

Arguments, Paragraph Form, and Standard Form

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1 Arguments and non-arguments

Write two paragraphs on two different sheets of paper (tear one in half if you like). The first will offer an argument for one of the following conclusions. You'll probably write around a half page. Don't just write an argument in standard form without the line breaks. It should go without saying that the conclusion you argue for does not matter—you don't even have to believe it ultimately; we're only concerned with validity here. The second paragraph will not make an argument. It will do something else, but will be on the same topic. What will it do? That's up to you.

- College athletes should be paid.
- There should be no college-level athletics.
- There should be year-round school at the K-12 level.
- There should not be year-round school at the K-12 level.
- Students should be able to test out of any 100- or 200-level class.
- Students should have to take six courses in the humanities.
- Students should not have to take any courses on writing.
- We should *not* have a military presence/intervention in _____. (You fill in the blank here.)
- We should have a military presence/intervention in _____. (You fill in the blank here.)
- Performance enhancing drugs should be allowed in professional sports.
- Professional athletes who take performance enhancing drugs should face a penalty of _____.
- We should have a two-week long Spring Break.
- All 100- and 200-level classes should be online classes.
- There should be no online classes.

2 Arguments?

Read each of the letters below. For each one, answer two questions: (1) Is the passage making an *argument*. (2) If so, what is the conclusion of the argument?

2.1 One term

We should limit all elected officials to single term in office

I have decided that our country is suffering primarily because those who are supposed to represent us are representing themselves. They “work” to get re-elected. Any benefits that accrue to voters are incidental.

Instead of term limits which don’t work, we need a constitutional amendment that limits all elected officials to one term. Until that happy, one-term day arrives, we voters should just refuse to re-elect anybody. I think in time, we will get quality candidates because the blowhards of all political parties will see no profit in raising millions of dollars to serve only one term, with no benefits after leaving office, including those now given to the president.

Solution: Argument.

Conclusion: We should limit all elected officials to single term in office

1.

2.

3.

∴ We should limit all elected officials to single term in office.

2.2 Discount?

After a month of condemning programs that provide state aid to undocumented immigrants, even blaming the aid for increasing illegal immigration, this new report shows that Romney’s health-care reform law—his only meaningful accomplishment in public office—provides at least some limited, taxpayer-subsidized health care assistance to these same undocumented workers.

Solution: No Argument: it’s an account of a report!

2.3 Jobs

The letter (“It’s time to create a law that will keep jobs here,” “Readers write,” Opinion, Jan. 5) is a perfect indication of the woeful inadequacy of Joe Public’s knowledge of economics, and of how dependant we have become on the government in our everyday lives.

I’m sure that the writer is unaware of the Law of Unintended Consequences. I’m pretty sure our elected officials are, too (or maybe they just choose to ignore it). If I’m the head of a large business, my job is to make money for my investors. If you tell me that I have to pay \$50 an hour in wages to produce my widgets, and can’t send that production to a place where I can have widgets made for \$20 an hour, what do you think I’m going to do with my business? I’ll either shut down, or move it offshore. And if you don’t want to buy my widgets for that reason, that’s your choice.

Our government has saddled every business with a staggering load of unfunded mandates, and we still expect those businesses to go out and create American jobs willy-nilly. This can’t be done.

Trust me, you don’t want to see the consequences of the law the letter writer asked about.

Solution: Argument.

Conclusion: The law the letter writer asked about would be bad for businesses and workers.

1.

2.

3.

4.

∴ The law the letter writer asked about would be bad for businesses and workers.

2.4 Divorce

Between 1935 and 1955, women tripled their presence at universities. Divorce rates also rose, which hurt women more than men, since it was the women who usually ended up with children, putting them under more financial and emotional stress. This heavier burden, the authors argue, also drove women to increased levels of education, to make themselves more robust candidates in the workforce.

Solution: No argument. It reports on an argument. But it doesn't make one.

2.5 Neighborhoods

A recent study by the Department of Housing and Urban Development proves that living in a neighborhood improves your health. They tracked volunteers living in public housing since 1998. One group was given vouchers that allowed them to live in middle-class neighborhoods, another received vouchers for rent but stayed put, and the third was a control group:

The health of people who received rent subsidies but did not move showed no significant improvement. But the people who moved to middle-class neighborhoods were about 5% less likely to be obese and show signs of diabetes than were people in the control group, the team reports today in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. "These are pretty big effects," Ludwig says, "comparable in size to the long-term effects on diabetes we see from targeted lifestyle interventions or from providing people with medication that can prevent the onset of diabetes."

Solution: Argument.

Conclusion: Neighborhoods improve your health.

1.

2.

3.

4.

∴ Neighborhoods improve your health.

3 Arguments

3.1 No fly zone

If Sen. John McCain had been elected president, you would see Republicans excited at the prospect of American military intervention in the conflict in Libya. The opportunity to send our troops into another Arab nation and to gain access to another significant source of oil would make them giddy with anticipation. But we have a Democrat in the White House named Barack Obama, and the Republicans have made a religion of criticizing him—no matter what he does. They demanded he implement a no-fly zone in Libya. Once he did this, they tripped all over each other to be the first to denounce him for doing what they wanted in the first place. Hypocrites.

<http://www.ajc.com/opinion/readers-write-4-4-897392.html>

Solution:

1. If Republicans get what they want, they should be happy.
 2. Republicans are getting what they want.
- ∴ Republications should be happy.

3.2 International protection

In the president's recent speech regarding the military action in Libya, there appears to be a precedent being set that we have a responsibility to protect civilian life from catastrophic harm. Well, I believe we have another candidate for this concept for protection: Israel. With evil elements firing mortars and rockets into civilian neighborhoods (who have an avowed aim of driving it into the ocean), I believe that Israel needs international help in protecting its population.

Nowhere on earth is this situation allowed or permitted.

<http://www.ajc.com/opinion/readers-write-4-4-897392.html>

Solution:

1. If we have a responsibility to protect life and Israel needs help protecting life, then we should help Israel.
 2. We have a responsibility to protect life.
 3. Israel needs help protecting life.
- ∴ We should help Israel.

3.3 Taxes

While Gov. Nathan Deal's tax cuts for individuals sound good on the surface, that's misleading at best. It has been proved time and time again that cutting taxes for corporations is not a major factor in attracting more businesses into states. While the taxpayers feel like they're getting a great deal, they are only helping big businesses get richer.

What happens when we wish to buy groceries or need to repair our cars? We will pay higher taxes. So even though we may feel better on tax day, we may not understand the collective taxes we will pay for necessities. Where is the outrage?

<http://www.ajc.com/opinion/readers-write-4-4-897392.html>

Solution:

1. If Gov. Deal's tax cuts are good, they will help individuals.
 2. Gov. Deal's tax cuts can help individuals by creating jobs or saving money overall.
 3. Gov. Deal's tax cuts will not create jobs.
 4. Gov. Deal's tax cuts will not save money overall.
- ∴ Gov. Deal's tax cuts are not good.

3.4 Foreclosures

Since recent numbers confirm that the housing industry is not making a recovery, why not allow homeowners to make a one-time, tax-free and penalty-free withdrawal from their retirement accounts? This withdrawal would have to be used to pay down or pay off personal residences. If a mortgage is paid down, the bank would have to reamortize the remaining balance using the original interest rate and remaining time on the original mortgage.

This could help reduce the number of foreclosures. It should also stimulate the economy. And, it should give a boost to the building industry by reducing the available home inventory so we can get back to building new homes.

<http://www.ajc.com/opinion/readers-write-4-1-893502.html>

Solution:

1. If we want the economy to turn around, we should do anything to let people have more money.
 2. If we should do anything that lets people have more money, we should let homeowners make a one-time, tax-free and penalty-free withdrawal from their retirement accounts.
 3. We want the economy to turn around.
- ∴ We should allow homeowners to make a one-time, tax-free and penalty-free withdrawal from their retirement accounts.

3.5 Textbooks

the textbook publishers might be "private," but they depend on lucrative public sector contracts. That is why they pour money into lobbying public officials, many of whom they later hire to lobby their former colleagues. We'd be much better off supporting for-profit entrepreneurs who make money by improving the quality of instructional materials rather than by improving their ability to chisel more money out of taxpayers. They are not the same.

Solution:

1. We should support a system for textbooks that produces the best instructional materials.
 2. We can either have the current system (which depends on lobbying public officials) or a new system that supports for-profit entrepreneurs.
 3. The proposed new system would result in improved instructional materials.
- ∴ We should have a new system that supports for-profit entrepreneurs.