

ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

Almost every type of essay written at the undergraduate level focuses on the presentation of an argument. Whether writing a newspaper article or a political science essay, the writer is required to present an argument in a clear and organized manner. The purpose of this document is to help the writer present a straight forward argument for any type of writing, whether for a philosophy report or for an English 2010 opinion paper.

Components of Argument

Before discussing how to adequately present or find an argument in a piece of writing, it will be useful to gain a basic understanding of the components of those arguments. In "Reason and the World" by Peter Vernezze, an *Argument* is defined as, "a set of statements in which one or more of the statements is offered as evidence for another of the statements. The statements offered as evidence are called the premises. The statement which the premise(s) is trying to establish is called the conclusion." In *Deductive Argument*, one begins with a generalization and then derives facts from the generalization. In *Inductive Argument*, one begins with facts and then derives a generalization from those facts.

Purpose of Argument

It is important to note that the primary purpose of an argument is to persuade; therefore, persuasion is what sets an argument apart from a mere explanation. In an argument it is also critical to keep in mind that it is not enough to "feel" that something is the case. One can "feel" cold, happy, sleepy, etc. In argument, rather than "feel," try "assert," "report," "believe," "argue," "guess," etc. that something is the case. Professors are concerned with language; be aware of its usage.

Argument Key Words

There are a few key words that are useful tools in presenting or finding arguments. In Vernezze's definition, arguments are based on premise and conclusion. Some of the many key words that will help create and locate premise and conclusion are the following:

Premise Indicators

since	because	for	in that	given that	seeing that	If..., then...
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either . . . , or . . .	all	some	many	for the reason that	but	may be inferred from
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Conclusion Indicators

therefore	accordingly	hence	thus	consequently
we may infer	it must be said that	implies that	as a result	so

One reason to use indicators such as these is for common courtesy to the reader. Indicators make it easier for readers not only to recognize that there is a position and defense presented in a paper but also to see where the premises and conclusions are.

Highlighting indicators may help find the premises and conclusions in writing.

Either we allow all forms of political expression, or we risk endangering the very freedoms this country was founded on. Since we clearly do not want to risk endangering the very freedoms this country was founded on, we must allow all forms of political expression.

Structure of an Argument Essay

Although there are many ways to present an argument in a paper, the following outline is a good outline for presenting an easy to read, clear to understand, and well-organized paper.

Section I - The Introduction

This section introduces the topic of the essay, offers any background information which might be necessary for clarity, and clearly indicates the position that will be defended.

Section II - The Argument

This section advances the best argument (defense) for the paper's position. Thus, the section should consist of a single argument which supports the position in the introduction.

Section III - The Counter-Argument

This section advances the best counter-argument against the paper's position. It presents the counter-argument as completely and fairly as possible. In essence, it defends the opponent's position.

Section IV - Response

This section responds to the counter-argument from Section III. It should respectfully and fairly respond as to avoid fallacy.

Section V - Conclusion

This section restates the position the paper is defending, reveals how it defends its position, and responds to any related issues. By responding to related issues the paper shows the relevance of its conclusion.

Conclusion

This type of argument is a *two-sided* argument. Both sides of the issue are presented. By leaving out sections II and III, a writer could create a *one-sided* argument. Generally, two-sided arguments are seen as a way of strengthening the paper's position, especially when the issue is well known. One-sided arguments might prove useful in opinion papers where the issue is not well known. It is important to keep the audience in mind when composing an argument. The degree of explanation required will depend on who the writer is writing for.

Most often in undergraduate writing classes, students are expected to write for an audience of relatively well-educated adults who lack relevant specialized knowledge. To test an argument, have a class-mate or tutor who lacks knowledge about the paper's subject read the paper. If they do not understand the argument, re-evaluating the argument might be best.

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