

Argumentation Essays

Purpose:

1. Convince the reader
 - A. To convince, appeal to the reader's logic; provide sound reasoning, facts, statistics, quotes, etc. "Argument to **convince** centers on making a case, which means offering reasons and evidence" (Crusius and Channell 16).
 - B. *Logos* – logical appeal: "The logic relies on evidence provided for claims and on sound reasoning" (Troyka and Hesse 156).
2. Persuade the reader
 - A. To persuade, appeal to the reader's beliefs, ethics, etc. Still make sure to provide sound reasoning and logic. "The persuasive writer attempts to represent something 'higher' or 'larger' than him- or herself – some ideal with which the reader would like to be associated" (Crusius and Channell 17).
 - B. *Pathos* – emotional appeal: "...*emotional* has a specific meaning in this context: 'arousing and enlisting the emotions of the reader'" (Troyka and Hesse 156).
 - C. *Ethos* – ethical appeal: Audiences "trust a writer who comes across as honest, knowledgeable, and fair" (Troyka and Hesse 157).
3. Do not feel confined to only one appeal. Try to use a combination of the three that best fits your paper.

Outline:

- I. Introduction
 - A. Provide any background information needed, define terms, etc.
 - B. Provide your thesis, which needs to be **debatable**.
 1. The thesis states your main claim and is the overall point of your essay.
 2. The thesis for an argumentative essay cannot be a fact or something that people generally agree upon – the thesis needs to be debatable, having at least two sides.
- II. Counter-argument
 - A. Include a short paragraph that provides the opposition's argument.
 - B. Some instructors do not require a counter-argument. Check with your instructor to see if you need to provide a counter-argument.
- III. Supporting Paragraphs (including evidence)
 - A. Include at least **three** supporting paragraphs.
 - B. Within these paragraphs, include:
 1. Explanation of your points/ reasons
 2. Textual evidence (mainly for literary criticism)
 3. Support of your points – evidence, facts, statistics, quotes, etc.
 - C. Remember that all of your points need to relate back to your thesis.
- IV. Conclusion
 - A. Re-affirmation of argument (Holland)
 - B. "The writer is particularly concerned with helping the reader move from the parts back to the big picture and to understand the importance or significance of the essay" (Ramage and Bean 480).

Order:

Argumentative essays are usually organized emphatically (by emphasis), starting with your least important point moving toward your most important or effective point. Organizing emphatically builds on importance and allows you to end with your strongest point.

Deductive vs. Inductive Reasoning:

1. Deduction states the argument first, and then supports it with examples (Holland).
 - A. Syllogism – a three-part structure including two **premises** and a conclusion.
 - B. The **premises** state facts or assumptions that lead to a conclusion.
 - C. “A deductive argument is *valid* when the conclusion logically follows from the premises; a deductive argument is *invalid* when the conclusion doesn’t logically follow from the premises” (Troyka and Hesse 140).

For example:

| | |
|------------|--|
| | VALID DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENT |
| PREMISE 1 | When it snows, the streets get wet. [fact] |
| PREMISE 2 | It is snowing. [fact] |
| CONCLUSION | Therefore, the streets are getting wet. |

| | |
|------------|--|
| | INVALID DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENT |
| PREMISE 1 | When it snows, the streets get wet. [fact] |
| PREMISE 2 | The streets are getting wet. [fact] |
| CONCLUSION | Therefore, it is snowing. |

(Troyka and Hesse 140)

- D. Even though the premises in the invalid argument are facts and are acceptable, the conclusion is incorrect because there could be other reasons why the streets are wet (such as the fact that it could be raining) (Troyka and Hesse 140).
 - E. “A syllogism sets up a logically tight argument; if your reader accepts your assumptions and your logic is not flawed, your reader must accept your argument” (Holland).
2. Induction states examples first and then moves to a general conclusion at the end (Holland).

For example: You go to the grocery store to buy tomatoes, but you find that they are all bruised. You go back in one week and, again, the tomatoes are bruised. You then talk with your sister and one of your friends who go to the same grocery store, and they concur with what you have said. You then conclude that the grocery store does not handle their tomatoes properly.

3. Deductive conclusions are considered true or false, whereas inductive conclusions are considered reliable or unreliable (Troyka and Hesse 138).
 4. Deductive reasoning is the most common form, but check with your instructor to see what type is acceptable.

References:

Crusius, Timothy W. and Carolyn Channell. *The Aims of Argument*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 2003.

Holland, M. “Argumentation Essays.” HyperTeach Resources. University of California.
<http://www.english.ucla.edu/TA/hyperteach/PDFs/argmnt_ess.pdf>.

Ramage, John D., and John C. Bean. *The Allan and Bacon Guide to Writing*. 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

Troyka, Lynn Quitman, and Douglas Hesse. *Simon & Schuster Handbook for Writers*. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005.