

# Types of Papers: Argument/Argumentative

While some teachers consider persuasive papers and argument papers to be basically the same thing, it's usually safe to assume that an argument paper presents a stronger claim—possibly to a more resistant audience.

For example: while a persuasive paper might claim that cities need to adopt recycling programs, an argument paper on the same topic might be addressed to a particular town. The argument paper would go further, suggesting specific ways that a recycling program should be adopted and utilized in that particular area.

**To write an argument essay, you'll need to gather evidence and present a well-reasoned argument on a debatable issue.**

***How can I tell if my topic is debatable?*** Check your thesis! You cannot argue a statement of fact, you must base your paper on a strong position. Ask yourself...

- How many people could argue against my position? What would they say?
- Can it be addressed with a yes or no? (aim for a topic that requires more info.)
- Can I base my argument on scholarly evidence, or am I relying on religion, cultural standards, or morality? (you **MUST** be able to do quality research!)
- Have I made my argument specific enough?

## **Worried about taking a firm stance on an issue?**

Though there are plenty of times in your life when it's best to adopt a balanced perspective and try to understand both sides of a debate, this isn't one of them.

**You **MUST** choose one side or the other when you write an argument paper!**

Don't be afraid to tell others exactly how you think things should go because that's what we expect from an argument paper. You're in charge now, what do **YOU** think?

Do...	Don't...
...use passionate language	...use weak qualifiers like "I believe," "I feel," or "I think"—just tell us!
...cite experts who agree with you	...claim to be an expert if you're not one
...provide facts, evidence, and statistics to support your position	...use strictly moral or religious claims as support for your argument
...provide reasons to support your claim	...assume the audience will agree with you about any aspect of your argument
...address the opposing side's argument and refute their claims	...attempt to make others look bad (i.e. Mr. Smith is ignorant.—don't listen to him!)

## Why do I need to address the opposing side's argument?

There is an old kung-fu saying which states, "The hand that strikes also blocks", meaning that when you argue it is to your advantage to anticipate your opposition and strike down their arguments within the body of your own paper. This sentiment is echoed in the popular saying, "The best defense is a good offense".

### By addressing the opposition you achieve the following goals:

- illustrate a well-rounded understanding of the topic
- demonstrate a lack of bias
- enhance the level of trust that the reader has for both you and your opinion
- give yourself the opportunity to refute any arguments the opposition may have
- strengthen your argument by diminishing your opposition's argument

Think about yourself as a child, asking your parents for permission to do something that they would normally say no to. You were far more likely to get them to say yes if you anticipated and addressed all of their concerns before they expressed them. You did not want to belittle those concerns, or make them feel dumb, because this only put them on the defensive, and lead to a conclusion that went against your wishes.

The same is true in your writing.

### How do I accomplish this?

To address the other side of the argument you plan to make, you'll need to "put yourself in their shoes." In other words, you need to try to understand where they're coming from. If you're having trouble accomplishing this task, try following these steps:

1. Jot down several good reasons why you support that particular side of the argument.
2. Look at the reasons you provided and try to argue with yourself. Ask: Why would someone disagree with each of these points? What would his/her response be? (Sometimes it's helpful to imagine that you're having a verbal argument with someone who disagrees with you.)
3. Think carefully about your audience; try to understand their background, their strongest influences, and the way that their minds work. Ask: What parts of this issue will concern my opposing audience the most?
4. Find the necessary facts, evidence, quotes from experts, etc. to refute the points that your opposition might make.
5. Carefully organize your paper so that it moves smoothly from defending your own points to sections where you argue against the opposition.