

what is a concession in writing

what is a concession in writing is a fundamental rhetorical strategy used to acknowledge opposing viewpoints or counterarguments within a text. This technique is essential for creating balanced, persuasive, and credible writing by demonstrating an awareness of differing perspectives. Understanding what a concession in writing entails helps writers build trust with their readers, enhance the strength of their arguments, and refine the clarity of their message. Concessions are often employed in academic essays, debates, opinion pieces, and other forms of persuasive communication. This article explores the definition, purpose, types, examples, and best practices related to concessions in writing, offering a comprehensive guide to mastering this vital element of effective argumentation. The following sections cover these aspects in detail to provide a thorough understanding of how concessions function within written discourse.

- Definition and Purpose of a Concession in Writing
- Types of Concessions
- How to Effectively Use a Concession
- Examples of Concessions in Writing
- Common Mistakes to Avoid When Using Concessions

Definition and Purpose of a Concession in Writing

A concession in writing is an acknowledgment of a point made by an opponent or an opposing argument that may contradict the writer's main claim. It is a rhetorical device used to demonstrate fairness and open-mindedness by recognizing valid aspects of the opposing side. This technique helps to build credibility and establish a more nuanced argument by showing the writer has considered multiple aspects of the issue.

The primary purpose of a concession is to preempt objections and defuse potential criticism by admitting that not all points in an argument are absolute. It can also serve to strengthen the writer's position by contrast, as after conceding a minor or less critical point, the writer can emphasize why their main argument remains valid and compelling. In summary, a concession fosters a balanced discussion and encourages critical thinking, making the overall writing more persuasive and thoughtful.

Types of Concessions

Concessions in writing can take various forms depending on the context and the nature of the argument. Understanding different types of concessions enables writers to select the most appropriate strategy for their specific communicative goals.

Partial Concession

A partial concession acknowledges that an opposing viewpoint has some truth but argues that it is limited or outweighed by other evidence. This type of concession maintains the writer's overall stance while showing respect for the complexity of the issue.

Full Concession

In a full concession, the writer admits that the opposing argument is entirely correct or valid. This approach is often used when the writer wants to appear especially honest and credible or when the concession serves to highlight an even stronger point elsewhere in the argument.

Concession with a Counterargument

This involves conceding a point but immediately following it with a rebuttal or counterargument. It is a strategic way to acknowledge opposing views while reinforcing the writer's primary position.

Concession by Qualification

Here, the writer makes a concession but qualifies it by specifying conditions or limitations that restrict the opposing argument's applicability or relevance.

How to Effectively Use a Concession

Using concessions effectively requires careful consideration of the argument's structure and the audience's expectations. When applied appropriately, concessions can enhance the clarity, persuasiveness, and sophistication of writing.

Recognize Valid Points

Identify aspects of the opposing argument that are reasonable or partially correct. This recognition shows intellectual honesty and can prevent your writing from appearing biased or one-sided.

Use Concessions to Build Credibility

Admitting opposing viewpoints demonstrates fairness and critical thinking, which increases the writer's credibility in the eyes of the reader.

Balance Concessions with Strong Arguments

After conceding a point, reinforce your main argument by providing stronger evidence or reasoning. This balance prevents the concession from weakening your position.

Use Appropriate Language and Transitions

Employ clear and precise language to introduce concessions, such as “although,” “while it is true that,” “granted,” or “admittedly.” These transitions signal to the reader that a concession is being made thoughtfully.

Place Concessions Strategically

Concessions are often most effective when placed early in an argument to anticipate objections or near the end to address counterpoints before concluding.

Examples of Concessions in Writing

Examining examples of concessions provides practical insight into how this rhetorical device functions within different contexts.

- **Example 1:** “While it is true that social media can contribute to decreased face-to-face interactions, it also provides unprecedented opportunities for global communication and community building.”
- **Example 2:** “Granted, the policy may present some short-term economic challenges; however, its long-term benefits for environmental sustainability outweigh these concerns.”
- **Example 3:** “Although some critics argue that the novel lacks depth, its innovative narrative structure has received widespread acclaim.”
- **Example 4:** “Admittedly, the experiment had a limited sample size, but the results align with previous research and offer valuable insights.”

Common Mistakes to Avoid When Using Concessions

Even experienced writers can misuse concessions, which may weaken their arguments or confuse readers if not handled correctly.

Overusing Concessions

Excessive concessions can make the writer appear indecisive or overly accommodating, diminishing the overall impact of the argument.

Conceding Critical Points

Avoid conceding points that undermine the central thesis or key evidence, as this can weaken the argument significantly.

Poor Placement of Concessions

Placing concessions awkwardly or without clear transitions may confuse readers and disrupt the flow of the writing.

Lack of Follow-Up

Failing to follow a concession with a counterargument or explanation can leave the concession unbalanced and potentially harmful to the writer's position.

Inappropriate Language

Using vague or weak language when making concessions may reduce their effectiveness and make the writer appear unsure.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a concession in writing?

A concession in writing is a rhetorical strategy where the writer acknowledges a point made by the opposing side to demonstrate fairness and understanding before presenting their own argument.

Why is concession important in argumentative writing?

Concession is important because it shows the writer's ability to recognize different perspectives, which can make their argument more credible and persuasive to the audience.

How does a concession differ from a counterargument?

A concession involves admitting a valid point from the opposing side, while a counterargument directly challenges or refutes the opposing viewpoint.

Can you give an example of a concession in a sentence?

Sure! For example: 'Although some people believe that video games are harmful, studies show they can improve cognitive skills.' Here, the writer concedes the opposing view before presenting their own.

How do writers effectively use concessions to strengthen their arguments?

Writers use concessions to acknowledge valid points from the opposition, which helps to build trust with readers and set up a stronger rebuttal or explanation supporting their own stance.

Is concession used only in persuasive essays?

No, concession can be used in various types of writing, including persuasive essays, debates, speeches, and academic papers, wherever acknowledging opposing views can enhance credibility.

What phrases are commonly used to introduce a concession in writing?

Common phrases include 'although,' 'even though,' 'while it is true that,' 'admittedly,' and 'it is often said that.' These signal the acknowledgment of an opposing point.

Does making a concession weaken the writer's argument?

Not necessarily. When used effectively, concessions can actually strengthen the argument by showing the writer's openness to other viewpoints and their ability to engage critically with them.

How can concession help in resolving conflicts in writing?

Concession helps resolve conflicts by finding common ground between opposing views and reducing hostility, making it easier to persuade readers and foster understanding.

Additional Resources

1. They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing

This book by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein introduces the concept of concession as a rhetorical strategy that acknowledges opposing viewpoints. It provides templates and examples that help writers effectively incorporate concessions to strengthen their arguments. The text is widely used in academic settings to teach persuasive writing techniques.

2. Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion

Jay Heinrichs explores classical rhetoric, including the use of concession to build ethos and engage audiences. The book explains how conceding a point can make an argument more persuasive by showing fairness and understanding. It's a practical guide for anyone looking to improve their argumentative skills.

3. Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process

Peter Elbow emphasizes the importance of acknowledging counterarguments and concessions in writing. His approach encourages writers to embrace complexity and nuance, which concessions help to achieve. The book offers strategies to make writing more dynamic and convincing.

4. Elements of Argument: A Text and Reader

Annette T. Rottenberg and Donna Haisty Winchell provide a comprehensive overview of argumentation, including the role of concessions. The text explains how concessions can be used to address objections and build trust with readers. It combines theory with practical examples to guide students in developing balanced arguments.

5. *They Say, I Say: Moves That Matter in Academic Writing with Readings*

An expanded edition of Graff and Birkenstein's work, this book includes additional readings demonstrating the use of concessions in various contexts. It highlights how conceding to opposing views can enhance the writer's credibility. The book serves as both a textbook and a resource for refining argumentative writing.

6. *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects*

Martha Kolln discusses how grammatical structures, including concessive clauses, function rhetorically to create emphasis and nuance. The book helps writers understand the subtle ways concessions can be embedded within sentences. It is particularly useful for those looking to deepen their grasp of language mechanics in persuasive writing.

7. *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates*

Mike Wallace and Alison Wray address the importance of concession in scholarly writing, especially at the postgraduate level. They explain how acknowledging limitations and alternative perspectives can enhance academic credibility. The book offers practical advice for integrating concessions seamlessly into research writing.

8. *Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings*

John D. Ramage, John C. Bean, and June Johnson explore argumentation strategies, including the effective use of concessions. They provide examples showing how conceding points can prevent alienating readers and strengthen an argument's overall impact. The book is widely used in composition courses.

9. *The Craft of Research*

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams discuss the role of concession in presenting research findings and engaging with scholarly debates. The authors emphasize that conceding opposing viewpoints demonstrates thoroughness and intellectual honesty. This guide is essential for researchers aiming to write compelling and credible papers.

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