



# Success Center Tips for Developing an Argument

## Types of Arguments

- An **argument of fact** proves or disproves a claim using facts and logic, and questions or discusses the facts of the topic.
- An **argument of definition** discusses the nature of a subject, and tries to convince readers to believe the authors' definition of a topic.
- An **argument of evaluation** ranks or labels a subject based on evaluating its characteristics, or discusses why the subject deserves its rank and compares it to competitors
- A **proposal argument** suggests an action that should be taken for some cause, or explains how to fix a problem with a plan

## Anatomy of an Argument

Use the following chart to help structure and strengthen an argumentative paper.

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contains an effective hook strategy to persuade readers to keep reading</li><li>• Demonstrates your qualifications and credibility as an author</li><li>• Shows reason</li><li>• Provides the thesis statement (claim)</li></ul>
Background information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides audience with the topic's history and gives some information about why you believe what you claim</li></ul>
The Persuasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gives readers your reasoning</li><li>• Appeals both logically and emotionally to readers</li><li>• Keeps a focus on the original claim</li></ul>
Opposing Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reasonably considers alternative solutions</li><li>• Addresses opposing arguments. What common ground do you share?</li><li>• Looks at the pros and cons of these options</li><li>• Discusses how your solution is the best</li></ul>
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviews what you have just gone over</li><li>• Reinforces your argument</li><li>• Leaves readers with a clear understanding of what actions or steps should follow</li></ul>

### Other guiding principles of writing an effective argument:

- Use a logical organization that helps readers see the relationship between ideas
- Consider what topics your audience may want to know first, and what may be OK to mention later
- Think about what support you should use and where
- Consider what rhetorical element would be most appropriately used and where

## Choosing a Topic

Follow these steps to choose an effective topic for an argumentative paper.

1. Decide on a subject that you are interested in or would like to know more about.
2. Consider that subject. What are some beliefs you already have about this topic? What are some questions you have about it?
3. Research your topic to discover background information about it, as well as how people already feel about the topic.
4. Find an idea that you would like to introduce or promote to your audience to change their opinions about the topic.
5. Then, create a well-reasoned claim that you will support through your argument.

## Creating a Claim

The first step to writing an effective argument is to build a strong claim, which will be formulated as a well-worded thesis statement that explains what you will be arguing and how you will be supporting that argument. **A thesis statement should be:**

- A clear 1-sentence statement about what your argument (main idea) is supporting
- Placed in the paper's introduction so that audience knows where the essay is headed
- An arguable point. Cannot be something everyone usually agrees or disagrees with.

**Once you have written a thesis statement, ask yourself the following questions to test its effectiveness:**

- Does my thesis have a clearly defined purpose and intention?
  - Is the thesis a common belief or universal truth instead of my own idea?
  - Would readers have reason to say, "so what?" if they read my thesis statement?
- Is my thesis statement just an opinion?
  - Can it be supported through reason and backed by credible sources?
  - Does it create a logical connection between compiled evidence and belief?

## Supporting a Claim

Once you have chosen a topic and created a claim, you will need to consider how to prove the claim or persuade people to believe it. Consider possible questions people may have about your claim and address them when writing, then suggest an appropriate response or solution to follow the claim.

### Consider the Audience

To help you decide on the points to cover in your argument, start by considering what will be most effective to your audience. To do this, ask yourself the following questions:

- How do people already feel about the topic of the claim? What position do they side with currently?
- What language will they understand and react to best?
- What tone of voice will be most likely to persuade them to agree with your views?

### Use Facts and Evidence

A well-written argument should include evidence to support its claim. You can do this by including information, statistics, and facts from articles, books, or websites. However, before using a source, verify that it is logical, credible, and unbiased. Choose evidence that is relevant and works well to support your claim, and then discuss how it strengthens your argument.

## Refining Your Argument

### Include a Concession Paragraph

Including a concession paragraph in the body of your paper will help make your argument more credible by showing that you have considered all sides of the topic or issue you are writing about. In a concession paragraph, you will consider the reasonable aspects of opposing argument(s), then provide counter offers for each of the opposing side's views. A concession typically consists of four parts:

1. An honest introduction of the opposing view to help demonstrate credibility
2. A review of that argument's valid possibilities and an explanation of how they are weak
3. A counter offer that shows your argument's best points
4. An summary of how and why your position is superior to the opposing side's position

### Use Rhetorical Appeals

When refining your argument, consider using ethos, pathos, and logos to help persuade people to believe it your claim. The type of appeal(s) you use should be tied to the type of argument you are writing, so remember that not every type of appeal will be appropriate in every paper – for example, it would be inappropriate to use an emotional appeal in a research paper.

- Logos (logic): Uses facts in a logical organization so that readers can easily see the connections between your ideas.
- Ethos (ethics): Shows the readers your argument is credible by using trustworthy sources and correct documentation.
- Pathos (emotions): Uses descriptive language, stories, or examples to help readers connect with your paper emotionally. Show readers you understand their feelings.

### Avoid Fallacies

Fallacies present faulty arguments in ways that sometimes appear to be logical. It is important that you not only understand how to recognize and point them out in the work of others, but that you also know how to avoid them in your own writing. Consider whether or not your argument does any of the following – if it does, consider other ways to support your claims.

- Avoid oversimplifying your argument to make your position more agreeable or disagreeable to audiences by obscuring the facts of the issue
- Avoid the slippery slope fallacy, which grossly exaggerates the effects of an action (Example: "Gay marriage will lead us to nuclear war.")
- Avoid appealing to pity or basing your argument primarily on pathos.
- Avoid making bandwagon appeals, which claim that since everyone else is doing something, the audience should do it too, while giving no other justification of the action.
- Avoid appeals to false authority, which occur when writers indicate that an argument is credible solely on the basis of themselves or on other authorities.
- Avoid dogmatism, which is when a writer claims that their position or solution to a problem is the only correct one.
- Avoid ad hominem arguments, which attack the personal character of opposing arguers and not the real issue at hand. (Example: political ads that attack a politician personally rather than his or her record or positions)