

Help Centres – English Support



Argumentative Essay Outline

Overview

In an argumentative essay, a specific point of view on a contemporary issue is presented via a thesis statement. This is followed by body paragraphs where evidence – and analysis of the evidence – is provided to persuade the reader to accept the point of view as a reasonable and logical position to hold on the issue.

Depending on the length of the essay, three or four body paragraphs present main points expanding on and defending the thesis. These focussed points are backed by evidence and analysis which shows how the evidence supports the argument.

Following these paragraphs, a paragraph-length counterargument – an opposing view—is made against the thesis. After the opposing view is presented, a refutation of the counterargument – either within the same paragraph or in the following paragraph – is made to contradict the opposing stance. This refutation disproves the opposing view by exposing flaws in its argument.

Paragraph Structure of an Argumentative Essay

Introduction: Hook to grab the reader’s attention; background to the issue to contextualize the argument in the thesis statement; a one or two sentence thesis statement containing the point of view on the issue argued throughout the body paragraphs.

Body Paragraphs: Topic sentence stating one main point arguing the thesis statement; an expansion of the topic sentence; evidence supporting the main point of the body paragraph; explanation of how the evidence supports the main point. The number of evidence and explanation sentences will vary, but body paragraphs should strive for balance between one another.

Counterargument Body Paragraph: Outline of a hypothetical counterargument against the point of view developed in the preceding paragraphs; the counterargument is followed by a well-reasoned refutation that exposes the weaknesses and biases of the counterargument.

Conclusion: Briefly paraphrase the main points of the thesis without introducing new evidence or arguments. The remaining sentences reinforce the strength, importance and validity of the original argument.