

## How to Write an Argumentative Essay

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Argumentative writing: clearly taking a stand, considering all sides of the issue and writing as if you are trying to persuade an opposing audience to adopt your beliefs or opinions.

### Key Features of an Argumentative Essay

All argumentative essays must:

- contain a thesis statement, which is in effect the author's opinion;
- include both the author's ideas and facts from outside sources that support the author's arguments;
- discuss and rebut the opposing arguments. (*to rebut* means to point out problems and limits with the opposing side's arguments).

### Preparing to Write your Argumentative Essay

In order to prepare your argumentative essay, it is necessary to research the topic, identify different arguments regarding the issue, take a position and develop a thesis. Make sure you use a variety of sources, properly citing them if you quote or paraphrase from them. It is recommended that you prepare an outline of your essay to organize your ideas, paragraphs and the overall structure of your paper.

### The Structure of your Argumentative Essay

#### A. The Introduction

The introduction is meant to attract the reader's interest, to introduce / explain the topic of the essay and give the author's opinion on the topic. It is often organized by giving the most general ideas first and then leading to the most specific idea, which is the author's opinion, otherwise known as the thesis statement. In the introduction, we do not typically ask a question or write a plan (which is quite common when writing in French).

For example:

Marijuana is illegal in most countries around the world. However, in most of these countries there are people who are trying to change the law. For example, voters in California had the chance to vote on legalizing marijuana in their state last year. Similarly, there are people in France who would like to legalize marijuana because they believe that it will reduce crime and help earn money for the state. Yet, marijuana should not be legalized in France because it will cost more money to control it and increase the number of accidents at work and on the road.

#### Writing a Strong Thesis Statement

In an argumentative essay, the thesis statement is the sentence that gives the author's opinion about the topic. It should state a position that can be supported using ideas and facts. It should not state two sides of an argument equally. The thesis statement always gives the author's opinion and may give the reason for this opinion and / or include the opposing viewpoint.

For example:

Sexist language in college textbooks is harmful because it reinforces negative stereotypes about many groups and individuals. (opinion + reason)

Although some people think that curfew laws will help control teenage gangs, they are wrong for several reasons. (opposing viewpoint + opinion)

Despite claims that the death penalty prevents violence and crime, this punishment constitutes a violation of human rights. (opposing viewpoint + opinion + reason)

### B. The Main Body of your Argumentative Essay

The main body paragraphs support your thesis with reasons and rebut the opposing side's arguments in an organized and logical way. How you structure your essay will depend on the topic but the following chart shows two ways which can be used as a guide:

Block Pattern	Point-by-Point Pattern
1. Introduction	1. Introduction
2. Body	2. Body
<u>Block 1</u>	- Summary of the other side's 1 <sup>st</sup> argument, rebuttal, counterargument
- Summary of the other side's arguments (1 paragraph)	- Summary of the other side's 2 <sup>nd</sup> argument, rebuttal, counterargument
- Rebuttals of the arguments (1 rebuttal per paragraph)	- ....
<u>Block 2</u>	3. Conclusion
- Your arguments (1 argument per paragraph)	
3. Conclusion	

Make sure that each paragraph:

- Begins with a sentence or phrase that informs readers of the purpose of the paragraph;
- Contains not only the author's opinion but examples and outside resources, such as statistics and quotations, that support the author's thesis;
- Uses appropriate quotes, with the sources of the quotes clearly identified.

### C. Conclusion

The conclusion restates or gives further commentary on ideas discussed in the essay. This can be done by summarizing the main points of the essay, restating the thesis (using different words), making a final comment about the essay's main idea and / or emphasizing an action that you would like the reader to take. Do not introduce new ideas in a conclusion.

For example:

To summarize, cloning humans is clearly dangerous and unethical. It is one thing to clone a mouse, sheep, or pig but quite another thing to duplicate a human being. Even though scientists claim that their only purpose is to help humanity, ethical people must demand an end to such experiments now.

### Sources

Oshima, A & A. Hogue *Writing Academic English* (Pearson Education, 2006)

D. Zemach & L. Rumisek *Academic Writing From Paragraph to Essay* (Macmillan, 2005)

### Evaluation Criteria

