab, Aaron has regained much of his mobility and considers himself lucky to be alive. "You don't think it's going to happen to you. I heard how many times in my life that texting and driving was dangerous, but obviously I was still doing it," he says. "If the text is that important, pull over. It's not worth your life. You might not be as fortunate as I was."

# Elements of Persuasive Writing

Let's examine closely the way this author uses the modes of persuasion (ethos, pathos, and logos) to craft a persuasive article. Use a separate sheet of paper as needed.

»»» What is the author's central idea and purpose in writing this article?

---

---

---

»»» **ETHOS: Establishing your credibility on the topic.** How does the author establish credibility in her article? Cite specific examples from the text.

---

---

---

»»» **PATHOS: Connecting to your audience on an emotional level.** How does the author evoke an emotional response from her readers? Cite specific examples from the text.

---

---

---

»»» **LOGOS: Using logic to persuade your audience.** These are the facts and figures used to support a writer's claims or thesis. Effective use of logos also benefits the author's ethos. How is the use of logos demonstrated in the article? Cite specific examples from the text.

---

---

---

»»» **CRITICAL RESPONSE:** Do you think the author's use of ethos, pathos, and logos in her article was effective? Why or why not? How did these techniques strengthen her argument? How did these techniques make her article more engaging? Is there anything you would change about the article to make it even more persuasive?

---

---

---

# Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

**Ethos, Pathos and Logos are modes of persuasion used to convince audiences. They are also referred to as the three artistic proofs (Aristotle coined the terms), and are all represented by Greek words.**

**Ethos** or the ethical appeal, means to convince an audience of the author's credibility or character. An author would use ethos to show to his audience that he is a credible source and is worth listening to. Ethos is the Greek word for "character." The word "ethic" is derived from ethos.



Ethos can be developed by choosing language that is appropriate for the audience and topic (also means choosing proper level of vocabulary), making yourself sound fair or unbiased, introducing your expertise or pedigree, and by using correct grammar and syntax.

**Pathos** or the emotional appeal, means to persuade an audience by appealing to their emotions.

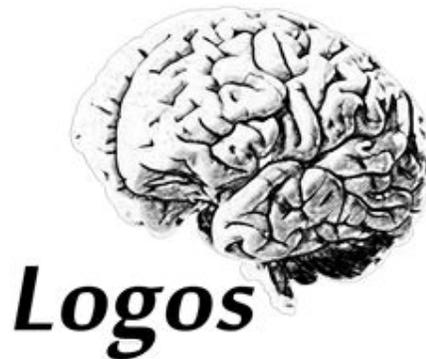
Authors use pathos to invoke sympathy from an audience; to make the audience feel what the author wants them to feel. A common use of pathos would be to draw pity from an audience. Another use of pathos would be to inspire anger from an audience; perhaps in order to prompt action. Pathos is the Greek word for both "suffering" and "experience." The words empathy and pathetic are derived from pathos.



Pathos can be developed by using meaningful language, emotional tone, emotion evoking examples, stories of emotional events, and implied meanings.

**Logos** or the appeal to logic, means to convince an audience by use of logic or reason.

To use logos would be to cite facts and statistics, historical and literal analogies, and citing certain authorities on a subject. Logos is the Greek word for “word,” however the true definition goes beyond that, and can be most closely described as “the word or that by which the inward thought is expressed, Lat. oratio; and, the inward thought itself, Lat. Ratio. (1) The word “logic” is derived from logos.



Logos can be developed by using advanced, theoretical or abstract language, citing facts (very important), using historical and literal analogies, and by constructing logical arguments.

**In order to persuade your audience, proper of Ethos, Pathos and Logos is necessary.**

# Examples of Ethos, Pathos and Logos

Here are some examples of ethos, pathos, and logos.

## Appeals to Ethos

- "As a doctor, I am qualified to tell you that this course of treatment will likely generate the best results."
- "My three decades of experience in public service, my tireless commitment to the people of this community, and my willingness to reach across the aisle and cooperate with the opposition, make me the ideal candidate for your mayor."
- "You know me – I've taught Sunday School at your church for years, babysat your children, and served as a playground director for many summers."
- "Based on the dozens of archaeological expeditions I've made all over the world, I am confident that those potsherds are Mesopotamian in origin."
- "If my age doesn't convince you that my opinion matters, at least consider that I am your grandfather and I love you dearly."
- "Doctors all over the world recommend this type of treatment."

## Appeals to Pathos

- "I'm not just invested in this community – I love every building, every business, every hard-working member of this town."
- "There's no price that can be placed on peace of mind. Our advanced security systems will protect the well-being of your family so that you can sleep soundly at night."

- "Where would we be without this tradition? Ever since our forefathers landed at Plymouth Rock, we've celebrated Thanksgiving without fail, making more than cherished recipes. We've made memories."
- "Don't be the last person on the block to have their lawn treated – you don't want to be the laughing stock of your community!"
- "You'll make the right decision because you have something that not many people do: you have heart."
- "You will never be satisfied in life if you don't seize this opportunity. Do you want to live the rest of your years yearning to know what would have happened if you just acted when you had the chance?"

## **Appeals to Logos**

- "The data is perfectly clear: this investment has consistently turned a profit year-over-year, even in spite of market declines in other areas."
- "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: we have not only the fingerprints, the lack of an alibi, a clear motive, and an expressed desire to commit the robbery... We also have video of the suspect breaking in. The case could not be more open and shut."
- "It's a matter of common sense that people deserve to be treated equally. The Constitution calls it 'self-evident.' Why, then, should I have been denied a seat because of my disability?"
- "More than one hundred peer-reviewed studies have been conducted over the past decade, and none of them suggests that this is an effective treatment for hair loss."
- "The algorithms have been run in a thousand different ways, and the math continues to check out."
- "In 25 years of driving the same route, I haven't seen a single deer."