

# Advice to graduates essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## “ Advice to Graduates”

George Saunders convocation speech, “ Congratulations, by the way” was delivered at Syracuse University for the class of 2013. In this speech, George aims to convince his audience that we are going to have a lot of regrets in our lives but the one we will regret most is the failures of unkindness. In order to live a full happy life we need to become kinder. Saunders says, “ All we want in our hearts is to be less selfish, more aware of what’s actually happening in the present moment, more open, and more loving.” Ethos, pathos, logos, kairos and style are all appeal techniques George Saunders skillfully uses to create a strong, convincing speech.

At the end of May, George Saunders gives some insightful words of advice to graduates. He asks them what they would regret when they got older looking back on time. He tells them a story about a girl named Ellen that was made fun of when she was younger and then out of nowhere she moved away. Saunders tells us what he regrets. His biggest regret was failures of unkindness. He says we can do worse in life than try to be kinder. He says the million dollar question is why aren’t we kinder? He says the second million dollar question is how do we become kinder? He says kindness is hard and it comes naturally when you become older because you have fewer reasons to be selfish, but why do you want to wait until you’re old? Start now! You will diminish and you will grow in love. If you have kids you want them to benefit. He tells us we have to take ourselves seriously and since our lives will be a gradual process of being kinder then hurry it up.

Right from the get go, reading Saunders speech, it was very easy to follow. The way he wrote it made it very clear to understand. In the speech there

<https://assignbuster.com/advice-to-graduates-essay-sample/>

was detailed and solid context. Because of this, I feel like his speech could apply and help a more vast audience.

When reading George Saunders speech, I wondered what made him credible and why he had the authority to give this speech. The appeal technique that applied to this was ethos. The ethical appeal of ethos is to define a writer's credibility and or authority. First off, to show that he is credible I did a little research and found out George is 54 years old so he must have a lot of life knowledge and school smart knowledge. He attended college universities and received two degrees; creative writing and engineering. Due to his degree in creative writing George Saunders has become an exquisite author. He has written dozens of novels and some of them have been titled New York Times bestseller. Based off of this information I would say that Mr. Saunders is more than credible to be writing and delivering a speech on “ kindness” to graduates.

Another ethical appeal technique that George Saunders uses to create an effective speech is pathos. Pathos is defined as the emotions that affect the audience. As a reader of his speech I could tell that this was his main way to draw the audience in. He portrayed the use of pathos through personal anecdotes and humor. At the beginning of the speech, right off the back he refers to himself as an “ old fart.” Then he tells us a story about how he swam in monkey feces. This is his way of letting his audience know that this is going to be a serious topic but he will be giving it in a funny relaxed way. By starting off like this it has already engaged the audience and they want to continue listening. Later on in George Saunders speech, He tells the audience a personal anecdote. The story is about how when he was younger

<https://assignbuster.com/advice-to-graduates-essay-sample/>

there was a girl named Ellen who got made fun of. He was not one of the people being mean. One day she just left and he tells us he regrets not being kinder. By telling the audience his personal story, it not only makes Saunders seem more credible but it gets the emotion across better to the audience so they can connect at a more personal level.

Next, George Saunders enforced the use of logos in his speech to present logic to his audience and readers. The ethical appeal logos is defined as the logic or evidence used to establish trust in the writing. Logos was incorporated in his speech when he called himself an “ old fart.” Someone who is old and has a lot of years behind them tends to have gone through a lot and had many experiences. Also, they have had a lot of regrets and wisdom. Finally, the last piece of logos George Saunders uses in his speech is how he keeps referring to the word kindness. He was trying to get the point across that kindness is the road to a life full of pleasure and no regrets.

Something I believe that George Saunders lacked in his speech is his uses of kairos. The only time I can think of that he used this was when he was telling the personal anecdote about how in seventh grade kids were making fun of a girl named Ellen and then how he mentioned the lack of kindness as his main argument of his speech. I feel like although kairos is one of the least used ethical appeals by him incorporating it into his speech a little more it would have boosted it and made it even better than it already is.

The last technique I feel George Saunders used to create a convincing speech was his style. His word choices, phrases and sentences made a very sturdy claim and argument. It was very smooth not choppy which made the

speech very easy for the audience to follow. George Saunders used humor and personal anecdotes to show the audience what his style is. He was very consistent with his style throughout his speech. His style was very informal and personal. He made it this way by using small easy words and humor, and also he told personal stories about himself to connect with the audience and show them it was a very important topic but a very relaxed delivery. George Saunders had a very strict, clear tone for his paper.

His tone was mostly threatening like. When he talked about how people were lacking kindness his voice was very destructive and intrusive. Overall, Saunders had a very distinct tone and voice throughout that helped contribute to the speech to make it effective. More important than the functions of the techniques he uses independently is how Saunders uses them together. For example, if he straight up stated early in his speech that “ if we don’t try to be kinder then we won’t live a full, happy life,” without preceding it without a personal anecdote, humor or honesty then a quite different effect would have been created. His audience, college graduates, would have undoubtedly been uninterested. This approach would certainly have prevented the essay from being convincing. It is obvious that Saunders purposely used the techniques in a planned way. This allowed him to create a specifically designed speech that was beneficial and effective in helping him present his ideas.