

ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO?

- a. State your assertion/claim/thesis.
- b. Support claim drawing on all you know/have read about the subject
- c. **Acknowledge and respond to real or possible opposing views. (Counterarguments)**
- d. Make final comment or conclusion, extending it to the “real world.” – “Big Global Issue”

STRATEGIES

1. WORK THE PROMPT (KNOW THE QUESTION)

Carefully read and deconstruct the prompt. A successful essay will depend on your thorough understanding of what is expected of you. Underline key ideas, concepts, etc.

2. THINK ABOUT YOUR SUPPORT/POSITION (PRE-WRITE)

What are the best arguments **against my position**; how will I address those? What sources give me material to use in my counterargument?

List specific examples that support the **assertion** (agree/defend) **and** that challenge the assertion (disagree/find fault). This gives ample evidence to defend your position. Make sure your support is in the form of:

- Facts/statistics (history/sciences/arts/ universal truths)
- Definitions
- Examples
- Cause and effect
- Details/anecdotes

3. DEVELOP THE OPENING PARAGRAPH

- **Attention Getter**: Shocking statement, generalization, brief anecdote... etc.
 - **Restate the assertion/claim in your own words! Extremely Important!!!!**
- **Transition, with brief statement of opposing side’s position** (counterargument already on your pre-writing). Quickly & briefly acknowledge “main point” from opposition...and **REFUTE IT!** (Transition using *However, Nonetheless, Nevertheless, Notwithstanding*...detailing your position.)

Other ways to state from opposing view to yours

- It is true...but
 - Proponents realize/agree...yet they believe...
 - Supporters recognize....; still, they do not acknowledge
 - Certainly.... despite these claims
 - Granted...in contrast...
- **Thesis: Claim + Why**

State your position (thesis) relative to the prompt as it is asked (i.e., rather than saying “I think the death penalty is wrong,” say something like “Smith is wrong in his assertion that the death penalty is good public policy (**Claim**) because.... **Why**”)

Avoid using First Person (*I, me*). Avoid using “weak” argument statements such as “I feel... I think.”
State your opinion with authority.

4. DEVELOP THE BODY

■ 1st Body Paragraph: Most Important Paragraph!

- **Claim:** (argument you are using as support for your thesis)
Reason: -- Explains claim and gives further details
- **Evidence:** Supports claim and provides evidence in form of a source or logical progression
- **So What?** Analysis that connects how claim is proven by evidence provided. It moves your claim forward.
- **Transition 1:** (Can be part of refutation for counterclaim. You are *leading the conversation to the next topic*)
- **Counterclaim:** (mention opposing side of your claim BUT **REFUTE IT RIGHT AWAY**. ...**NEVER** should this part be **STRONGER** or **LONGER** than your support and evidence.
- **Transition 2:** (You are basically *leading the conversation to the next body paragraph/claim*)

Transitions you may use

- **Body Paragraphs:** Initially, Furthermore, Ultimately, AND the topic sentence
 - Specific Example: For example, for instance, similarly, moreover, specifically, to illustrate
- **Contrast:** however, nevertheless, on the contrary, conversely, ...
- **Concluding thoughts:** in essence, hence, accordingly, consequently....

****Add commentary/analysis to your examples/evidence.... always provide the "So What??" ****

■ 2nd-4th Body Paragraphs:

- **Claim:** (argument you are using as support for your thesis)
Reason: Explains claim and gives further details
- **Evidence:** Supports claim and provides evidence in form of a source or logical progression
- **So What?:** Analysis that connects how claim is proven by evidence provided. It moves your claim forward.
- **Evidence:** Additional evidence/support for claim in the form of a source or logical progression
- **So What?:** Analysis that connects how claim is proven by evidence provided. It moves claim forward.
- **Transition:** (You are basically *leading the conversation to the next body paragraph/claim or conclusion*)

Build your argument using 2-3 paragraphs in which you adequately develop and support your position with specific examples or elements from the sources. Use your observations, readings, and experiences to build your claim. **Think critically!** Do not summarize, rather analyze the topic.

CONCLUSION

Your last body paragraph should be your strongest.

- **Quickly and briefly reaffirm your claim without re-stating it**
- (If time permits) **Add a challenging statement, question, or insight based on your BGI** (Big Global Issue). You may do this in the form of an analogy, paradoxical truth, metaphor, simile,

+ COMMON PROBLEMS

- Not taking a clear position or wavering between positions
- Being reluctant to engage in verbal combat because "everyone's entitled to his/ her own opinion"
- Slipping out of focus by discussing language and not issues
- Lacking clear connections between claim & the data, and the connection
- Lacking counterarguments
- Summarizing sources instead of using them to build up our claim.