

Argumentative Essays

There are many different ways to organize an argumentative essay. The most important thing to remember about an argumentative essay is that you must show **both sides of a contentious issue**. In other words, your topic must be **debatable**.

An argumentative essay is a good tool of persuasion because you show the reader:

- You have considered both sides of the argument before choosing your position
- You are able to anticipate and refute any opposing arguments.

Before you organize your essay, make sure that you have brainstormed **both sides of the issue**. Once you know what you want to say, the organization you choose should be whichever will best showcase your ideas.

Plan before you start!

Try a PRO vs. CON list to help you identify both sides of the issue:

PRO: Abortion should be legal	CON: Abortion should not be legal ever!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Women's rights– Socio-economic effects of unwanted children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Child's rights– The moral questions and religious perspective

When an argumentative essay is assigned by your teacher, it is important to distinguish whether the assignment asks you to:

a) Present both sides of the issue equally and objectively

OR

b) Present your position on the issue as stronger than the opposing position

Your thesis statement must clearly reflect the purpose of your essay assignment.

Objective stance:

Example:

While many feel that a woman should have the freedom to choose whether or not to bear a child, others feel that terminating a pregnancy is immoral.

This statement shows the two sides as equally valid. The writer's own opinion or position on the issue is not indicated.

Taking a position:

Example:

While many feel that terminating a pregnancy is immoral, the freedom to choose whether or not to bear a child should be every woman's right.

This statement shows both sides, but also clearly shows the writer's position on the issue in contrast to the opposition.

Before you start your essay, make sure that you have done sufficient research to present the argument fairly and judiciously. You will need to back up your claims, so make sure that you **cite your sources!**

There are many ways you could organize your argumentative essay. The one thing you need to keep in mind is that **you must show both sides of the argument.**

Here are a few basic possibilities for organizing an argumentative essay:

Option 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Introduction- Pro point 1 + support- Pro point 2 + support- Con point + rebuttal- Conclusion	Option 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Introduction- Opposing point 1 + rebuttal- Opposing point 2 + rebuttal- Opposing point 3 + rebuttal- Conclusion
Option 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Introduction- Pro point 1 + support- Con point 1 + rebuttal- Pro point 2 + support- Con point 2 + rebuttal- Pro point 3 + support- Con point 3 + rebuttal- Conclusion	Option 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Introduction- Con point 1 + rebuttal- Con point 2 + rebuttal- Con point 3 + rebuttal- Pro point 1 + support- Pro point 2 + support- Pro point 3 + support- Conclusion

This outline is designed to help students understand argumentative essay outlines in more detail. The following outline is appropriate if you are **taking a position on the issue**.

Detailed outline examples:

Argumentative Essay
Point by Point <i>This organization works well if you would like to persuade a reader of your own opinion on the issue. If a lot of your argument directly counters your opponent's arguments, this organization can work very well.</i>
Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Explain the importance of the issue○ Summarize the opposing side's arguments very briefly○ Provide a thesis statement which recognizes your disagreement with the other side's argument and states your position clearly.
Body: <p>Paragraph 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ State your opponent's first argument and counter that argument directly with your points of rebuttal○ Support your points with examples and research to strengthen your position <p>Paragraph 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ State your opponent's second argument and counter that argument directly with your points of rebuttal○ Support your points with examples and research to strengthen your position <p>Paragraph 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ State your opponent's third argument and counter that argument directly with your points of rebuttal○ Support your points with examples and research to strengthen your position <p>(Continue in this way until you have exhausted your ability to present and counter the opposition.)</p> <p>Paragraph 4: (optional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If you have additional points to strengthen your argument that do not directly counter your opponent's point, you can provide them in the last few body paragraphs

Argumentative Essay

You may continue this way (paragraph 5, 6, 7 etc.) until you exhaust your additional arguments.

Conclusion

- Rephrase your main point
- Summarize your main ideas in order to show how strong your position is over your opponent's
- Provide a final thought for your reader

The following outline is appropriate if you are presenting an **objective or neutral position** on the issue.

Argumentative Essay:

Point by Point

This organization works well if you would like to present 2 sides of an issue fairly and objectively without taking a side. Point by point works best if the individual points of argument oppose each other directly.

Introduction:

- Explain the importance of the issue
- Provide background information explaining why the issue is commonly debated
- Provide a thesis statement which recognizes the main perspectives of the opposing sides. (Do not present your opinion)

Body:

Paragraph 1:

- Present the first supporting point of one side
- Support the points with examples or research to illustrate their position
- Present the opposing or counter point to the above claim
- Support the points with examples or research to illustrate their position

Paragraph 2:

- Present the second supporting point of one side
- Support the points with examples or research to illustrate their position
- Present the opposing or counter point to the above claim
- Support the points with examples or research to illustrate their position

Paragraph 3:

- Present the third supporting point of one side
- Support the points with examples or research to illustrate their position

Argumentative Essay:

- Present the opposing or counter point to the above claim
- Support the points with examples or research to illustrate their position

(Continue in this way until you have exhausted your ability to present both sides of the issue)

Paragraph 4: (optional)

- If you have additional points to present that cannot be directly countered, you can provide them in the last few body paragraphs

Conclusion

- Rephrase your main point
- Summarize your main ideas in order to show how strong your position is over your opponent's
- Provide a final thought for the reader