

# **Argumentation**

**ENC 1102****Writing an Argumentative Essay****I. Introduction**

- A. Open your argument with a creative lead-in
- B. Establish common ground.
  - 1. Provide neutral background on your controversial topic.
  - 2. At this point, avoid taking a position.
- C. Write a sentence in which you transition from neutral background to your argumentative thesis.
- D. Write a thesis statement with an essay map in which you express your opinion.

**II. Body**

- A. Be fair to the other side in your first body paragraph.
  - 1. Acknowledge the opposition. \*
  - 2. Refute the opposition
- B. In all other body paragraphs, present your argument according to the following guidelines:
  - 1. Write a topic sentence (main idea of the paragraph) in which you take a stand on one aspect of your topic.
  - 2. Support your topic sentence as suggested below:
    - a) Explain your position through logic and reasoning.
    - b) Provide evidence (facts, examples, statistics, quotations, illustrations, graphs, personal experiences and observations) that supports your opinion.
    - c) Explain the meaning of your specific evidence.
  - 3. Write a concluding sentence in which you summarize the main idea of the body paragraph and transition to the next one.

## Conclusion

- A. Pull the ideas of your argument together.
- B. Re-state your thesis in new and different words.
- C. Leave the reader with a provocative final thought, perhaps a quotation, a rhetorical question, an image or description that suggests closure, or a call to action.

\*To address reasonable objections from the opposition, use the language of argument, which is a two-step process: 1. acknowledging your opponent and 2. refuting your opponent.

1. Acknowledge your opponent in the first half of the first body paragraph. Your goal is to diplomatically present the other side's argument, showing why it is reasonable and valid, thus creating the impression that you are an open- and fair-minded writer. Use the language of argument to present the other side's point of view. For example, you could write "Some critics of this view argue that. . ." "Some people make a valid point when they claim that. . ." "Some opponents of this position believe that..

2. After acknowledging the other side through the language of argument, you will be ready to refute it in the second half of your first body paragraph. Your goal is to point out that while the other side makes valid claims, your argument is actually more convincing. Use the language of argument to refute the other side's opinion. For example, you could write "While these critics raise legitimate concerns, they overlook the fact that...," "Those who hold this position fail to see that...," "These thinkers overlook the fact that...," or "They fail to realize that..."

## Guidelines for Planning and Writing an Argumentative Essay

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Choose a fresh, original argumentative topic that interests you. Write it in the space provided. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Write a thesis statement in which you make an assertion about your topic. Write it in the space provided.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Think of two to four reasons why you hold the opinion expressed in your thesis. List those reasons below.

Reason 1:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason 2:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason 3:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason 4:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*The reasons you listed above will become the topic sentences for your body paragraphs.*

4. Provide evidence to support each reason that you listed. Evidence includes examples, stories, descriptions, facts, details, quotations, statistics, etc. You may want to support each reason with three forms of evidence, labeled A, B, and C below.

Reason 1:

A. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason 2:

A. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason 3:

A. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason 4:

A. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*The information above can be used as an outline for your argumentative paper, helping you to organize and write the body paragraphs.*

5. To write a convincing argument, you will need to acknowledge the other side, that is, the opposing point of view. This step is done in an “opposition paragraph,” which you might think of as a “yes, but. . .” section of your paper. The opposition paragraph of your argument is generally the first or last body paragraph. It either precedes or follows the body paragraphs containing the reasons that support your thesis statement.

An opposition paragraph has two parts. In the first part, you will acknowledge the other side. In the second part, you will refute or disprove the other side. To write this

paragraph, you will need to use the language of argument. The language of argument includes special phrases that you employ to acknowledge and refute the opposition.

To acknowledge the other side in the first part of your opposition paragraph, you will use language of argument phrases like those that follow: Some critics argue that. . . Those who oppose (your thesis) claim that)... Opponents make a valid point about...

To refute the opposition in the second part of the opposition paragraph, you will use language of argument phrases like those that follow: What these thinkers fail to realize is that. . Critics overlook the fact that.... Opponents raise reasonable objections, but....

6. Aside from planning the body paragraphs of your paper, you will want to develop a creative introduction and conclusion.

An introduction should contain an interesting hook or opening line (a quotation, statistic, story, etc.); informative background information about the topic; and lastly your thesis statement.

A conclusion should contain a summary of your main points, a restatement of your thesis in new and different words, and a clincher (a captivating closing line).

***Delve into this project! Explore the planning strategies suggested above! Discover your own beliefs through the process of writing about them!***

Thesis Statement from an ENC 1102 Student: The legal driving age should be raised to eighteen because too often teenagers behave irresponsibly when behind the wheel of a car.

### **Opposition Paragraph:**

Some people oppose raising the legal driving age to eighteen. They make a valid point when they claim that many teenagers are responsible, skillful drivers capable of handling the challenges of both city and highway driving. Critics of raising the legal driving age point out moreover, that some adolescents help to provide for their families financially and need convenient transportation to continue working. However, what these thinkers fail to realize is that automobile accidents are the number one killer of adolescents. While many youths are indeed responsible, skillful drivers, a significant number of teens drive carelessly, becoming easily distracted especially when transporting friends. In addition, although some adolescents work hard to help support their families, these young people

Information provided by Professor Ciez-Volz

[http://www.geocities.com/frankie\\_meehan/ArgVocab.htm](http://www.geocities.com/frankie_meehan/ArgVocab.htm)

[http://www.geocities.com/frankie\\_meehan/ForAgainst.htm](http://www.geocities.com/frankie_meehan/ForAgainst.htm)

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do not need to drive their own cars in order to work. Public transportation, namely the bus system, provides a safe and reliable means for them to arrive at their various places of employment. Indeed, the legal driving age should be raised to eighteen.

### Argumentative Essay Websites

[www.ulm.edu/~lowe/argumentativeessay.ppt](http://www.ulm.edu/~lowe/argumentativeessay.ppt)

<http://www.rsc.c.c.tn.us/owl&writingcenter/OWL/Types.html>

<http://www.poewar.com/essay-paper-writing-guide/>

<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/tablecontent.html>

**Peer Review of the Argument**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*A peer will complete this checklist for you. Please keep it in your English notebook*

- 1. Does the writer capture your interest with a creative opening? Yes No
- 2. Does the writer provide neutral background in the introduction n before stating the thesis? Yes No
- 3. Write the thesis in the space provided.

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- 4. Does the writer address the other side in. an opposition paragraph? Yes No
- 5. Does the opposition paragraph have two distinct parts? Yes No
- 6. Does each body paragraph (aside from the opposition) begin with a topic sentence that expresses a clear reason in support of the thesis statement? Yes No
- 7. What types of evidence does the writer supply to support the thesis? Circle as many as apply.

Facts    Examples    Statistics    Observations    Stories  
 Quotations    Comparisons    Opinion    Other

- 8. Does the writer use transitions throughout the body paragraphs? Yes No
- 9. List three transitions that are used in the paper.

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- 10. Does the writer use new and different words to restate the thesis in the conclusion? Yes No
- 11. Does the writer close the paper creatively? Yes No
- 12. What do you like most about this essay? How do you think it could be improved?

Information provided by Professor Ciez-Volz

[http://www.geocities.com/frankie\\_meehan/ArgVocab.htm](http://www.geocities.com/frankie_meehan/ArgVocab.htm)

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## Notes for Five Argumentative Essays

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- [The use of animals in scientific research](#)
- [Should motor traffic be restricted?](#)
- [Capital punishment \(the Death Penalty\)](#)
- [Euthanasia should be legalised](#)
- [Examinations should be abolished](#)

These tables outline the main arguments used when debating five controversial topics. The points have been arranged into simple "For/Against" columns.

It is convenient to have a ready-made list of arguments, but to write an effective essay you must decide upon a **structure**. There are two basic options:

**Option 1:** *Set 'em up and knock 'em down*

Look at my [model essay on zoos](#) for an example of this approach. Using this approach, you present each of your opponents' arguments in turn and demonstrate that it is false or weak - you "knock it down". This is a very effective approach because you acknowledge that other views exist but persuade the reader that *yours* are superior.

**Option 2:** *The balanced approach*

You will find an example of this approach at <http://www.ceu.hu/misc/tews.htm>, a Central European University webpage. Using this approach, you look at both sides of the argument in a more balanced way. In the end, however, you must indicate your opinion. The basic structure is: Introduction >>> Points in Favour >>> Against >>> Conclusion (including your opinion). **WARNING:** This approach can sound weak because the writer seems to be "sitting on the fence", afraid to take sides.

The use of animals in scientific research

FOR	AGAINST
<p>Animals are only used when really necessary and most animal experiments do <b>not</b> involve pain</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It is morally wrong to do things to laboratory animals which we would not do to our pets; lab animals are burned, poisoned, blinded, crippled and driven mad</li> <li>○ Human and animal brains are very different, so surgeons do not gain much from practicing on animals</li> </ul>
<p>Brain surgery and "replacement surgery" (e.g. replacing hip joints, heart transplants) requires practice; we cannot practice on humans!</p>	
<p>When surgery is necessary, an anesthetic is always used so that the animal feels no pain</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We need to test new drugs/chemicals on animals in order to predict whether humans will suffer side-effects; if we don't do this, we will never find cures for AIDS, cancer etc.</li> <li>○ Lots of research with animals helps to develop new treatments for <i>animal</i> diseases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Most animal experiments are done for trivial reasons - e.g. to produce cosmetics, household goods, food additives etc.</li> <li>○ A lot of research turns animals into drug addicts or removes part of their brain, just so we can observe changes in their behavior!</li> <li>○ Most new drugs are created in order to make profit for the drug</li> </ul>

	<p>companies; only 1-2% are essential for good health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tests on animals do not give reliable results since animals react differently to humans (e.g. aspirin causes birth defects in cats, dogs &amp; monkeys but not in humans)</li> <li>○ We should be spending more money on <u>preventing</u> diseases instead of focusing so much on cures (many diseases are linked to smoking, bad diet and pollution)</li> </ul>
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**Should motor traffic be restricted?**

FOR	AGAINST
<p>Cars are a major source of air and noise pollution, as well as numerous accidents that cause death or injury.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Motor vehicles make travel more convenient, contribute to economic development and enrich our leisure; petrol is much "greener" than it used to be.</li> <li>○ The USA has more cars than any other country, yet its accident rate is less than half that of many European countries. The answer lies in better roads, better driver training and</li> </ul>

	better vehicle maintenance.
Motorways are an eyesore in the countryside and disturb wildlife habitats .	Well-designed motorways blend into the countryside just as much as canals or railways.
Traffic in modern city centres moves at roughly the same speed as it did 100 years ago. The solution is to discourage drivers from entering city centres (e.g. by imposing taxes). The govt. should also improve the public transport system and provide free parking on the outskirts of cities.	Public transport is simply not adequate to handle the volume of people who need to enter cities. The real solution to road congestion is to build more roads and carparks.
Railways are more suitable (faster & safer) than cars for traffic between cities; they are also more suitable than large trucks for carrying goods	Railways are inflexible and do not suit our modern desire for "door-to-door" transport; goods deliveries by rail are often delayed

**Capital Punishment (the Death Penalty)**

FOR	AGAINST
It discourages criminals from carrying guns and carrying out serious crimes such as murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Capital punishment is not an effective deterrent: for example, the USA (where the death penalty exists) has a far higher murder rate than the UK (where there is no death penalty)</li> <li>○ Out of 30 countries</li> </ul>

	that have abolished the death penalty none has reported an increase in murders
Some hardened criminals cannot be reformed; we know that so-called "life sentences" are often reduced, so they are a great risk to society if we do not execute them	The death penalty belongs to a time when punishments were cruel and society was less civilized; the destruction of human life is wrong
It is better for a society to get rid of its enemies than to pay for them to stay in prison	Where the death penalty is used, juries are often afraid to convict someone in case they are wrong; in this way, many criminals escape punishment (if the penalty was imprisonment, juries would be less afraid)
People are not sentenced to death if there is any doubt in the minds of the jury; mentally insane murderers are never convicted	If a jury makes a mistake (and they do!) this cannot be reversed; a civilized society should not take this risk. Also, many prisoners are kept on "death row" for decades; they are often completely reformed individuals by the time they are executed

**Euthanasia should be legalized**

FOR	AGAINST
Many people die long and painful deaths from incurable illnesses. We put animals out of their misery	A doctor cannot draw up a list of incurable illnesses; for example, patients suffering from so-called

<p>rather than let them suffer terrible pain; why should we deny humans the same release?</p>	<p>incurable diseases such as cancer and AIDS frequently are cured and live long, productive lives.</p>
<p>The patient him/herself is the best person to judge when life has become too hard to bear. Suicide ceased to be a crime in the UK in 1961; there has been no increase in the suicide rate because of this, so it is unlikely that large numbers of people would choose euthanasia if it were legalized.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If a physical suffering is a valid excuse for cutting life short, then why not mental/emotional suffering as well?</li> <li>○ A request for euthanasia might be the result of temporary depression; people in great pain are not always responsible for what they say</li> </ul>
<p>If a patient is completely unable to make a decision, doctors should be allowed to make a recommendation and then close relatives could make the final decision.</p>	<p>Doctors do not always correctly estimate a patient's power to recover; they should not have to make the terrible decision to kill a patient. This is a heavy responsibility for relatives too. Some relatives might even misuse their power (e.g. in order to inherit wealth)</p>
<p>If we call it murder to take someone's life with their own consent, then logically it is theft to take a person's property with their consent - which is absurd.</p>	<p>Many religions teach that it is wrong to take away human life; if we are reluctant to kill even murderers, we should be even more reluctant to kill innocent people.</p>
<p>Many unfortunate people are born with severe physical and/or mental defects that mean they will never</p>	<p>We must respect <u>all</u> human life; otherwise, we may become like the Nazis, who had millions of people</p>

lead a normal life and will be a huge burden to their families. Relatives should have the right to opt for euthanasia in such cases.	put to death for imaginary "racial defects".
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**Examinations should be abolished**

FOR	AGAINST
Examinations test only a limited range of skills; they favour people who have a good memory and good "exam techniques" even though they may not be very original or imaginative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Passing an examination shows that the candidate can handle unfamiliar problems and communicate effectively; these are important qualities in the workplace.</li> <li>○ Examinations have changed a lot in the past 20 years; most include coursework today and this helps to test a greater range of skills.</li> </ul>
Examinations depress students and deaden their initiative; teachers, too, become less creative as they are forced to "teach to the exam".	The mental effort of preparation for examinations is valuable; no harm is done to anyone. Without the discipline of examinations, teachers could fail to cover some important topics/skills.
Examinations are set as if all children have reached the same mental level at the same age. However, psychologists and	The greatest gaps in development occur at primary age; exams are rare there nowadays. The inequality is much less at secondary

educationalists agree that this is not so. Also, girls tend to mature earlier than boys.	level.
Examinations encourage competition and favour academically gifted students; the less able (who actually need the most help) get neglected.	The problem of "mixed ability" classes would exist whether we had examinations or not. The solution is to find better ways of organizing classes and to employ more teachers.
Research has proven that different examiners grade student papers differently; indeed, the same examiner will often give different marks to the same paper after a few months!	Modern examination boards have sophisticated "moderation" systems for ensuring that marking is done fairly. In addition, most examinations include practicals or orals, so a student's result does not depend completely on written work.

## Vocabulary for Argumentative Writing

When we write an argumentative essay, our opinions carry more weight if we look at both sides of the issue. In other words, we acknowledge our opponents' views but try to convince the reader that our own argument is stronger.

Our essay would be extremely dull if we used the words *supporters* and *opponents* all the way through. Similarly, it would be unimpressive if we only used the verb *say* to refer to people's opinions. The tables below contain lists of useful alternatives. Study them and then do the gap-fill task that follows.

+	-
Supporters	Opponents

Proponents	Opponents
Those in favour of ...	Those opposed to ...
Defenders of ...	Critics of ...
Advocates of ...	Objectors
Pro-... (e.g. <i>Pro-abortionists</i> )	Anti-... (e.g. <i>Anti-abortionists</i> )

<b>say that ...</b>
argue
claim
maintain
assert
contend
allege
insist
contend
suggest
point out

Tasks

1. Complete the text below using words/phrases from the tables above. (Solid lines relate to the first table; dotted lines relate to the second.)

\_\_\_\_\_ of TV ..... that it exposes us to too much violence and, as a result, we become less sensitive to real-life violence. They also ..... that schoolchildren neglect homework and have problems concentrating in class as a result of spending too much time glued to the box. Finally, \_\_\_\_\_ ..... that television has turned many of us into over-weight, unfit "couch potatoes".

\_\_\_\_\_, on the other hand, ..... that it is a blessing for lonely, elderly or housebound people. Furthermore, they ....., it does not simply entertain; it can be very educational as well. Another argument \_\_\_\_\_ of TV is that it sometimes plays an important role in fundraising for disaster relief and various charities. For example, the "Live Aid" rock concert in 1984 raised millions of pounds for victims of the Ethiopian famine.

2. Choose another controversial issue (e.g. hunting, car use, school uniforms, meat-eating, the use of animals in medical research, single sex schools, euthanasia). Write some sentences that express the views of people on both sides of the argument. Aim for variety in your choice of language. -Frankie Meehan