

ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

A style guide for argumentative writing

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What is it?

A basic definition of an argumentative essay is: **A genre of writing that takes a position on a debatable issue.** A successful argumentative essay will use logical arguments and facts related to the topic to convince the reader of the chosen position.

What is it for?

Why write an argumentative essay? A lot of writers don't like the style of writing because "argumentative" sounds aggressive. Another way to think of argumentative is **Logical Position Writing**. The purpose of this genre of writing is to convince the reader of a particular idea. This kind of writing is seen in academic settings, business settings, literature settings, and history writing specifically.

- A businessman may need to convince investors that a particular product is better. Thesis-driven logical arguments will help him here.
- A historian may wish to claim that a particular source is more trustworthy as a primary source. The ability to present the topic and acknowledge the opposing side (why the source might be less trustworthy) is important for the historian to gain credibility and convince her readers.
- With something more subjective like literature analysis, being able to use evidence to support a claim is key to presenting a convincing thesis.

How is it different from other styles of writing?

The genre of argumentative writing contains a **thesis/antithesis** focused position on a debatable topic. Furthermore, argumentative writing is dependent on the personal viewpoint of the writer. The goal in argumentative writing is to first **develop your own opinion** on a debatable issue and then use the resources available to support that opinion or position in the body of the paper. Furthermore, the main goal is to point out the writer's skill in crafting the argument.

However, other writing styles like Research Writing focus on the general knowledge base of experts that is narrowed down into either a common perspective or a place where knowledge hasn't been explored yet. While some research writing may contain an argument, the main goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic, regardless of argument.

For more information on Research Writing and its style requirements see our resource [here](#).

Writing an Augmentative Essay

Step 1: Choose a Topic that can be Debated

A debatable topic is one that has at least two distinct sides or perspectives. The focus of an argumentative essay is to choose a particular perspective and convince your readers to share that perspective.

Remember that a debatable topic is something that has two reasonable arguable sides that don't disagree with logical fact.

For example:

Logical Fact: Apple is a technology company.

Debatable topic: Apple is the leading technology company.

Opposing Side: Google is the leading technology company

Step 2: The Argumentative Thesis

The Thesis: Fundamentally, your thesis is simply an expression of your position (opinion) on the debatable topic. However, your thesis should also answer the questions **WHY** or **HOW**.

For Example:

Position: Apple is the leading technology company.

Full thesis & how/why: Apple is the leading technology company because it has the highest number of sales.

The Antithesis: The antithesis is the arguable opposition to your position. A strong argumentative paper will acknowledge the opposition and debate specific points to increase a reader's confidence in your argument. Using, acknowledging, and fairly evaluating the opposition in your paper makes you a more credible writer. Your antithesis should also have a "how" and "why."

Remember, if your paper does not address or consider an antithesis, then you do not have a strong argumentative position on a debatable topic.

For example:

Thesis: Apple is the best technology company because it has the highest number of sales.

Antithesis: Google is a better technology company because even with a smaller number of sales, they have higher customer satisfaction.

Step 3: What a good Argumentative Essay Looks Like

As an example outline, this is a great way to make sure you have all of the main elements. For more information on Introductions, see our resource on [Introductions.](#)

Introduction:

- Background
- Thesis statement
- Signposting your evidence in support of your thesis

Body paragraphs:

- Arguments in Support of Your Thesis (usually one argument per paragraph)
- Refutation of Opposing Arguments (Remember to look at the opposing side objectively and avoid using statements of value like “good,” “bad,” ect.)

Conclusion:

- Recap your evidence
- Restate your thesis.

Step 4: Final Checklist

- Does your topic have at least two clear debatable sides?
- Does your thesis have a “how” and/or “why” attached to your position?
- Have you taken into consideration the values, beliefs, opinions of your audience?
- Have you crafted a clear introduction and a strong conclusion?
- Have you considered your opposition fairly and refuted its arguments?
- Have you supported your claims with evidence?
- Is your evidence logically tied to your position?
- Have you provided your readers with adequate background information?

Resources:

Gleason, Mary. "The Role of Evidence in Argumentative Writing," Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties, 15 No. 1. 81-106. 2011.

Purdue Online Writing Lab. Argumentative Essays. Purdue Owl. 2021.

Prof Miriam. "Difference Between Research Paper and Essay," Papers Owl. 2019.

University of Toledo. "Argumentative Essay/Commentary," Composition Writing Studio. 2021.

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