

## **Writing an Argumentative Paper**

### **□ Choose a topic which has at least two sides**

Choose a subject that allows for the possibility of persuading your reader. Avoid subjects that cannot be addressed in a logical manner and that cannot be proven with evidence from unbiased academic sources.

### **□ Analyze your audience**

Who are your readers? What do they already know about the subject? How are they likely to feel about it? How impartial or prejudiced are they going to be? Can you find a way to present your argument so that they will receive it logically rather than emotionally? Some ideas, especially those based on one's faith or other strongly held emotional beliefs, cannot be logically challenged or debated.

### **□ Make a list of your main points**

Jot down a list of the main points you will use in your argument. Analyze each piece of evidence to see how effective it will be in proving your thesis.

□ **Use unbiased sources**

Skilled writers avoid writing or referring to any ideas which are distorted, inaccurate, or inflammatory. Argue with solid, reasonable, fair, and relevant evidence. Be as fair-minded as possible.

□ **Make a list of counter arguments**

Make a list of the possible arguments your readers might raise against you. Think of ways in which you can respond to those objections.

□ **Decide how you will structure your essay**

Decide how you want to structure your essay. You can begin with a thesis and then provide evidence. You can begin with the evidence and end with an assertion. You can discuss your weakest point in the middle of the paper and your strongest point at the end. Which structure seems to fit your subject and evidence better?

□ **Build to a memorable conclusion**

Conclusions are what listeners and readers are most likely to remember. Repeat or restate your thesis. Drive home the importance of your argument, and make sure that your conclusion is the strongest, most dynamic part of your paper by calling your

reader to action or by stressing the importance of the argument you have made.

## □ **Writing Style**

An effective argumentative essay requires an academic writing style in the third person. Here are a few pointers how to develop this style:

1. Use third person voice in the body of your paragraph. **Never** use “you” and only use I” in the introduction or conclusion
2. Develop a good thesis statement, it will help organize your essay
3. Do not use contractions--spell out all words, even abbreviations when used for the first time. For example, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). After it is spelled out once, one may use the abbreviation
4. Use effective choice of words and avoid ambiguity: be specific and exact, provide concrete examples with support
5. No jargon or slang, unless you explain what it means or you have good reasons for using it
6. Use consistent verb tenses and be careful of subject verb agreement
7. Use a variety of sentence patterns and lengths, including complex sentence structure and even the occasional short sentence to avoid monotony
8. Use very specific language and avoid generalities, clichés and sweeping statements; also make sure you define your terms
9. Keep your audience in mind as you write your essay

10. Avoid personal judgments such as “I believe”, “I think”, and “in my opinion”

Choose specific words to communicate. Writing to persuade is more effective if the writer minimizes vagueness by selecting language appropriate for its context--that is, for its subject and its audience. Generally speaking, the more details given, the less vague the claim is. Terms like "all" or "none" refer to universal claims that may be difficult or impossible to substantiate. It is less difficult to verify qualifiers like "some" and "most", but they are vague and non-specific. For example, it is more effective and persuasive to state that "80% of the American public" prefers vanilla ice cream than to say "all Americans like vanilla ice cream" (you can't prove that), or "most Americans like vanilla ice cream."