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The
**Argumentative
Essay**

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Argumentative Writing

What is **Argumentative Writing**?

A type of composition that requires the writer to establish a position on a topic in a logical, unbiased manner

Audience is the intended reader. Why is audience important to consider?

What makes argumentative different from **persuasive writing**?

- Claim must be based on evidence and reason
- There are no personal pronouns (no "I believe" or "I think")
- Author will include a counterclaim to refute

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The Thesis

What is a **thesis**?

A statement that clearly establishes the writer's position on a topic and gives insight to the author's rationale

The thesis sentence in your paper is also referred to as your **claim**.

How do you construct a thesis statement?

- First, what is the argument?
- Second, what side are you taking?
- Now, in one sentence, make a claim that explains the best side of the argument and one general reason why.
- Remove any personal pronouns.

The thesis will be the last sentence in your introduction paragraph.

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Example Thesis Statement

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Example topic: Should students be allowed to use cell phones in school?

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Good Thesis: Students should be allowed to use cell phones in school because having easy access to appropriate websites will only enhance their education.

Not a thesis: I believe we should be able to use cell phones in school.

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Why isn't the second example a sufficient thesis statement?

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Counterclaim and Refutation

A **Counterclaim** is the opposite of your claim with reason (the opposing side's argument). Consider if the claim is "students should be allowed to use cell phones in school."

Example counterclaim: Some people believe that allowing students to use cell phones in school will only cause more disruptions and distractions in class.

A **Refutation**, or a rebuttal, is the evidence a writer uses that proves the counterclaim wrong or weak. Think of it as your "comeback" or "clapback."

Example refutation:

Although cell phones can be distracting, if schools enforce a rule that students can only use phones at appropriate times, students will keep their phones in their pockets during class.

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Introduction Paragraph

- Begin with background information on the argument.
- Use general information.
- Act as if your reader knows nothing about the topic.
- End with your thesis statement.

Example:

It seems like everyone has a cell phone in today's world. Even kids as young as five have the latest version of the iPhone or Android. Technology has many beneficial and harmful effects on society which makes it a controversial topic. It's no wonder the education system is struggling on whether or not to incorporate cell phones into classrooms as a means of technology. But overall, wouldn't allowing students to use cell phones in the classroom only make life easier for students and teachers? Students should be allowed to use cell phones in school because having easy access to appropriate websites will only enhance their education.

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Reasons and Evidence

Body Paragraphs

Body Paragraph 1: List your first reason with evidence/details.

Students should be allowed to use cell phones in school because they will have easy access to educational websites. (Then list specific examples of websites or situations in which the internet would be helpful during school hours.)

Body Paragraph 2: List your second reason with evidence/details.

Having cell phones in school is also helpful for students because they can take pictures of homework or notes, especially if they miss a day of class. (Explain how this could be beneficial to students, teachers, and parents.)

Body Paragraph 3: Reference the opposing side and explain why they're wrong.

(Counterclaim and Refutation) Although cell phones can be a distraction, if schools enforce a rule that students can only use phones at appropriate times, students will keep their phones in their pockets during class. Students can be responsible if provided structure and a chance to prove they are trustworthy. This will actually prepare them for living more responsible lives after high school, where cell phones are accessible at all times.

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Evidence from Sources

You need **evidence** to support your claim and refutation.

Types of evidence include: quotes, anecdotes, statistics, and facts.

For example:

Quote that supports my claim:

"In the modern world, technology is an essential part of education and should be embraced rather than dismissed."

Quote that supports refutation (disproves the counterclaim):

"Studies show that most people have no problem focusing on a task if their cell phone is not directly in front of them."

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Use Quotes Properly

Always introduce the title and the author of the text you are referencing to give credit to that author and show that your evidence comes from a credible source.

Grammar Notes:

- Use a comma before a quotation (on the outside of the quotation mark) if your explanation comes before the quote.
- Use a comma after the quotation (on the inside of the quotation mark) if your explanation comes after the quote.
- You do not need to use a comma if you use the word "that."

Examples:

In the article "Technology in the Classroom" by Mark Jackson, he states, "In the modern world, technology is an essential part of education and should be embraced rather than dismissed."

"In the modern world, technology is an essential part of education and should be embraced rather than dismissed," states Mark Jackson in the article "Technology in the Classroom."

Mark Jackson states in the article "Technology in the Classroom" that "In the modern world, technology is an essential part of education and should be embraced rather than dismissed."

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Use Quotes Properly

Never insert a quote into your essay without a sentence that explains how it fits in with your topic.

After you introduce the title and author at least once, you can then refer to the author by just their last name and you may refer to the title as "the article" or "the text" instead of the entire title.

For Example:

In the article "Technology in the Classroom" by Mark Jackson, he states, "In the modern world, technology is an essential part of education and should be embraced rather than dismissed." Jackson also goes on to say that school districts with more accessibility to technology have higher test scores compared to schools that have a limited access to technology.

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Conclusion Paragraph

- Restate your claim
- Restate your best reasons that support your claim
- Provide any additional solutions to how the problem can be solved or how both sides of the argument can agree with your claim

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Teacher Instructions Activating Strategy

Step 1: You will need six volunteers in total to act out three skits in the front of the classroom. There are three separate skits, so only bring up two students at a time. Print out two copies of each script to give to students to read. In-between each skit, you should prompt your class into discussion of what went well and what did not go well in the conversation. Some talking points are included below.

Script Argument #1

Person 1: Why does marching band get Varsity Letter jackets? It's not even a sport.

Person 2: Yes, it is.

Person 1: You don't need to be athletic to hit a drum with a stick. My two year old sister can do that.

Person 2: I bet she can tackle you too, maybe she should try out for football.

Person 1: Very funny.

Person 2: I bet she's smarter than the whole football team combined... including you.

Person 1: Sounds like someone is jealous. Go back to making pathetic music with your tuba, band geek.

Talking Points: This argument included nasty comments targeted at each other, and nothing gets resolved. No one uses reason to make their argument; the two characters just resort to offensive stereotypes. Neither is able to acknowledge or appreciate the opposing side. The only thing that went well is that both characters clearly established their side of the argument.

Script Argument #2

Person 1: Why does marching band get Varsity Letter jackets? It's not even a sport.

Person 2: Really? And what makes something a sport?

Person 1: You need to be athletic and part of a team.

Person 2: What about swimming or wrestling? They don't work as a team.

Person 1: But they're still *on* a team.

Person 2: How so?

Person 1: They just are.

Person 2: The marching band is made up of like 150 students, and we have to work together... you wouldn't call that a team Mr. Football?

Person 1: Listen kid, I've been at this at this school two years longer than you. Trust me, band is not a sport.

Talking Points: Person 2 attempts to make valid points, but they aren't strong enough to convince Person 1. Both characters are still unwilling to really understand the other side. Person 1 leans on the fact they are older, so they must know better. Person 2 only addresses the fact that to be a sport, there must be a team, and neglects to address the statement by Person 1 that sports require athleticism.

Script Argument #3

Person 1: Why does marching band get Varsity Letter jackets? It's not even a sport.

Person 2: Interesting. Why would you say it's not a sport?

Person 1: Band is not a sport because it doesn't require any athleticism.

Person 2: Actually, it can be very demanding physically and it requires skill.

Person 1: Look at a football player, then look at a band member... who looks more fit to you?

Person 2: That's because football players are required to lift weights outside of practice. The band would look more fit if we were required to do that too.

Person 1: Ok fine. But what's so physically demanding about playing an instrument?

Person 2: A tuba weighs 35 pounds. You try holding that while marching for miles, performing coordinated movements, AND hitting all the right musical notes.

Person 1: What about the other instruments aside from a tuba?

Person 2: It takes a ton of concentration for *everyone*... keeping the tempo of a song can make the movements extremely intense. Ask anyone in marching band if they've ever broken a sweat from a performance.

Person 1: You bring up a good point, but I don't think so. You don't even play *against* anyone. And you're not a team.

Person 2: There's 150 of us! And we have to be synchronized. Plus, marching bands *do* compete. Just because we put on a show at halftime doesn't mean we don't have competitions too. Face it... marching band checks off all the boxes of being considered a sport: it's a physical activity, it requires skill, we compete, we're a team, and we even entertain.

Person 1: I guess I don't have a response for that.

Talking Points: This argument actually involves logic and conversation. Person 2 is more open to hear Person 1's ideas, and vice versa. Person 2 is then able to refute Person 1's argument multiple times by using factual information. Facts are harder to deny than opinion which is why Person 2 is successful in getting Person 1 to listen and understand their point of view. Person 2 does a great job summarizing all the main points that support his/her argument which leaves Person 1 speechless.

Step 2: After your class has discussed all three arguments, generate a list on the board of things that make a strong argument.

Example List:

- Writer clearly states their point of view
- Writer provides a number of specific examples
- The writer has authority or credibility in the field (The band member was able to clearly speak about marching band because he or she is a part of the band. This can sometimes work against a writer because of bias.)
- The writer is willing to acknowledge the opposing side without immediate dismissal
- The writer can dispute the other side with evidence
- Presents examples/ideas that are easy to follow
- Writer uses truth and logic

You can also discuss things that do not work in winning an argument:

- Mocking the other side
- Speaking louder than everyone else
- Using insults
- Refusal to admit that some people might not agree
- The belief that older equals smarter

Teacher Instructions

Tell students they will be writing an argumentative essay. If they've never written one before, you can tell them it is not the same as a persuasive essay. Pass out the graphic organizers to students for note-taking. Use the Powerpoint to teach the lesson on argumentative writing (Powerpoint presentations can also be uploaded to Nearpod).

After students take notes on argumentative writing, choose a topic for students to write an essay on or let them choose their own. You can either provide students with the resources to use for evidence or instruct them to find a credible source for evidence in their essays. Review rubric with students and assign due date.

The Argumentative Essay

Argumentative Writing	
Audience	PREVIEW
How is argumentative writing different from persuasive writing?	
Thesis/Claim	PREVIEW
Counterclaim	
Refutation	
What belongs in your introduction paragraph?	PREVIEW
What belongs in your body paragraphs?	
Evidence	
What belongs in your conclusion paragraph?	PREVIEW

Argumentative Essay Rubric — 120 Points

Content — 20 Points

- Multiple pieces of logical evidence are provided to support claim
- Counterclaim is acknowledged and refuted
- At least one quote from the source is used
- Essay is 5 paragraphs in length
- Paragraphs are all an appropriate length for grade level

Focus — 20 Points

- Claim is clearly stated and maintained throughout the essay
- All evidence in body paragraphs directly support claim and refutation
- Writer does not get off topic
- Writer remains unbiased and does not include opinion statements

Organization — 20 Points

- The writer's supporting reasons are organized intentionally and easy to follow
- Transition words and phrases are used in every paragraph
- Specific evidence is located in the body paragraphs
- Introduction remains general, ending with a thesis statement
- Conclusion restates claim and summarizes main ideas

Style — 20 Points

- Formal style of language is used
- Sentence style varies and has a rhythmic flow
- Writer uses a variety of vocabulary
- No person pronouns used

Conventions — 20 Points

- Proper grammar
- Proper spelling
- Proper mechanics and punctuation
- Word choice/word usage is precise and correct

Format — 20 Points

- Typed essay using acceptable font, "Times," "Arial," or "Calibri," size 12, color black
- Indent paragraphs
- Proper heading
- Title included

Student Name:

Total Points Earned:

Comments: