**ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY**

**Definition:** In this kind of essay, we not only give information but also **present an argument** with the PROS (supporting ideas) and CONS (opposing ideas) of an argumentative issue. We should clearly take our stand and write as if we are trying to persuade an opposing audience to adopt new beliefs or behavior. The primary objective is to persuade people to change beliefs that many of them do not want to change.

**Organization:** All argumentative topics have PROs and CONs. Before starting writing, it is imperative to make a list of these ideas and choose the most suitable ones among them for supporting and refuting.

 There are three possible organization patterns:

Pattern 1 (recommended):

1. Thesis statement
2. PRO idea 1
3. PRO idea 2
4. PRO idea 3
5. CON(s) + Refutation(s)
6. Conclusion

Pattern 2:

1. Thesis statement
2. CON(s) + Refutation(s)
3. PRO idea 1
4. PRO idea 2
5. PRO idea 3
6. Conclusion

Pattern 3:

1. Thesis statement
2. CON idea 1 -----> Refutation
3. CON idea 2 -----> Refutation
4. CON idea 3 -----> Refutation
5. Conclusion

**Example (Pattern 3):**

Thesis: Do Reiki instead of taking medicine.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Counter arguments |  | Refutation |
| 1. | People should trust medicine since it is effective and scientifically proven. | -----> | Reiki is also scientifically proven and does not have side effects. (refutation method: insufficient claim) |
| 2. | Serious illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and cancer cannot be treated without medicine. | -----> | Medicine also cannot treat serious illnesses if not diagnosed at an early stage. (refutation method: opponents are partially correct) |
| 3. | Reiki, like alternative healing methods, requires a lot of time. | -----> | Reiki requires less time if done regularly. (refutation method: opponents are completely wrong) |

Conclusion: Reiki is a better alternative method to treat disease.

**Supporting our ideas:** This is the most important part when persuading others. We are asking some people to change their beliefs or actions. We should be supporting our ideas with such facts, statistics and/or authorities that there should not be room for any doubts. Choose supporting details carefully using the following strategies:

**S**tatistics

**A**necdotal evidence

**F**acts

**E**xpert opinions

However, there are some *faulty*supports (**fallacies**) we should avoid:

Thesis: Leaving the university and starting to work is good for the adolescent because …

* Feelings, emotional arguments (… it makes one feel much better.)
* Irrelevant examples (wandering off the topic) (… he would then be able to take his girlfriend to expensive restaurants.)
* Oversimplification (… only then would he understand what it means to be an adult.)
* Hasty generalizations (... it is a widely known fact that all adolescents look forward to earning money.)
* Unreliable, even false outside sources (… according to www.doubtme.com, 80% of working men wish they quit school when they were at university and started working at an earlier age.)

**Refuting opposing arguments:** Before we start saying that the opponents are wrong, we should *specify* their opposing ideas. Otherwise, it would be like hitting the other person with eyes closed. We should see clearly what we are hitting and be prepared beforehand so that he cannot hit us back. We can do this by knowing what we are refuting.

e.g. **X** Some people may say that adolescents should not leave university education; however, they are wrong. (What they say is not wrong, but lacks the warrant to make it logical. We should state their supporting idea specifically to be able to refute it.)

 √ Some people may say that adolescents should not leave university education because they are not physically and psychologically mature enough to cope with the problems of the real world. However, they forget one fact: adolescents can vote or start driving at the age of 18 (in some countries even before that age!), which proves that they are considered physically and psychologically mature at that age.

**Language:** Here are some examples of sentences starters for an argumentative essay.

When pointing out opposing arguments (CONs):

Opponents of this idea claim / maintain that …

Those who disagree / are against these ideas may say / assert that …

Some people may disagree with this idea that…

When stating specifically why they think like that:

They put forward this idea because …

They claim that … since …

Reaching the turning point:

However,

, but…

On the other hand,

When refuting the opposing idea, we may use the following strategies:

* *compromise* but prove that their argument is not powerful enough:

They have a point in thinking like that, but…

To a certain extent they are right; however,…

That is an understandable concern, but…

* completely *disagree*:

The evidence, however, overwhelmingly supports the argument that...

* say that their argument is *irrelevant* to the topic:

Their argument is completely irrelevant.

**Possible Essay Topics:** In an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources, develop a position about *whether or not* the following statements should be done in the stated way. Include elements of both persuasion and argument.

1. Social media should be banned from teenagers.
2. Testing scores should be used as an indication of a school’s competency.
3. Random drug testing should be required for all high school athletes.
4. Students should have free use of cell phones during school hours.
5. Cells phones and / or text messaging should be allowed while driving.
6. Computerized instruction should replace the traditional classroom instruction.
7. Internet censorship should be developed.
8. An illegal alien student should be allowed to earn and receive a scholarship.
9. The death penalty should be abolished.
10. There should be open borders between countries.
11. Human cloning should be legalized.
12. Marijuana should be legalized.
13. Affirmative Action in college admission should be phased out.
14. Assisted suicide should be legalized.
15. All gun purchases should be registered.
16. The environmental movement is effective.
17. All animal experimentation should be outlawed.
18. Embryonic stem-cell research should be expanded and supported by the government.
19. Every state should enact a divorce counseling law.
20. A public school voucher system should be implemented.