

## Outline for the Argumentative Synthesis

### Establish a claim:

This would be the thesis statement or what you are seeking to prove about a controversial issue. It also reflects your viewpoint about a controversial issue. Please refer to the attachment from the *Key for Writers*, "Choosing a topic and developing a claim (thesis)," for examples of how to write your claim/thesis statement.

-----Example of a claim/thesis statement: We should allow people from other countries to come to the United States for professional advancement.

### Write your Introduction

Provide background: Provide an overview of why the issue, you are presenting is so controversial/debatable. You can begin with an anecdote, startling statistic, quotation or question. Please refer to the attachment from the *Key for Writers* on, "Writing introductions and conclusions" and "Structuring an argument," for more information and suggestions. You should end your introduction with your claim/thesis statement.

### Write the body:

Define terms and provide detailed background information: Do not assume the reader knows the meaning of certain terms. For instance, the reader may not know the specific definition of marijuana. So, you could begin by defining these terms, and providing additional background such as the history of marijuana.

Support your claim: Provide statistics, data and other convincing information from research to support your claim. For instance, to validate your claim about allowing people from other countries to immigrate to the United States for professional reasons, you could provide statistics about the kinds of professional advancement immigrants seek in the United States: doctors, lawyers, teachers and other professions. You can further argue that these people can return to their homelands to improve the standard of living there.

Acknowledge opposing viewpoint(s)/counterargument(s): You should discuss the opposing viewpoint(s)/counterarguments to your claim. For instance, one opposing viewpoint/counterargument to immigration or even for a short stay with a student visa, is overcrowding. This information should also come from research.

Refutation: This is your response to the opposing viewpoint(s)/counterarguments. For example, in refuting the opposing viewpoint/counterargument that immigration can cause overcrowding, you may argue that we can limit the number of people that immigrate to the United States through a visa quota and their educational background.

**Conclusion:**

-----Restate your claim (thesis statement)

-----Remind the reader why the issue is so controversial

-----Recap the points you discussed in the body of your essay.

Please refer to the attachment from the *Key for Writers* on, "Writing introductions and conclusions."

**Note:** Please remember to use academic/scholarly sources from research, in writing your argumentative synthesis. Hence, you should not cite Wikipedia; since it is an open source, with information written and edited by persons, who are not necessarily an authority on the subject, they are writing about.

**You should use at least five (5) academic/scholarly sources for your synthesis.** To find academic/scholarly sources, you can consider using Google Scholar and the Tiffin University library resources online or on campus. Please refer to the attachment from the *Key for Writers* on, "Questions to Evaluate a Source," for more information on evaluating research information.

less engaged overall. But how can so many of us be so wrong about what's fun? Shouldn't we have a better intuitive sense of what actually makes us feel better?

We certainly have a strong intuitive sense of what makes us feel bad, and negative stress and anxiety are usually at the top of the list. . . . [R]esearchers believe that when we consciously seek out relaxing fun, we're usually trying to reverse these negative feelings. When we seek out passive entertainment and low-engagement activities, we're using them as a counterbalance to how stimulated and overwhelmed we feel.

But by trying to have easy fun, we actually often wind up moving ourselves too far in the opposite direction. We go from stress and anxiety straight to boredom and depression. We'd be much better off avoiding easy fun and seeking out hard fun, or hard work that we enjoy, instead.

—Lisa McStrang, *Really Is Broken*

## 21 Writing introductions and conclusions

**Introductions** Readers like to know a little about a topic, about why it is even worth discussing, before you pronounce your opinion on it. Think of your introduction as a way to establish your purpose for writing and to make an important connection with your intended audience. If you find it difficult to write an introduction because you are not yet clear about your claim or how you will support it, wait until you have written the body of your essay. You may find it easier to introduce the actual text you have composed than something you have not yet written.

When you write an essay in the humanities, keep the following points in mind. Other disciplines have slightly different ways of introducing writing, depending on the conventions of the genre.

### KEY POINTS

#### Options

- Make sure your first sentence stands alone and does not depend on readers being aware of the essay title or an assigned question. For instance, avoid beginning with "This story has a complex plot."
- Provide context and background information.
- Indicate what claim you will make in your essay, or at least indicate the issue that your main idea concerns.

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- Define any key terms that are pertinent to the discussion.
- Establish the tone of the paper: informative, persuasive, serious, humorous, personal, impersonal, formal, informal.
- Engage the interest of readers to make them want to explore your topic with you. Tell them something they may not know or something to surprise them, such as an unlikely fact or statistic, a challenging question, a pity quotation, interesting background details, a joke, an intriguing opinion, a startling verbal image, or a description of a problem.

#### What to Avoid

- Avoid being overly general and telling readers the obvious, such as "Crime is a big problem" or "In this fast-paced world, TV is a popular form of entertainment" or "Since the beginning of time, the sexes have been in conflict."
- Do not refer to your writing intentions, such as "In this essay, I will. . . ."
- Do not make extravagant claims, such as "This essay will prove that bilingual education works for every student."
- Do not restate the assigned essay question.

Consider these attention-grabbing beginnings of books or chapters:

- ▶ "You gonna eat that?" The woman is eyeing the tray the flight attendant has just set before me. I can't tell if she wants reassurance that I find it as repellent as she does or if she is simply hungry and hopeful that I will hand my food over. I loosen my seatbelt, swivel in my narrow seat, and see that her face holds a challenge. Is she daring me to eat the food?

—Ruth Reichl, *Garlic and Sapphires*

- ▶ Raced with working-class life in towns such as Winchester, I see only one solution: beer.

—Jan Bequent, *Dear Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War*

- ▶ It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

—Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

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► It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. —George Orwell, 1984

► Every day in the United States, roughly 200,000 people are sickened by a foodborne disease, 900 are hospitalized, and fourteen die. —Dr. Shwartz, *Fast Food Nation*

Brainstorming may help you come up with catchy openings. A brainstorming session, for example, produced the following openers for an essay on fashion:

**A description** Everyone stared at him as he walked in. His jeans were torn, his sneakers stained and ripped, his jacket a shapeless rag, his tee shirt sweaty. He was the coolest guy in the room.

**A memorable question** The flamboyant author Oscar Wilde advised, "One should either be a work of art or wear a work of art." How far obedience to fashion can be taken was shown in China when for hundreds of years women were truly fashionable when they had undergone the torture and permanent disfigurement of having their feet bound so they could fit into unnaturally tiny shoes.

**An anecdote** I keep clothes I have rarely worn for a time when they might come back into fashion and I can maybe wear them again. I still have bright green pants with vast bell bottoms and a purple jacket with football-quarterback shoulders in my closet. The sad thing is that a fashion never returns in exactly the same style or color. When I put on the pants, my friends just laugh and say "Nice Halloween costume!"

**A question** "Who are you wearing?" Such a question, the one most often heard on the red carpet before the Oscars, would have been unintelligible a few decades ago. Identical twins can live apart for twenty years without ever having been in touch and yet at any moment can be wearing the same colored dress, shoes of the same make, hair cut in the same style.

**An interesting observation**

**Conclusions** Think of your conclusion as completing a circle. You have taken readers on a journey from a presentation of the topic in your introduction, to your main point, to supporting evidence and discussion, with specific examples and illustration. Remind readers of the purpose of the journey. Recall the main idea of the paper, and make a strong statement about it that will stay in their minds. Readers should leave your document feeling satisfied, not turning the page and looking for more.

Each academic discipline has slightly different ways of conducting a piece of writing, depending on the conventions of the genre. When you write an essay in the humanities, keep the following points in mind.

**KEY POINTS**

**Opinions**

- Frame your essay by reminding readers of something you referred to in your introduction, and by reminding readers of your main idea. Kind of a strong note, a quotation, a question, a suggestion, a reference to an anecdote in the introduction, a humorous insightful comment, a call to action, or a look to the future.
- Leave readers with a sense of completion of the point you are making.
- **What to Avoid**
  - Do not use the obvious "In conclusion."
  - Do not apologize for the inadequacy of your argument ("I do not know much about this problem") or for holding your opinions ("I am sorry if you do not agree with me, but...").
  - Do not repeat the identical wording you used in your introduction.
  - Do not introduce a totally new direction. If you raise a new point at the end, readers might expect more details.
  - Do not contradict what you said previously.
  - Do not be too sweeping in your conclusions. Do not condemn the whole medical profession, for example, because one person you know had a bad time in one hospital.

**21 Writing with others**

Writing is not necessarily a solitary process. In the academic or business world, you will often have to work collaboratively with one or more classmates or colleagues. You might be part of a group, a team, or a

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1.2**4b Developing an effective argument**

The goal of argument is to persuade. We often associate the word *argument* with combat and confrontation, but the Latin root of the word *argue* means “to make clear.” The Greek word *persuasion* derives from the verb “to believe.” So, in the process of formulating and constructing a good argument, your work lies in making your claim so clear to your readers that they may come to believe what you do. Your readers need to recognize that the claim you make about your topic rests on solid, reliable evidence and that you have provided a fair, unbiased approach to this evidence. In reading your argument, your readers will discover that you have good reasons for your position.

**KEY POINTS****The Features of a Good Argument****A good argument**

- deals with a controversial, debatable issue
- is not based on strong gut reactions or beliefs but on careful analysis of reliable information
- stands up to a critical reading
- takes a position on and makes a clear claim about the topic
- supports that position with detailed and specific evidence (such as reasons, facts, examples, descriptions, and stories)
- establishes common ground with listeners or readers and avoids confrontation
- takes opposing views into account and either refutes them or shows why they may be unimportant or irrelevant
- is engaged and vital, a reflection of the writer’s careful, critical thinking rather than just a collection of others’ opinions

**4c Choosing a topic and developing a claim (thesis)**

**Choosing a topic** Choose an issue that is fresh. Avoid topics such as the death penalty, drug laws, and abortion, which have been written about so often that original or interesting arguments are hard to develop. Global warming and the environment, the church and morality, or racial prejudice may be issues that mean a great deal to you personally, but you will have difficulty structuring a logical argument around them.

**Knowing what a thesis statement looks like—and why you need one** Suppose someone were to ask you, “What is the main point that you want to communicate to your reader in your piece of writing?” The sentence you would give in reply is your *thesis statement*, also known as a *claim*. Your thesis, or claim, tells readers what stand you are going to take on a topic. It won’t take you far to say, for instance, “I am interested in writing about sustainable/ethical food sources” if you stop right there and hope that somehow ideas will shoot right out at you. What aspects of sustainable and ethical food practices interest you and what are the issues? Which readers do you regard as your primary audience? Which geographical areas will you discuss? Will you be concerned with the present or the future? What do you intend to propose about food practices—both about producing food and consuming it? In short, what point will you end up making (purpose) and for which readers (audience)? You don’t have to know exactly where to put your thesis statement in your essay right now, but having a thesis will focus your thoughts as you read and write.

A good thesis statement may be one or more of the following:

1. a strong, thought-provoking, or controversial statement
  - ▶ Although food costs can be kept low by producing food in large quantities and shipping it long distances, the benefits are outweighed by the risks to the environment.
2. a call to action
  - ▶ The best way to promote sustainable production of food is to support legislation that encourages the use of locally grown crops.
3. a generalization needing support
  - ▶ Ethical production of food sources should focus on humane treatment of animals raised for consumption.
4. an analytical statement that sets up the structure of the essay
  - ▶ Two examples illustrate the complexity of issues surrounding the humane treatment of animals produced for consumption and the importance of supporting humane treatment: the production of veal and the production of foie gras.

Keep a working thesis in front of you on a self-stick note or an index card as you write your first draft, but be flexible. You are the boss as you write. You can change and narrow your thesis whenever you like. Many readers will expect to discover your point within the introductory

**Establish common ground** Remember that readers who are turned off by exaggerations or extreme language have the ultimate power to stop reading and ignore what you have to say.

### KEY POINTS

#### 900's to Establish Common Ground with Readers

1. Avoid extreme views or language. Do not label someone's views as *ridiculous*, *ignorant*, *immoral*, *fascist*, or *crooked*, for example.
2. Write to convince, not to confront. Recognize shared concerns, and consider the inclusive use of *we*.
3. Steer clear of sarcastic remarks such as "The mayor's office has come up with the splendid idea of building a gigantic parking garage right in the middle of a popular and historic city park."
4. Use clear, everyday words that sound as if you are speaking directly to readers.
5. Acknowledge valid arguments from your opponents, and work to show why the arguments on your side carry more weight.
6. If possible, propose a solution with long-term benefits for everyone.

**Refute opposing views** It is not enough to present your own reasons and evidence for your claim. When you take into account any opposing arguments and the reasons and evidence that support those arguments, you present yourself as objective and evenhanded, furthering your appeal to credibility. Examine opposing arguments; describe the most common or convincing ones; evaluate their validity, applicability, and limitations; and explain what motivates people to take those positions. Then discuss why you see your reasons and evidence as more pertinent and convincing than those in opposing arguments.

Be careful to argue logically and rationally without insulting your opponents. Take pains to explain rationally why your views differ from theirs. You may choose to do this by following each one of your own points with a discussion of an opposing view. Or you may prefer to devote an entire section of your essay to dealing with opposing views.

### 4g Structuring an argument

Written arguments are typically structured to follow one of four basic patterns: (1) general to specific, (2) specific to general, (3) problem and solution, and (4) cause and effect.

### KEY POINTS

#### 900's to Structure a General-to-Specific Argument

**Introduction** Provide background information on the issue, why it is an issue, and what the controversies are. After you have introduced readers to the nature and importance of the issue, announce your position in a general statement of your claim or thesis statement, perhaps at the end of the first paragraph or in a prominent position within the second paragraph, depending on the length and complexity of your essay.

**Body** Provide evidence in the form of supporting points for your thesis with concrete and specific details. For each new point, start a new paragraph.

**Acknowledgment of opposing views** Use evidence and specific details to describe and logically refute any opposing views.

**Conclusion** Return to the topic as a whole and your specific claim. Without repeating complete phrases and sentences, remind readers of the point you want to make. End on a strong note.

**General to specific** The general-to-specific structure is used frequently in the humanities and arts. It moves from the thesis to support and evidence. Obviously, writers experiment with many variations on this structure, but it is one you can use as a reliable starting point.

**Specific to general** Alternatively, you may choose to begin with data and points of evidence and then draw a conclusion from that evidence, provided the evidence is relevant and convincing. A basic specific-to-general argument on the topic of driving while using a cell phone looks like this:

**Introduction:** background, statement of problem and controversy

**Data:**

1. Cell phone users admit to being distracted while driving (cite statistics).
2. Many accidents are attributable to cell phone use (cite statistics).
3. Several states have passed laws against using handheld cell phones while driving.

## Thinking Critically about

### QUESTIONS FOR EVALUATING SOURCES

Apply the Critical Thinking Framework to investigate sources.

#### PURPOSE

- What is the author's purpose in writing this piece? Is it meant to be persuasive, informative, or something else?
- What influence might that purpose have on the potential usefulness of the piece as a source in your own work?

#### AUDIENCE

- What audience is the author addressing? How do you know?
- Does the intended audience have any impact on what information is included in, or excluded from, the piece? If so, how?

#### VOICE

- What are the credentials and reputation of the author?
- What is the place of publication?
- What or whom does the author represent?
- Is there a particular bias that the author demonstrates? If so, where do you see it, and what is the impact on the author's credibility?

#### MEDIUM

- In what medium was the piece published? Why do you think it was published in that medium?
- Was it peer reviewed or edited by someone else?
- Is the publication venue subject to rapid change (like that of an article in *Wikipedia*), or is it fairly static (like that of a printed book or an online journal article)?



See the "KEY TO FEATURED CONTENT" on pages 743–745 for a quick reference guide to critical thinking, writing, reading, researching, and using media.