



Kairos

What is *kairos*?

Kairos is an author's effort to present an effective message at an opportune time. Strong appeals to *Kairos* help convince the audience that the message is valuable and relevant. When authors fail to take *kairos* into account, they risk losing credibility and purpose. In academia, researchers in areas such as biology and engineering rely on timely findings, so attention to *kairos* is critical. Even disciplines such as history and literary studies must address current trends or ongoing conversations in their field.

How can you judge the effectiveness of an author's use of *kairos*?

Ask yourself if the author selected an opportune time to write on the topic or if it is too early or too late to address it. Is the author's argument relevant to current events or effectively contributing to the current discussion? If not, readers will likely regard the text as lacking in both innovation and significance.

Examples of *kairos*

- Have you ever needed to convince your professor to extend a deadline on a final project? If you have turned in the last two assignments late, then the timing isn't right to ask for an extension. However, if you have good attendance, class participation, and communication for the whole semester, then you are making good use of *kairos* with your request.
- *Kairos* is even useful in producing pop culture. For example, in 1963, part of the *Iron Man* comic was set in Vietnam. However, in the 2008 *Iron Man* movie, the location changed to Afghanistan. Keeping the original location would have been a less effective use of *kairos* for a 2008 audience, because the U.S. military was no longer active in Vietnam. However, at the time it was active in Afghanistan.
- Have you ever noticed that charity organizations ask for money around the Christmas season? Why do they choose this time of year to reach out for help? The timing and context (*kairos*) make the season conducive for fundraising. These organizations understand that people are in a giving mood during this season, so charities are more likely to get the help they need.
- A local business launches a billboard ad campaign, and some members of the community find the message offensive. A week later, a concerned citizen writes a letter to the editor of the local newspaper stating why he thinks the billboard should be taken down. If the citizen had waited a year to state his opinion, his use of *kairos* would have been ineffective and the audience uninterested or confused.

A key takeaway is this: An effective message comes at the right time, not too early or too late, and in the right context for the chosen audience.