

The
Argumentative
Essay

Features of an argument

- Organized around convincing someone else that the claim is true
- Using evidence (grounds), warrants (reasons), and backing to support your claim

We argue because...

- We want others to consider seeing the world the way we see it
- We want others to do something we believe is in their interest as well as ours
- It acts as a method of discovery

More than two sides

- Misleading to believe that there are only two possible positions to take on any issue
 - The two sides are a good starting point for an inquiry into the question
- Useful to find positions that don't fall neatly into the usual opposed positions
 - To do this: initially withhold judgment and ask questions

Premises and Assumptions

- Reasons that we believe something is true
- A way to find the path back from a claim to a reason is to use “because”
 - Example: Initial claim - “University course classes are a joke, to be quite honest. Who hasn’t had math, science, and history in high school?”
 - Example: Finding the reasoning in this claim: Core classes are a joke BECAUSE their content is similar to what most students learn in high school.

Statements vs. Claims

- Claims differ from statements because they are arguable - people might agree or disagree with it
- Which is the claim and which is the statement?
 - “I have a headache” - statement
 - “Headaches can be caused by secondhand smoke” - claim

Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle

- Persuasion depends on good reasoning (logos), moving an audience (pathos) and making is believe the speaker is someone worth listening to on the subject (ethos).

Disposition of Audience	Ethos	Pathos	Logos
Resistant	Most important	Least important	Most important
Neutral	Important	Important	Important
Receptive	Least important	Most important	Least important

Understanding Warrants

- The task is not to make a claim and then hunt up evidence to support it, but rather to do research and let the claims come naturally, allowing your thesis to change if necessary
- Wedged between evidence and claims are warrants - things the writers assume must be true for their claims to be believable

MLA IN-TEXT CITATIONS

- Use a signal phrase to integrate your quote: Human beings have been described by Kenneth Burke as “symbol-using animals” (3). OR Human beings have been described as “symbol-using animals” (Burke 3).
- For quotations that are longer than four lines, place quotations in a block of text and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, with the entire quote indented one inch from the left margin.

Example/ These three traits used to make up the archetype musician, someone who loved what they did and were good at doing it:

Let me introduce you to the kid teaching himself how to play guitar, the busker in the train station, the guys and girls recording their own demos and playing the small venues, the unpublished songwriter with countless books full of lyrics, the people who just want to be heard, who want to express themselves, their creativity, and their artistic worth. They are the ones who just want to make music! They are the real artists! (Dickinson)

- Don't be sloppy. The font on your works cited page should be the same as the font used in the rest of your essay.

QUOTES

- Quotes not only need to be integrated, they also need to be analyzed. Integration comes before, analysis comes after. Simply adding a sentence after a quotation does not necessarily constitute analysis:
 - “We don’t want to waste tax dollars. And also, we want to give people the incentive to not use drugs.” This quote from Florida Governor Rick Scott is a prime example as to why drug testing should be mandatory for all states. - **WHY is this a prime example? As the writer, you need to provide analysis for the reader.**

THESIS

- Must be arguable and must state an opinion
- What is missing from this thesis statement?
Issues have been raised on whether or not the drinking age should be lowered because of dangers college students face in emergency situations. **An obvious stance is missing.**
 - Corrected thesis statement: The drinking age should be lowered to eighteen because of dangers undergraduates face in emergency situations.
- Must be arguable and conclusive. The following is not: Global warming may or may not be a problem and we do not know for sure if man is the cause of it. **An obvious stance is missing.**
 - Corrected thesis statement: Global warming is a problem and humans are a partial cause of it.

TRANSITIONS

- “The main reason,” “some other reasons,” “a final problem” and “another problem” are not effective transitions. Be deliberate when choosing transitions. Use the list you copied from the board.

ASSUMPTIONS AND CLAIMS

- While metaphor, simile, and allegory are all useful tools, be sure to carefully consider equating two complex and emotionally wrought subjects. Example/ The end of slavery does not equal marriage equality and vice versa. Both issues are far too complicated and have too much history to compare to one another.
- What assumptions might you need to address before your reader will accept this statement: “Store owners will care more about the legal age of marijuana than drug dealers do.” (the majority of store owners care when selling alcohol and cigarettes; drug dealers will still sell marijuana once it is legalized; etc.) OR “Smokers are not aware of the harmful effects of smoking.” (smokers smoke because they aren’t educated about the health effects; smokers would quit if they knew smoking was harmful). **See how these claims fall apart once we begin examining the assumptions?**

LANGUAGE

- Do NOT use “now a days” or “nowadays.”
- Avoid using “seems.” You WILL overuse it.

SOPHISTICATION

- Avoid statements such as:
 - This is what I'm going to do in this essay.
 - This is what I have found while researching.
 - **You are the writer, so this extra qualification is unnecessary.**

TONE

- Identify the problematic word choice in these examples of informal tone:
 - Falling asleep around midnight was the norm during high school. (**norm - too informal**)
 - So, why is there so much controversy over whether or not abortion should be legal? (**so - too conversational**)
 - General education courses are just a major waste of time. (**just a major waste - the unsophisticated tone makes me think that the person who wrote this could benefit from additional general education courses**)

AUDIENCE

- Identify how the author unintentionally narrows their audience excluding many of their readers:
 - People should be able to decide what is right and wrong on their own, regardless of restrictions set by the religion our parents might follow. (**“our” - people and our do not go together - should be we and our OR people and their**)

REMEMBER...

- No contractions in academic writing
 - “You’re” is WRONG, “you are” is CORRECT
- Proofread, proofread, proofread
- “Punctuation goes inside quotations.” unless you are providing the citation immediately after, “punctuation goes inside quotations” (Hughes 2).
- Don’t be LAZY. Your instructor never wants to hear “I knew that was wrong, but I didn’t change it.”
- Plagiarism can ruin your college career. You can be expelled, even if you plagiarize yourself. It’s better to accept an F or have an uncomfortable conversation with a professor than to turn in unoriginal work.
- Always refer to books, articles, movies, etc. in the present tense. Even though you read it in the past, it still exists on the page in the present.