

Argumentative Writing

A written argument should be formal, fair and well-structured

A written argument can work well when it is presented as a debate between opposing views. This can help make you seem much more fair-minded and that you have weighed up the pros and the cons before coming to your own view. You must, however, clearly state your view to the reader.

Structuring an argument

- Start with a clear opening that explains what the argument is about and where you stand on it.
- Write a series of structured 'body paragraphs' that present the debate, that is, the differing sides of the argument – but in each case use this to show how your viewpoint is the best one to take.
 - For example, 'It is true that the town is crowded with parked cars and that many of these are from workers at local businesses. This means that a new car park would be welcome to relieve the congestion and pollution in town; however, to take away a green space that is the home of the town's war memorial and such a popular walking spot for the young and elderly is surely the wrong way to go about it.'
- A strong conclusion that very briefly summarizes the strongest point from each side of the argument, before restating the writer's view as the best compromise to follow.

Use linking words & phrases to connect differing viewpoints

The use of linking words can help the argument to flow smoothly and seemingly logically, for example, 'however others might disagree...' or 'although different views exist, for example...'. Linking words often work well after a semicolon as this creates a useful 'pause and emphasis effect'.

- but
- so
- and so
- however
- although
- instead of
- alternatively
- in contrast
- whereas
- on the other hand
- unlike
- otherwise
- likewise
- similarly
- equally
- as with
- in the same way
- like

Persuasive writing techniques

Use the list below to guide you and help you to improve your argument by adding these techniques:

- **Anecdote** - a brief account or story. An anecdote is used to back up your viewpoint. For example, to keep the park, you might write, 'Many parents have said just how important the green area is for their young children as a safe place for play and exercise'. Anecdotes can be made up, of course – but they do need to appear realistic and reasonable.
- **Clusters of three/lists of three** - this is usually three phrases or describing words used to emphasise a point, for example, 'it's great, it's brilliant, it's amazing!'.

Usually the list gets stronger as it builds up. A list of three can create a very impressive effect of emphasis but be careful if you are writing a balanced argument as it is a way to present one side of a point of view.

- **Contrasts** - a contrast presents two opposing views, but in way that subtly shows one as a stronger view, for example, 'While it is true that the town is clogged with workers' cars during the daytime and the park is often empty at that time, the opposite is true in the afternoons and especially summer evenings...'. This is essential in an argument as the writer's job is to present each side of the case fairly.
- **Emotive words** - these are words that are deliberately designed to try to make the reader have strong feelings. These can be positive or negative. Human beings will react to some words very positively. Words like 'love', 'happiness', 'wealth' and 'good health' tend to make us feel positive. Other words, such as 'death', 'illness', 'poverty' and 'tears' make us negative. You need to be subtle with your use of emotional language in an argument especially if you are writing a balanced argument.
- **Imagery** - a mental picture or feeling in the mind's eye. Imagery can help a reader engage with a text by making them feel almost as if they were 'there', seeing, hearing or feeling the things the writer saw, heard and felt.
- **Personal Pronouns** - these are words like 'I', 'me' and 'you'. By using a personal pronoun such as 'you', you are addressing the reader directly. This can cause the reader to engage very closely with the text and help to keep them engaged in your argument.
- **Repetition** - this is where a single word or phrase is repeated at least twice. Repetition works in a similar way to a list of three. By repeating a word or phrase, you draw attention to it and emphasise its importance.
- **Rhetorical question** - this is a question stated in a way that presents a point of view, so is not truly asking for a response. When a reader is asked a question, it engages them in the topic of the writing.
- **Statistics (and facts)** - statistics are numbers or facts that are presented to seem to be fair and convincing information. You should use these as a tool to convince your reader so take care if you are trying to create a sense of balance. The reader will

feel that they cannot argue with statistics and facts and that the statistics will prove what you are saying.

- **Quotations** - quotations are used when a writer brings in some information from another person or from another article and quotes their actual words. By using quotations from other interested – and often expert - parties, you can back up what is being said or promoted. It can help make the argument seem well researched and thought out.