

Plan A

- I. Introduction (+ thesis statement of intent)
- II. Background paragraph about topic (OPTIONAL: depends on assignment, audience, and available material)
- III. Pro argument #1 (weakest argument that supports your opinion)
- IV. Pro argument #2 (stronger argument that supports your opinion)
- V. Pro argument #3 (strongest argument that supports your opinion)
- VI. Con (Counterarguments and your refutation) —
- VII. Solution to the problem. (OPTIONAL: depends on the assignment, your audience, and the available material)
- VIII. Conclusion (summary + solution, prediction, or recommendation)

Plan B

- I. Introduction (+ thesis statement of intent)
- II. Background paragraph about your topic (OPTIONAL: depends on the assignment, your audience, and the available material)
- III. Con (Counterarguments + your refutation)
- IV. Pro argument #1 (the weakest argument that supports your opinion)
- V. Pro argument #2 (stronger argument that supports your opinion)
- VI. Pro argument #3 (strongest arguments that supports your opinion)
- VII. Solution to the problem (OPTIONAL: depends on the assignment, your audience, and the available material)
- VIII. Conclusion (summary + solution, prediction, or recommendation)

Plan C

- I. Introduction (+ thesis statement of intent)
- II. Background paragraph about your topic (OPTIONAL: depends on the assignment, your audience, and the available material)
- III. Counterargument #1 + Pro argument to refute it
- IV. Counterargument #2 + Pro argument to refute it
- V. Counterargument #3 + Pro argument to refute it
- VI. Counterargument #4 + Pro argument to refute it (OPTIONAL: depends on available material)
- VII. Solution to the problem (OPTIONAL: depends on the assignment, your audience, and the available material)
- VIII. Conclusion (summary + solution, prediction, or recommendation)

NOTE: Your decision on which plan to use for your argumentative essay will depend on the material. For example, if you have parallel and equal numbers of pro and con arguments, you might choose Plan C. If, however, you have only one or two counterarguments, you will choose Plan A or Plan B. In addition, you must consider the audience. If you think that putting the counterarguments first and then building the pro arguments will result in a stronger positive reaction from the audience, then you should choose Plan B. If, instead, you believe that putting your counterarguments near the end of the paper would be more successful, then you should choose Plan A.

Generating Material

EXERCISE 5E

Below are three plans by student writers for three argumentative essays. Study each plan. Then make a similar plan for your argumentative essay.

| | |
|--|---|
| I | |
| Solar Energy: The Energy of the Future | |
| Pro | Con |
| source (the sun) is free plentiful and inexhaustible safe, nonpolluting needs only simple technology | costly to build a solar energy system low efficiency compared to fossil fuels |

Audience: classmates
 Purpose: to educate and persuade the audience about the coming importance of solar energy

Techniques of support: facts, examples, physical description
 Argumentative thesis: Although solar energy systems are initially costly and presently have relatively low efficiency, we need to develop solar energy because the source is free, inexhaustible, safe, and needs only simple technology.

- Outline (Plan A)
- I. Introduction: explanation of energy problem
 - II. Background paragraph: about sources of energy
 - III. Pro #1: resource of the sun is free, plentiful, and inexhaustible
 - IV. Pro #2: safe and nonpolluting
 - V. Pro #3: simple technology

3. Based on the information you have, decide on a tentative thesis.

Example: For the foreign student, American food is a problem: it is tasteless and not very nutritious.

Note: A controversy must have two sides; that is, the argument must be able to be answered both "yes" and "no" by different members of the audience. To test your topic, try the "although-because" sentence (see below). If your topic has two sides, this sentence will give the basic plan for your essay. You may use this test sentence as your thesis statement, or you may form another thesis.

Example:
Although American food is quick and easy to prepare, it is not as good as food from my country because it is tasteless, not often fresh, and has too much sugar and starch to be truly nutritious.

4. Select a suitable number of strong arguments, the strongest you have on your list. The number of arguments will depend on the essay assignment, the audience, and the available information.
5. Organize your arguments in order of importance and strength. Consider your audience: Is each of your arguments interesting, valuable, most important, or will it help build your argument?
6. Use supporting material to prove that each of your arguments is strong, vivid, and correct. Supporting techniques in argumentation are the same as they are in any other essay: facts, examples, physical description, and personal experience.
7. Select methods of development that will present your arguments in the strongest possible way for your reader. Methods of development include definition, comparison-contrast, process, classification, and cause-effect.
8. Many students stop right there. But intelligent readers won't. They see arguments on the other side, called "counterarguments." If the writer does not show an awareness of the counterarguments, readers might think either that the writer has not explored the subject thoroughly, or that the writer is presenting one-sided propaganda, afraid to admit the counterarguments. So the writer must look at the other side too.
9. Anticipating opposition, use one of the following transitions to introduce the counterargument:

Opponents of this position argue that . . .
Another argument against X is . . .
Critics of this position point out that . . .

It may be objected that . . .
Several questions come to mind:
At this point, one may wonder . . .
Certain objections must, of course, be considered . . .

Example: Of course there are some advantages to American food. First, and perhaps most important for the student, American food is generally quick and easy to prepare.

10. Now you, the writer, must refute that counterargument. It is real; it won't go away from your reader's mind. You must deal with major objections to your position, either by disproving them or by conceding their truth but showing that they are not as strong or valid as your arguments. Your refutation must do one of the following:

- a. correct your opponent's facts: the counterargument is UNTRUE/INCORRECT
- b. deny that the counterargument is related to the topic: IRRELEVANT
- c. compromise: although the counterargument is true, it is not enough to overcome your arguments: INSUFFICIENT

Example: But although American food is fast and quite easy to fix, sitting down to a dinner that tastes like cardboard and is not much more nutritious makes eating not very worthwhile.

Technique:
insufficient

EXERCISE 5D

The audience for your argumentative essay is hostile. Think about a mean, unpleasant, crotchety old man. He doesn't like you, and he doesn't like your topic. In fact, he doesn't like any topic. As you begin to generate material for your essay, think about this man. As you list the "pros" and the "cons" for your essay, consider:

- Will he accept your proof?
- Is the evidence you are giving strong and valid?
- What comments could this man make about your evidence?
- The goal of your argumentative essay will be to force this nasty man to admit that your opinion has some merit. He may still not agree with your opinion, but he will have to recognize that your evidence is valid.

Possible Overall Structures for the Argumentative Essay

Below are three basic plans for argumentative essays. Notice that in each plan, one or more of the body paragraphs can be OPTIONAL (that is, you will choose either to use or not to use that paragraph). For your argumentative essay, the assignment (700-900 words) determines that your essay will