

THE ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

Writing which expresses the author's opinions and argues in favor of them is *argumentative writing*. Newspaper editorials and the commentaries of some television and radio personalities are often argumentative. Students occasionally use argumentative writing on class tests when asked to give an opinion and to support it with facts learned in the course. The purpose of argumentative writing is to persuade.

An argumentative essay usually begins with a statement of *opinion* to be supported by paragraphs. This statement is the central idea or *thesis*. There are several ways to support opinion. Perhaps the most commonly used is the listing of facts or examples (evidence) in support of opinion. A writer may also prove a point by giving *reasonable arguments* reached through logical thinking. (Note that an argument differs from an opinion because an opinion is based solely on personal judgment while an argument is based on logical reasoning.) A combination of evidence and reasonable arguments is the most effective way to develop the essay. At the end of the essay, the writer must add a *summarizing paragraph* (conclusion) to clinch important points.

Following is the order of ideas in an argumentative essay from lesser to greater importance, saving the most powerful arguments and most convincing evidence until last, the climax.

Introductory Paragraph	→	State argument.
1st Body Paragraph	→	Recognize opposition.
2nd Body Paragraph	→	Build up case. Use facts, logic, authorities. Include sources in support of theme whenever possible. Use direct quotes, if possible.
Last Body Paragraph	→	State most powerful argument. Include emotion, if necessary.
Concluding Paragraph	→	Summarize and restate argument.

GUIDELINES FOR AN EFFECTIVE ARGUMENT

1. Avoid a one-sided or biased argument. Anticipate realistic objections, giving the opposition a fair representation, by examining both pros and cons of your thesis.
2. Have a clear and unambiguous thesis statement. Make sure that the reader is not confused by an overly general thesis.
3. Write an objective thesis statement. A subjective thesis (or an *I believe* statement) will not convince your reader of anything but your opinion.
4. Avoid controversial supporting arguments. A thesis supported by "hot" topics will not be taken seriously by the reader.
5. Express ideas as solid statements, not questions. Opponents will have answers for questions.
6. When including quotations, use neutral sources for evidence. A biased source will not be recognized by the opposition.
7. Avoid hasty generalizations (conclusions based on insufficient or biased evidence), red herrings (diversionary tactics that avoid the key issues), and other logical fallacies (or errors in reasoning). For more information on logical fallacies, please see an LTC tutor.

VOCABULARY FOR THE ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

As with any essay, an argumentative essay would be very boring if the same vocabulary is used throughout. In the table below are a variety of words that will add interest to an argumentative paper.

Supporters	=	Proponents Those in favor of Defenders Advocates
Opponents	=	Those opposed to Critics Objectors
Supporters/Opponents say that	=	Argue Claim Maintain Assert Contend Allege Insist Suggest Point out

An argumentative essay must also contain *transitions* that work to effectively convince the reader of the author's point.

To add to the essay's coherence, use the following transitional words: moreover, first, second, third, finally, furthermore, in addition, then, too, equally important, on the contrary, at the same time, hence, therefore, accordingly, thus, in fact, consequently, as a result.

SAMPLE OUTLINE FORMAT

Thesis Statement: _____

- I. Objections & Answers
(i.e. presentation of opposition's arguments & responses to them)
- II. Supporting Argument 1
 - A. Example
 - B. Explanation
- III. Supporting Argument 2
 - A. Example
 - B. Explanation
- IV. Supporting Argument 3
 - A. Example
 - B. Explanation