

LESSON FOUR: Types of Essays - Argumentative

The Argumentative Essay

Creating strong arguments is a necessary skill both inside and outside of college. It is necessary to be able to recognize different sides of controversial issues, to be able to defend one's opinion, and to persuade the audience of that opinion.

An argumentative essay is an attempt to *convince* the readers that a certain point-of-view on a topic is or is not correct. It expresses an opinion about a controversial issue, and the writer must take a position and persuade the reader to agree with the opinion by using strong logical arguments, evidence, and examples to support that opinion.

To convince the audience, your essay must be *balanced*—it must include your *viewpoint* and the *opposing viewpoint*, or *counterargument*. Even though you are arguing only one side of an issue, you must think about what the other side would say about your opinion. After you give *the counterargument*, you must *refute* it by showing that it is wrong. If your essay is balanced, a reader is more likely to agree with you.

In an argumentative essay: You have to (1) state your opinion, (2) give reasons to support your opinion, and (3) argue against the opposite opinion.

1. The Argumentative Essay Structure:

1.1. Introduction

- **The hook:** introduces the issue.
- **Background information:** gives a broader picture of the issue and why it is important. It can give details about the history of the people involved, what they want, and how it affects them.
- **Thesis Statement:** It should provide a clear statement of the writers argument position about the issue at hand.

1.2. Body Paragraphs

The topic sentence in each body paragraph presents one distinct reason for the writer's point of view stated in the thesis. All supporting details in each paragraph must support the topic sentence. These details can be facts, examples, statistics, definitions, causes and effects, quotations, anecdotes, or questions.

The writer often presents an opposing opinion (**a counter-argument**); however, the writer may then express some agreement with the opposing view (**a concession**), but will show evidence that the argument is stronger (**a refutation**).

1.3. Conclusion

The conclusion restates the argument that appeared in the thesis. It can end with a prediction, a warning, or other type of comment that reinforces the writer's viewpoint. It can also be a synthesis, or a call to action.

INTRODUCTION	Paragraph 1	Hook Connecting/Background Information Main idea Statement/Thesis Statement
BODY	Paragraph 2	Support 1 (first reason) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explanation, detail, example
	Paragraph 3	Support 2 (second reason) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explanation, detail, example
	Paragraph 4	Support 3 (third reason) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explanation, detail, example
	Paragraph 5	Opposite Side <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counterargument 1• Refutation (ATTACK)• Counterargument 2• Refutation (ATTACK)
CONCLUSION	Paragraph 6	Repeat your thesis statement in different words Suggestion/Opinion/Prediction for the future

2. Counter-Argument, Concession, and Refutation

To make an argumentative essay strong, the writer includes a counter-argument, a refutation, and concession.

•**The counter-argument** is the writer's opinion about the opposing point of view. It gives reasons why the writer's point of view makes sense. By including the counter-argument, the writer shows an understanding of the opposing point of view.

•**In a concession** the writer agrees that the opposing point of view is valid, but emphasizes how his or her argument is still stronger.

•**The refutation** is the writer's response to the counter-argument. In the refutation, the writer shows why the counter-argument is weak and his or her position is strong. The refutation may also address doubts the reader may have about the writer's position.

Example:

Counter-argument: Some students may argue that because of their situation, they sometimes have no choice but to buy essays off the Internet.

Concession: I understand that students are under a lot of pressure to produce well-written essays in order to pass their classes, but this does not justify plagiarism.

Refutation: If they plagiarize, they will not develop their own writing and critical thinking skills. As a result, they may not be prepared to pass their final exams. In the end, plagiarizing is harmful to the student's own

3. Organization of an argumentative Essay:

3.1. Block organization:

In this type of organization, the introduction explains the controversy surrounding the topic, and states your position concerning the topic (Thesis statement).

The first block of paragraphs presents the counter-argument, and its supporting evidence and explanation, while the second block should present the writer's argument, evidence, and examples. The conclusion should present a summary of your own argument.

This approach suits shorter papers (essays) and issues that are not very complex.

3.2. point-by-point Organization:

The introduction explains the controversy surrounding the topic, and states your position concerning the topic (Thesis statement).

In each paragraph you state a claim from the other side (counter-argument), followed by your own argument and refutation.

The conclusion should restate your view points and sum up your arguments and often includes a call to action.

This suits best longer papers or essays where it is necessary to examine the issue in depth

4. Language Focus: Connectors to Show Addition and Contrast

In order to construct a strong argument, it may be necessary to provide additional information, or to contrast different pieces of information. Addition and contrast connectors link ideas between two main clauses and clarify the relationships between ideas.

Connectors That Show Addition

- Use the connectors *furthermore*, *in addition*, or *moreover*, etc to indicate additional information.

Connectors That Show Contrast

In order to make your argumentative essay as persuasive as possible, you will need to contrast two points of view effectively.

- Use the connectors *nevertheless*, *however*, *whereas*, etc. to show contrast.
- When the clauses are joined in one sentence, the connector is always preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma.

E.g. Students who struggle with their writing might be tempted to plagiarize; *however*, it is crucial that they do their own work.

- A contrast connector may also begin a separate sentence. In this case it is followed by a comma.

E.g. *Nevertheless*, Students who struggle with writing their papers might be tempted to plagiarize.

Breaking the Rules

College and high school students often look for shortcuts to make their work easier. To achieve a good grade, students are sometimes tempted to cheat. One of the most frequent ways of cheating is to buy essays off the Internet. This may result in a good grade. However, plagiarism is irresponsible from a social and an academic standpoint.

First, plagiarism is socially unacceptable. Students are expected by teachers and their classmates to do their own work. If a student plagiarizes, he or she violates that trust. This may damage the relationship between the student and the teacher, as well as the relationship with classmates. I remember once when a student was discovered to have plagiarized his essay. We were mad that our classmate had lied to us. It was an embarrassment for everyone—the institution, the instructor and the student—to discover that he had been cheating all along.

Plagiarism is also wrong because it is against academic policy. Even though buying essays and presenting them as your own may save time initially, this practice is against university rules. In fact, universities have ways to prove if students have plagiarized. Instructors can use software that compares a student essay and material on the Internet. This way, instructors can detect if a particular essay was copied. The consequences are very serious. I remember when one of my classmates started buying essays to prove that he was an excellent student. After the final exam, our instructor found his essay on a website and the student was expelled.

It is true that many students at community colleges have busy schedules and may have trouble completing their assignments on time. Some students may argue that because of their situation, they sometimes have no choice but to buy essays off the Internet. However, buying essays off the Internet should never be the solution. Instead, students might try to negotiate the deadline with their instructor. Furthermore, while writing may be a struggle for some students who feel that their writing is not good enough to receive an A, it is crucial that they do their own work. They may go to a writing center for help. Otherwise, if they plagiarize, they will not develop their own writing and critical thinking skills. As a result, they may not be prepared to pass their final exams. In the end, plagiarizing is harmful to a student's own academic success.

I believe that university authorities should discourage plagiarism by making students more aware of the problems it causes. Plagiarism damages classroom relationships. It also violates school policies and prevents students from realizing their own potential. If we do not stop plagiarism, many students will lose out on their education.

Answer the following:

- How would you describe the writer's personal feelings about people who plagiarize? What makes you say that?

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- Do you agree or disagree with the writer? Write your opinion and reasons below.

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- Did the writer influence your position? If so, which point influenced you the most ?

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- Circle and label the hook.

- Underline the thesis Statement. Then rewrite it in your own words.

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- What kind of supporting details are used in body paragraph 2?

a. facts b. causes and effects c. statistics d. an anecdote

- In body paragraph 3, the writer presents an opposing opinion. Rewrite it in your own words.

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- How many reasons has the writer restated in the conclusion? Underline the reasons.