

Basic Argumentative Paper Format

Creating a defined outline makes the essay writing process much simpler. Because you organize your ideas before you write, the process helps you logically present your ideas and saves you from getting stuck with writer's block. If you follow these basic guidelines for writing an argumentative essay, you can easily craft a well-organized paper.

Please note that this is only a basic sample format. There are multiple ways to organize an argumentative paper. Always follow your Instructor assignment process.

Introduction

Purpose: To set up and state one's claim. One (1) paragraph to introduce your idea.

Required Elements: Provide a brief explanation of the issue or theory that you're arguing about.

Make your introductory paragraph interesting. How can you grab your reader's attention? What background information, if any, do we need to know in order to understand your claim?

Thesis Statement: State your claim at the end of your introductory paragraph. This should include the subject + controlling idea + keywords that will appear in the three (3) supporting paragraphs

Counterargument Paragraph

Purpose: To anticipate your reader's objections; to put forward objective and reasonable objections. What possible argument might your reader pose against your argument and/or some aspect of your reasoning? Insert one or more of those arguments here and then refute them. End paragraph with a concluding sentence that reasserts your paper's claim as a whole.

Supporting Evidence Paragraph #1

Purpose: To prove your argument. Usually is one paragraph but it can be longer.

Topic Sentence: What is one item, fact, detail, or example you can tell your readers that will help them better understand your claim / paper topic? Your answer should be the topic sentence for this paragraph.

Explain Your Topic Sentence: You need to explain your topic sentence. Do so here. You will usually use references to academic writing that supports your argument.

Introduce your evidence either in a few words (As Dr. Brown states ... or in a full sentence (To understand this issue we first need to look at statistics).

State Evidence: What supporting evidence (reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and/or quotations) can you include to prove/support/explain your topic sentence?

Explain Evidence: How should we read or interpret the evidence you are providing us? How does this evidence prove the point you are trying to make in this paragraph? Can be opinion based and is often at least 1-3 sentences.

Concluding Sentence: End your paragraph with a concluding sentence that reasserts how the topic sentence of this paragraph helps up better understand and/or prove your paper's overall claim.

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Supporting Evidence Paragraph #2, 3, 4, etc.

Repeat the process for the first supporting evidence paragraph. Each paragraph will introduce a new point with new evidence.

Conclusion Part 1: Sum Up Sentences

Purpose: Remind readers of your argument and supporting evidence. Your conclusion restates your paper's overall claim and supporting evidence. (no new claims can be introduced)

Conclusion Part 2: Your "So What" Sentences

Purpose: This is to illustrate to your instructor that you have thought critically and analytically about this issue.

Your conclusion should not simply restate your intro paragraph. If your conclusion says almost the exact same thing as your introduction, it may indicate that you have not done enough critical thinking in your essay (since you ended up right where you started).

Your conclusion should tell your reader why they should care about your paper. What is the significance of your claim? Why is it important to you as the writer or to me as the reader? What information should you or I take away from this?

Your conclusion should create a sense of movement to a more complex understanding of the subject of your paper. By the end of your essay, you should have worked through your ideas enough so that your reader understands what you have argued and is ready to hear the larger point (i.e., the "so what") you want to make about your topic.

Your conclusion is the climax of your paper. So, save your strongest analytical points for the end of your essay, and use them to drive your conclusion.

Vivid, concrete language is as important in your conclusion as it is elsewhere – perhaps even more essential – since the conclusion determines the reader's final impression of your essay. Do not leave them with the impression that your argument was vague or unsure.

Caution: It's fine to introduce new information or quotations in your conclusions, so long as the new points grow from your argument. New points might be more general, answering the "so what" question; they might be quite specific. Avoid making new claims that need a lot of additional support.

Finally

Go ahead and try this out. Remember, always read through the assignment specifications and ask your instructor for any clarifications. If you still need more help, please contact a writing tutor or Learning Strategist at the TLC.

For a graphic template of this, please use the graphic organizer worksheet:

Write_Essay_ArgumentOrganizer_WA.pdf

Reference

Adapted from the Odegaard Writing & Research Center <http://www.depts.washington.edu/owrc>