



Writing an Argument

What Is an Argumentative Essay?

An **argumentative essay** is a type of writing that requires a writer to support a position on a topic using evidence from literature, historical examples, research or personal experience to support her viewpoint. The writer usually uses several different arguments to prove her point.

Getting Started:

To write an argument essay, you'll need to gather evidence and present a well-reasoned argument on a debatable issue.

How Do You Choose a Debatable Issue?

Ask yourself:

- How many people could argue against my position? What would they say?
- Can it be addressed with a yes or no? (aim for a topic that requires more info.)
- Can I base my argument on scholarly evidence?
- Have I made my argument specific enough?

How Do I Create a Strong Thesis?

- Write a thesis that is focused and debatable.
- Pick a side in your thesis and make claims.
 - Argue a position not a statement of fact.

Focused

Example 1: “Americans should cut back on their participation in the fast food industry because a fast food diet can lead to many health-related issues like obesity, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure.”

Debatable

The example above is targeted towards a specific group instead of a general audience. By doing this, the topic is more focused and clear to your readers.

Picks a Side

Example 2: “The homeless population in Chicago should be given access to more services like food donations, shelters, and public restrooms because it would make the environment better throughout the entire city.”

Makes Claims

This example shows a thesis statement that is debatable. People can argue for or against this statement. Opponents could easily argue that homeless people in Berkeley already receive adequate services, or perhaps that they shouldn't be entitled to services at all.

Example 3: Poverty affects many Americans.

The thesis above states an inarguable fact or observation. While the writer could find evidence and examples to support this statement, very few people would argue against this writer's claim. To make this thesis more specific and argumentative, this writer could try to elaborate on why or how poverty affects so many Americans.

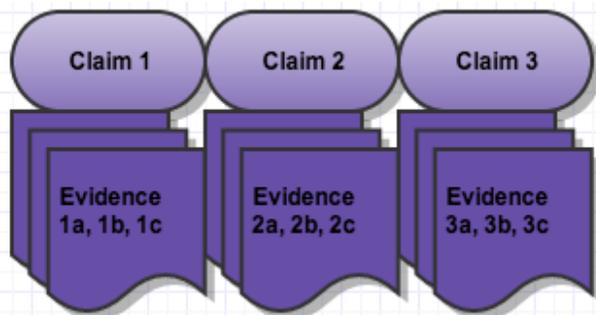


Dos and Don'ts of Writing an Argument

Dos	Don'ts
Do use passionate language.	Don't use weak qualifiers like "I believe," "I feel," or "I think."
Do cite experts who agree with you.	Don't claim to be an expert if you're not one.
Do provide facts, evidence, and statistics to support your position.	Don't use strictly moral or religious claims as support for your argument.
Do provide reasons to support your claim.	Don't assume the audience will agree with you about any aspect of your argument.
Do address the opposing side's argument and refute their claims.	Don't attempt to make others look bad. (i.e. Mr. Smith is ignorant—don't listen to him!)

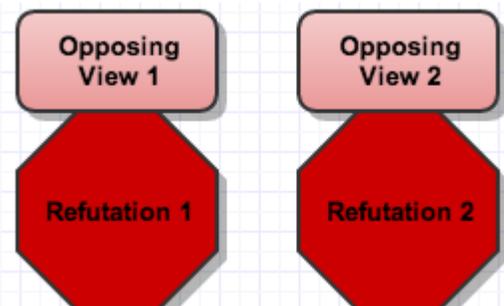
Evidential Support

- Evidential support can be factual, logical, statistical, or anecdotal.
- The argumentative essay requires well-researched, accurate, detailed, and current information to support the thesis statement and consider other points of view.
- A successful and well-rounded argumentative essay will discuss opinions not aligning with the thesis because the opposing ideas on the topic will be addressed.



The image to the right shows your opposing views and your refutations. In other words, your refutations are how you counteract the opposing views.

The image to the left shows the multiple claims you want included in your paper and how much evidence can be used to support your claims.





How to Organize an Argumentative Essay

Here are several different outlines you can use to help organize your argumentative essay. These models can and should be adapted to suit the writer's needs and number of claims.

Outline I - standard format for an argumentative essay

Introduction/Thesis-Claim

Body Paragraph 1: Present your 1st point and supporting evidence.

Body Paragraph 2: Present your 2nd point and its supporting evidence.

Body Paragraph 3: Refute your opposition's first point.

Body Paragraph 4: Refute your opposition's second point.

Outline II - format that presents the opposition first as a means to demonstrate the significance of your solution (debate)

Introduction/Thesis-Claim

Body Paragraph 1: Refute your opposition's first point.

Body Paragraph 2: Refute your opposition's second point.

Body Paragraph 3: Present your first point and supporting evidence.

Body Paragraph 4: Present your second point and supporting evidence.

Conclusion/Restate Thesis

Outline III - introduce the problem and present your solution format

Introduction/Thesis-Claim

Body Paragraph 1: Present your first point and its supporting evidence, which also refutes one of your opposition's claims.

Body Paragraph 2: Present your second point and its supporting evidence, which also refutes a second opposition claim.

Body Paragraph 3: Present your third point and its supporting evidence, which also refutes a third opposition claim.

Conclusion/Restate Thesis

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library, or call 815-836-5427