

How to Write an Argumentative Essay

Why Argumentative Essay Writing? In your L1 classes, you will be asked to write an essay in which you will present, elaborate, and defend an argument. In the essay you will take a position in response to a given prompt (a controversial issue or topic). Argumentation is an important skill that you will be able to apply in your future professional lives. Effective argumentation cultivates your critical thinking and research skills, deepens your ability to generate and evaluate evidence, strengthens your capacity to establish and prove a position. (Please note: these skills and competencies are also measured on the TOEIC)

What is Argumentative Writing?

The goal of written argumentation is to investigate an issue; consider the various viewpoints; collect, generate, and evaluate evidence; establish a position, analyze and refute opposing viewpoints and hence prove your position. To convince the audience of your stance, your essay must be analytical and balanced—it must include your viewpoint and the opposing viewpoint(s), or counterargument(s). If your essay is balanced, a reader is more likely to agree with you.

When?

In class, you will study and practice written argumentation methodology. The rubric in this handout will be used to grade your in-class TD and the argumentative essay on your DE. You will have one hour for your in-class essay which will take place in **lesson 10**. On the DE, which will last two hours, you will read three texts, answer comprehension questions, plan and write your essay. Make sure you leave yourself time to reread your work.

How to Structure an Argumentative Essay

A. The Introduction

The introduction must include three things:

1. An introductory sentence ('a hook') that sparks the readers interest and prepares them for the general topic or theme of the essay (e.g. *artificial intelligence, hunger in the world*);
2. Specific information on the topic, including the context or background which provides the motivation for discussing the issue or question addressed by the essay;
3. A strong **thesis statement**, which you need to underline.

In an argumentative essay, the thesis statement is the overall claim (your stance or position) that will be defended with evidence and reasoning in the body of the essay.

A thesis statement should:

- Be a clear, argumentative, and qualified sentence.
- Help you organize your essay.

A thesis statement should NOT:

- Be a question
- Include broad generalizations about "all" or "none"
- State two sides of an argument equally
- Give the outline of your essay

In the example introduction paragraph below, we can see that the student is going to focus on the broad concept of the death penalty in the United States and the specific question of whether it should be abolished. The thesis statement is underlined and highlighted in yellow.

For example: Introduction

The punishments that are given to criminals in response to their crimes have always been a source of controversy. At one point in our history, it was legal to hang people or throw them in a dungeon to die. There are still arguments today about how to fairly punish people who break the law. One example of this argument is the debate over the death penalty and whether or not the U.S. should continue to allow executions in some states. Currently, there are only a few countries left that still execute criminals for some crimes and the United States is one of them. Many people believe that the death penalty is a good idea and that we should continue to allow it in the United States. **Although the death penalty is reserved for only the most violent offenders, it should be abolished because of potential bias and sentencing mistakes.**

In this paragraph we can see the student started **with a hook** (i.e., *punishments for crimes committed*); provided **context and a motivation** for discussing the issue (i.e., *the death penalty as a form of punishment and its continued use in the United States*); and finished the introduction with a clear **thesis statement** that states the author's position on the topic, and gives reasons to support that position.

B. The Main Body of Your Essay

The main body paragraphs support your thesis with reasons and rebut the opposing side's arguments in an organized and logical way. How you structure your essay will depend on the topic and how long you have to write your essay but the following chart shows two ways which can be used as a guide:

Block Pattern	Point-by-Point Pattern
1. Introduction 2. Body Block 1 - Summary of the other side's arguments (1 paragraph) - Rebuttals of the arguments (1 rebuttal per paragraph) Block 2 - Your counterarguments (1 argument per paragraph) 3. Conclusion	1. Introduction 2. Body - Summary of the other side's 1st argument, rebuttal, counterargument - Summary of the other side's 2 nd argument, rebuttal, counterargument - Summary of the other side's 1st argument, rebuttal, counterargument - Summary of the other side's 2 nd argument, rebuttal, counterargument - 3. Conclusion

These two methods serve as flexible frameworks. Plan, explore and develop your arguments in a way that persuades your reader – even after all your analysis - that your thesis is right!

Make sure that each paragraph:

- A.** Begins with a topic sentence (that informs readers of the purpose of the paragraph);
- B.** Clearly explains the supporting argument, rebuttal or counterargument;
- C.** Provides evidence (quotes, data, examples, etc.) which is correctly cited;
- D.** Offers an explanation/analysis of the evidence;
- E.** Ends with a wrap-up sentence and transition as appropriate.

C. Conclusion

The conclusion provides the audience with a resolution (e.g. refers to the introduction, calls for action, issues a warning, etc.) A concluding paragraph for an argumentative essay should **restate** but **does not repeat** the **thesis, summarize the arguments**, and end with a **thoughtful comment** that brings the essay to a close.

For example: Conclusion

*The death penalty should be abolished because it does not work. Executing only the people who do really horrible things does not work at stopping horrible crimes from happening and judges and lawyers can make mistakes when charging people. If the people who are getting the death penalty are not being chosen based on their crime, but on the color of their skin, then the country has to stop it. Also, so many people have been sentenced to death and then proven innocent that any person who can imagine their own loved one wrongly sentenced to death must agree that the death penalty needs to go. **The only reason to accept these mistakes would be if the death penalty really reduced crime. Since it clearly does not, the only right thing to do is to abolish the death penalty.** America is a country that stands for a lot of things to a lot of different people. One of those things should not be executing people.*

How to Use Citations

It goes without saying, you must **NOT PLAGIARIZE** from the internet, other people or even auto-plagiarize (reusing previous work). If you use correct citations this should not be a problem.

For your in-class essay and for the essay on the DE, only **ONE citation style will be accepted:** (author's last name, date of publication) e.g. **(Musk, 2021).***

* IT ALWAYS COMES AT THE END OF THE SENTENCE BEFORE THE PERIOD.

You must use evidence to support/defend/explain the topic of each paragraph. There are two ways to do this:

1. **Direct quotes:** A direct quote is when you take text directly from a source without changing anything and you put parentheses around the chosen text. This **ALWAYS** requires a citation.
 - e.g.: According to Elon Musk, "the London research lab DeepMind is a "top concern" when it comes to artificial intelligence" (Musk, 2021).
 - e.g.: Similar to OpenAI, "the London research lab DeepMind is a "top concern" when it comes to artificial intelligence" (Musk, 2021).
2. **Paraphrasing:** explain something the author said **in your own words**. Be careful, paraphrasing **ALWAYS** requires a citation. Even if you are using your own words, the idea still belongs to someone else.
 - e.g.: The studies on AI being done at the DeepMind lab require critical consideration, according to Elon Musk (Musk, 2021).
 - e.g.: Some research into AI, notably the DeepMind lab, needs close monitoring (Musk, 2021).

Key Take-Aways

Argumentative essay writing is persuasive. You are expected to **take a position** and **present an argument** in order to **convince the reader of your views**. Arguing for a position goes beyond simple description or the presentation of a series of facts. It means understanding the question, engaging with the debate, and using evidence critically. To do this, a writer must support their thesis with strong evidence and sound logic.

At the very minimum you will need an **introduction**, **body**, and **conclusion**. Your line of argument should run through the entire essay, as it links all your main points and evidence to your central position. Therefore **ALL** argumentative essays must:

- contain a thesis statement;
- be cohesive and include both the author's ideas and facts from outside sources that support the author's arguments;
- rebut and discuss the opposing arguments with evidence;
- summarize your position and the key points you made throughout your essay.

Good luck!

Grading

Your instructor will grade your synthesis according to the grid below. Please note, half points can be awarded.

<u>Structure (6 points)</u>	<u>Content (8 points)</u>	<u>Language (6 points)</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Introduces the theme of essay (hook) 1pt. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides a clear organization (point-by-point or block pattern) 1.5 pts. <input type="checkbox"/> Introduces quotes and uses correct citation of sources 1.5 pts. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses correct overall structure (Introduction, body, conclusion) 2pt.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides clear thesis (<u>underlined</u>) 1.5pts. <input type="checkbox"/> Restates thesis in conclusion 0.5 pt. <input type="checkbox"/> Begins each paragraph with topic sentence 1pt. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides evidence of at least one opposing argument 1pt. <input type="checkbox"/> Refutes opposing arguments 1pt. <input type="checkbox"/> Cites at least <u>two</u> sources 1pt. <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates overall cohesion (transitions, relevancy, arguments, analysis, etc.) 2 pts.	<input type="checkbox"/> Grammar 2pts. <input type="checkbox"/> Syntax 1.5pts. <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary 1.5pts. <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuation 1pt.
____/7	____/7	____/6
Corrector's Comments:	Corrector's Comments:	Corrector's Comments:

TOTAL: /20