

Argumentative Essay

Purpose

The purpose of an Argumentative Essay is to defend a debatable position on a particular issue with the ultimate goal of persuading readers to accept the argument. Although the goal is to convince readers to accept the argument, the readers' response will either be: agree completely, agree with reservations, or disagree.

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement for an argumentative essay clearly announces both the theme/subject (topic) of the essay and the debatable point of view the writer is claiming (argument).

Generally, the argumentative thesis is not factored as this can limit the scope of an argument.

Example:

Archaic sex education programs (topic) teach abstinence as the only effective means to prevent unwanted pregnancy, but newer sex education programs that teach safe sex practices have proven to be more effective and should replace outdated abstinence-only programs (argument).

- The *topic* informs the reader the overall subject of the essay e.g. sex education programs, specifically abstinence-only vs. safe sex.
- The *argument* claims a debatable viewpoint e.g. newer programs should replace outdated programs.

Identifying and Using Supporting Details

In an argumentative essay, a persuasive argument has supporting details that are aided by *credibility, logic, and emotion*. For further suggestions, reference The Writing Center's **Supporting Details** handout.

- *Credibility* refers to the believability of the sources and their ethical implications e.g. quotations from authorities and valid sources cited in the Bibliography or Works Cited page of the essay. Do the sources have the credentials in order to be considered valid in persuasion?
- *Logic* refers to reason, rationality, and analysis e.g. facts, quantitative data, statistics, research studies, and logical flow in the essay.
- *Emotion* refers to appealing to the heart and feelings of the reader e.g. narrative, testimony, and personal experience. Although the appeal to emotion is used sparingly in academics, it can be a powerful tool in persuasion.

Organization

The logical progression and organization of an argument is crucial. Remember to adhere to the instructor's directions and preferences for the writing assignment. The following is one example of how to organize and develop an argumentative essay.

Sample Outline for an Argumentative Essay

I. Introduction

Make the question, problem, or topic clear; and state the debatable point of view.

- A. Attention Getter
- B. Necessary Background Information
- C. Thesis Statement Example: Archaic sex education programs teach abstinence as the only effective means to prevent unwanted pregnancy, but newer sex education programs that teach safe sex practices have proven to be more effective, and should replace outdated abstinence-only programs.

II. State/Transition to Topic One

Describe and address the opposing stance, noting its validity yet questioning its case.

- A. Topic Sentence Example: Proponents for abstinence-only programs argue that abstinence is the only effective way to prevent unwanted pregnancy because they reason that a person who does not engage in sexual intercourse cannot possibly become pregnant.
- B. Supporting details *appealing to credibility, logic, and/or emotion.*

III. State/Transition to Topic Two

Address the opponent's argument by balancing it with the argument of the essay.

- A. Topic Sentence Example: Although proponents for abstinence-only programs have been effective in the past, recent observations and studies show that teenagers do not remain abstinent even if they are currently enrolled in abstinence-only programs.
- B. Supporting details appealing to credibility, logic, and/or emotion.

IV. State/Transition to Topic Three

Confirm the argument of the essay, and reinforce it with credible supporting details.

- A. Topic Sentence Example: Numerous studies conducted in the past five years serve as examples verifying that newer programs teaching safe sex practices are more effective at preventing unwanted pregnancy than the outdated, ineffective, and impractical abstinence-only programs used for decades.
- B. Supporting details appealing to credibility, logic, and/or emotion.

V. Conclusion

Revisit key points; discredit topics against the proposed argument; reaffirm topics in support of the argument, and answer the original question/problem.

Some Information Courtesy of:

Gaetz, Lynne, and Phadke, Suneeti. *The Writer's World: Paragraphs and Essays*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2011. Print.

Pudewa, Andrew, dir. *Advanced Communication Series: Persuasive Writing and Speaking Skills*. Institute for Excellence in Writing, 2011. DVD.