

Writing Strategies

Two-Sided Position

Sometimes it is NOT appropriate to totally agree or disagree with an issue. Rather, it may be wiser if you argue that the issue has two sides going with it. That is, in some cases, it is true and in some others not, or it has both advantages and disadvantages.

Example:

Consider the position taken in regard to the following issue:

"It is dangerous to trust only intelligence."

The author contends that it is a danger if we merely depend on intelligence. This is a claim which is NOT always true. In fact, whether to basically depend on intelligence depends to a great degree on the aspect of life we are concerned with.

(Paragraph 1) There are some domains in human life where the sole application of intelligence may lead to catastrophic results. (Choosing a life partner, choosing a job, child rearing, etc.)

(Paragraph 2) However, in certain other areas of life it seems necessary to consider intelligence the source for work. (e.g. application of justice, science, etc.)

Sample Issue Composition

"The video camera provides such an accurate and convincing record of contemporary life that it has become a more important form of documentation than written records."

(Issue Restatement) According to the speaker, the video recording is a more important means of document hag contemporary life than a written record because video recordings are more accurate and convincing. **(Position)** **Generally, I believe that the speaker overstates the comparative significance of video as a documentary tool. In fact,there certain events that lend themselves better to video recording and some others to written documentation.**

For the purpose of documenting temporal, spatial events and experiences, I agree that a video record is usually more accurate and more convincing than a written record. It is impossible for anyone, no matter how keen an observer and skilled a journalist, to recount with complete and objective detail **(QUICK EXAMPLES)** such events as *the winning touchdown at the Super Bowl, a Ballanchine ballet, the Tournament of Roses Parade, or the scene at the intersection of Florence and Normandy streets during the 1992 Los Angeles riots.* Yet these are important events in contemporary life the sort of events we might put in a time capsule for the purpose of capturing our life and times at the turn of this millennium.

The growing documentary role of video is not limited to seminal events like those described above. **(EXAMPLE OR CASE TYPE 1)** Video surveillance cameras are objective witnesses with perfect memories. Thus they can play a vital evidentiary role in legal proceedings—**(QUICK EXAMPLES)** such as those involving robbery, drug trafficking, police misconduct, motor vehicle violations, and even malpractice in a hospital operating room. Indeed, the video camera is superior to the written word **(EXAMPLE OR CASE TYPE 2)** whenever moving images are central to an event. **(QUICK EXAMPLES)** A written description of a hurricane, tornado, or volcanic eruption cannot convey its immediate power and awesome nature like a video record. A diary entry cannot "replay" that wedding reception, dance recital, or surprise birthday party as accurately or objectively as a video record. And a real estate brochure cannot inform about the lighting, spaciousness, or general ambiance of a featured property nearly as effectively as a video.

Nonetheless, as was mentioned in the introductory paragraph there is far more to document the life than what we see and hear; that is, for certain other purposes written records are advantageous to and more appropriate than video records. For example, **(EXAMPLE OR CASE TYPE 1)** certain legal matters are best left to written documentation: **(QUICK EXAMPLES)** video is of no practical use for documenting the terms of a complex contractual agreement, an incorporation, or the establishment of a trust. **(EXAMPLE OR CASE TYPE 2)** And video is of little use when it comes to documenting a person's subjective state of mind, impressions, or reflections of an event or experience. Indeed, to the extent that personal interpretation adds dimension and richness to the record, written documentation is actually more important than video. **(EXAMPLE TYPE 3)** Finally, a video record is of no use in documenting statistical or other quantitative information. **(QUICK EXAMPLES)** Returning to the riot example mentioned earlier, imagine relying on a video to document the financial loss to store owners, the number of police and firefighters involved, and so forth. Complete and accurate video documentation of such information would require video cameras at every street corner and in every aisle of every store.

In sum, the speaker's claim overstates the importance of video records, at least to some extent. When it comes to capturing, storing, and recalling temporal, spatial events, video records are inherently more objective, accurate, and complete. However, what we view through a camera lens provides only one dimension of our life and times; written documentation will always be needed to quantify, demystify, and provide meaning to the world around us.

HOMEWORK

Directions: Choose one of the issues stated below and develop it into an essay based on the format taught in this unit.

"College and university education should be free for all students, fully financed by the government."

Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the recommendation and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing and supporting your position, describe specific circumstances in which adopting the recommendation would or would not be advantageous and explain how these examples shape your position.

"Governments should focus on solving the immediate problems of today rather than on trying to solve the anticipated problems of the future."

Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the recommendation and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing and supporting your position, describe specific circumstances in which adopting the recommendation would or would not be advantageous and explain how these examples shape your position.