

## Persuasive Writing

This information should be helpful to you as we begin our persuasive writing unit. You should print these pages and keep them in your English notebook. Students will use this information this semester and next semester.

### Persuasive Writing is Similar to Arguing a Court Case

Think of the judge as the prompt. The judge is going to tell everyone what the topic for the trial (**the persuasive essay**) is going to be. The attorneys know they must stay on topic and present related evidence in the court (**the persuasive essay**).

The jury is the **audience**. They are the ones who will decide how persuasive you are in the courtroom (**the persuasive essay**).

The prosecutor (**student**) must state his/her argument (**thesis**) and prove this thesis while showing how the opposition (**defendant**) is guilty (**wrong**).

The defendant (**counterclaim**) is the opponent who does not have to defend him/herself. They are “innocent until proven guilty.” You, as the prosecutor (**student**), must provide your cited/documented evidence supporting your viewpoint (**thesis**) and show how the defendant (**opponent**) is wrong. When you do this, you are providing the **refutation/assertions**.

It is common practice in a courtroom for the prosecutor to acknowledge the defendant (**concede/concession**) which is when you (**the prosecutor**) must acknowledge that the opponent’s viewpoint (**counterclaim**) exists; however, your job is to show why their belief/stance/point of view is invalid or inferior. You must include additional cited evidence in your refutation.

## Organizing Your Argument

### How can I effectively present my argument?

Use an organizational structure that arranges the argument in a way that will make sense to the reader. The Toulmin Method of Logic is a common and easy-to-use formula for organizing an argument.

### The basic format for the Toulmin Method is as follows:

**Claim:** The overall thesis the writer will argue for.

**Data/Concrete Detail:** Evidence gathered to support the claim.

**Warrant/Commentary:** Explanation of why or how the data supports the claim; the underlying assumption that connects your data to your claim. (This can also be thought of as a “bridge” which connects your evidence to your thesis.)

**Backing (also referred to as the foundation):** Additional logic or reasoning that may be necessary to support the warrant/commentary.

**Counterclaim:** A claim that negates or disagrees with the thesis/claim. (This would be the opponent’s viewpoint.)

**Rebuttal:** Evidence that negates or disagrees with the counterclaim. (This is where the student responds to the opponent and shows why their argument is weak.)

Including well-developed commentary (or a warrant or bridge) is essential to writing a good argumentative essay or paper. If you present data to your audience without explaining how it supports your thesis the reader may not make a connection between the two or they may draw different conclusions.

Don't avoid the opposing side of an argument. Instead, ***include the opposing side as a counterclaim***. Find out what the other side is saying and respond to them within your own argument. This is important so that the audience is not swayed by weak, unrefuted arguments. Including counterclaims allows you to find common ground with more of your readers. It also makes you look more ***credible*** because you appear to be knowledgeable about the entirety of the debate rather than just being biased or uninformed. You may want to include several counterclaims to show that you have thoroughly researched the topic.

**Example:**

**Claim:** Hybrid cars are an effective strategy to fight pollution.

**Data/CD 1:** Driving a private car is a typical citizen's most air polluting activity.

**Warrant/CM 1:** Because cars are the largest source of private, as opposed to industry produced, air pollution switching to hybrid cars should have an impact on fighting pollution.

**Data/CD 2:** Each vehicle produced is going to stay on the road for roughly 12 to 15 years.

**Warrant/CM 2:** Cars generally have a long lifespan, meaning that a decision to switch to a hybrid car will make a long-term impact on pollution levels.

**Data/CD 3:** Hybrid cars combine a gasoline engine with a battery-powered electric motor.

**Warrant/CM 3:** This combination of technologies means that less pollution is produced. According to ineedtoknow.org "the hybrid engine of the Prius, made by Toyota, produces 90 percent fewer harmful emissions than a comparable gasoline engine."

**Counterclaim:** Instead of focusing on cars, which still encourages a culture of driving even if it cuts down on pollution, the nation should focus on building and encouraging use of mass transit systems.

**Rebuttal and Concluding Sentence:** While mass transit is an environmentally sound idea that should be encouraged, it is not feasible in many rural and suburban areas, or for people who must commute to work; thus hybrid cars are a better solution for much of the nation's population.

### **Persuasive Essay Skeleton**

The following outline is designed to help you build a skeleton for the persuasive essay. As with all essays, you will need both an introductory paragraph and a concluding paragraph. This essay will be in MLA format. You will correctly document and cite your sources. You will include signal phrases for each fact (CD) and you will include parenthetical documentation. You will also create a correctly-formatted Works Cited page. Times New Roman font size 12 is the standard and required font.

An introductory paragraph will include the thesis statement, which will be the last sentence in your intro paragraph. Be sure to identify your topic and your point of view on the topic in this paragraph. You must take a stand and you must clearly identify your stand on the issue. You can not "flip-flop" on the issue. Be firm throughout the essay. Do NOT use first-person or second-person pronouns in your body paragraphs.

**Thesis Statement**

(Prepare the audience for both sides of the argument). This is the last sentence in the intro paragraph:

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**BODY PARAGRAPH #1**

Body Paragraph TS (*The other side*):

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Counterclaim/Acknowledgment #1 of Opposition's POV:

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Counterclaim/Acknowledgment #2 of Opposition's POV:

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Concession/Commentary

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**BODY PARAGRAPH #2**

Body Paragraph 2 TS (*Your Side*):

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Refute/Explanation #1 of your POV:

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Refute/Explanation #2 of your POV:

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Assertion - This is your side only. Be authoritative. Based on your commentary, what should the listener to believe?

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This is simply a skeleton. Use the skeleton to organize your ideas and evidence before you write your essay. You will include additional paragraphs. Here are two options for you to consider as you write your persuasive:

**Option #1:**

The first body paragraph is the only place you have to acknowledge and discuss the opposing side. Remember that you want to make your side look the stronger, so think of strong, relevant examples (CDs) and detailed commentary to back up your viewpoint. In your subsequent body paragraphs, you will address arguments to support your point of view on the issue.

**Option #2:**

In each body paragraph, select an opposing viewpoint and use your cited evidence to show why that belief is inferior. The more arguments that you can effectively negate, the stronger your arguments will appear. Remember that you want to make your side look the stronger, so think of strong, relevant examples (CDs) and detailed commentary to back up your viewpoint.

Would you like more information about organizing your arguments? Check out *The Owl at Purdue*: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/03/>