

Argumentative Essay Assignment

Argumentative skills are a part of everyday life: On a daily basis, each of us makes claims about issues large or small. Consider the argumentative elements of issues that you're concerned about. To make this assignment a meaningful and successful endeavor, choose a topic with a narrow focus, so you can successfully support your stance. *Avoid* global issues and claims that are supported more by emotion than fact. The key to a successful argumentative essay is to *combine facts with logic to form a convincing argument*.

Once you've selected a topic, examine the subject for a debatable claim. If the claim is arguable (if there is an opposing side), then you have the focus for an argumentative essay. To clarify your purpose for writing this essay, you **MUST** define a specific audience.

Essay length: minimum of 1,000 words, plus Works Cited page, if necessary

Font: Times New Roman (size 12)

Spacing: Double Spaced (for easier reading and commenting)

Guidelines for Selecting a Successful Argumentative Essay Topic

1. Is the topic narrow enough to be successfully and convincingly developed in a 3-4 page paper? A very specific topic, well presented, is more effective than a broad (seemingly more significant) topic that can't be developed fully.
2. Is there a legitimate opposition?
3. Can you refute the opposition's argument?
4. Can your position be argued and supported primarily with fact and logic rather than emotion, faith, or a morality-based stance?
5. Is it an issue you have experience with or have a vested interest in? To be convincing, your voice must be heard.

Topics to Avoid

1. Issues that have been argued into the ground for years (e.g., abortion, capital punishment, the legalization of marijuana, gay marriage, etc.)
2. Issues that you feel so passionately about that you can't argue your position logically (rather than emotionally) or acknowledge arguments from the opposing side.

Supporting your Argument

In order to convince your audience, you must provide sufficient REASONS for your position. You must give more than mere opinion—you must offer logical arguments to back up your points. Listed below are several suggested methods:

1. Give examples (real or hypothetical): "When students wear uniforms, they are still free to express their individuality. Some may use a hairstyle or hair color to show their creative side. Others might embrace their trendiness by slipping on leopard print flats. Jewelry and other accessories may also be worn to highlight the students' interests and personal style...."
2. Present a comparison or contrast: "In contrast to looking like a robot clone, an individual who selects his or her own attire is empowered to make responsible choices that reflect his or her personal style."
3. Argue by definition: "Expressing oneself isn't the same as *revealing* oneself."

Your essay might also include supporting evidence such as:

- Personal experiences
- The experiences or testimony of others whose opinions are relevant to the topic

- Factual information you've gathered from research
- Statistics from CURRENT, reliable sources
- Hypothetical examples
- Testimony from authorities or experts
- Charts, graphs, or diagrams

ESSAY TOPICS

1. Students should/should not work through high school.
2. To prepare students for a highly technical, demanding world, public high schools should/should not extend their academic year.
3. Sixteen-year-olds should/should not be issued limited-privilege driver's licenses.
4. The movie rating system should/should not be revised.
5. All adoption records should/should not be open to adopted people over 18.
6. Students who do poorly in their academic courses should/should not be allowed to participate in extracurricular programs.
7. All high schools should/should not adopt a "repeat/delete" policy, allowing students to retake a course and substitute a higher grade on their record.
8. Televised instant replays should/should not be used to call plays in all sports.
9. National exams, such as the ACT and SAT, should/should not be required for college applicants.
10. The math requirement (or some other requirement, rule, or policy) at Scott County High School should/should not be changed.
11. Off-road recreational vehicles should/should not be banned from our national parks.
12. Telephone solicitation bans do/do not infringe on freedom of speech rights.
13. Public school students should/should not be required to wear uniforms.
14. The Electoral College system should/should not be used to select the U.S. president.
15. Controversial names or symbols of athletic teams ("Redskins," the Confederate flag, the tomahawk chop) should/should not be changed.
16. College athletes should/should not be paid by their institution of higher education.
17. Persons over 14 charged with crimes should/should not be tried as adults.
18. Public school students should/should not have exclusively male or female content classes (English, math, social studies, and science).
19. Men and women in the military should/should not serve in separate units.

Choosing a Topic

- Start with your roles in life. Make four columns with the headings "Personal," "Family," "School" and "Other." Then, list the roles you play that relate to each.
- Identify issues that interest you in one of more of your roles.
- Frame your topic as a problem.
- Choose one issue to write about.

A Topic Proposal for Your Essay

- Identify the subject of your argument and write a working thesis statement.
- State at least one reason for choosing this topic.
- Identify your audience.
- List at least 3 reasons that support your opinion.
- Clearly state at least one opposing opinion that you must address.