

# Assignment Guide: The Argumentative Essay

## Assignment Prompt

For this assignment, you will be writing an argumentative essay—a piece of writing that requires you to take a position, what rhetoricians call a [claim](#), on a debatable topic (that is, a topic with more than one side). Specifically, you will present a [policy claim](#) where you argue for or against a change of some kind. This [claim](#) should be supported by reliable, credible [evidence](#) (i.e. [scholarly sources](#)) backed by research. In addition to presenting your [claim](#), you will also need to acknowledge the other side, which is called the [counterargument](#). **For this assignment, you may choose your own topic. Hint: browse topics that interest you in "Opposing Viewpoints" our article database accessed through the banner.**

## Assignment-Specific Requirements:

**Length:** This assignment should be at least 750 words.

**Thesis:** Underline your [thesis statement](#) or the main [claim](#) of your letter.

**Supporting Points:** Plan to develop at least three strong [supporting points](#) to accompany your [thesis](#) and at least one [counter](#). Each supporting point should equate to at least one [body paragraph](#).

**Sources Needed:** The essay should integrate at least 4 reliable and [credible sources](#), to help prove the argument for or against a policy change. Be sure to use [MLA guidelines](#) for all in-text and [Works Cited](#) citations.

While we encourage you to acquire sources from Gale's Opposing Viewpoints, you may access credible, [scholarly sources](#) from other resources. Tertiary sources, such as online encyclopedias, dictionaries and Wikipedia, are not [scholarly sources](#), and should not be cited within your work; however, they may offer helpful foundational information as you develop your understanding of an issue. (For more information, please review Berkley University's resource on scholarly and popular sources: "[Evaluating Resources](#).")

**Page Formatting:** See Appendix C - Formatting and Submitting Your Work. Please underline your [thesis statement](#).

**MLA Requirements:** See Formatting your Essay: [MLA 8th Edition](#)

## Rhetorical Mode

When we talk about argument writing, we are not talking about an emotional and heated argument, but one that is neutral in [tone](#) and uses [evidence](#)/facts to convince your readers of a [claim](#). Your

argument is your **claim**, or the point that you want to convince readers of—in this instance, you will be making a **claim** for or against a policy change. Because everything depends on the strength of this **claim** (and the **supporting points** that you use to scaffold it), the **organizational structure** of an argumentative essay is incredibly important to its success. Every idea, **topic sentence**, paragraph, and page should always align with your argumentative **claim**. Be sure that you use **scholarly evidence** purposefully to support the **claim** you are making and do not veer too much into **exploratory** or informative writing, which is trickier than it sounds. You'll also need to think carefully about how to integrate **researched evidence** with your own ideas, to build a fully developed and supported stance throughout. Finally, you will want to acknowledge the **counterargument** in the body paragraphs, even if you cannot **refute** it entirely.

## Rhetorical Considerations

Purpose:

Remember that this is an argumentative essay: that means your goal is to prove your **claim** for or against a policy change to readers. This piece of writing should be aimed at convincing readers through the inclusion of a strong argumentative **thesis**, specific **supporting points**, acknowledgement of the **counter**, and carefully chosen **scholarly evidence**.

Audience:

The argumentative essay is written for someone else—a community of readers that is most impacted by the policy you are proposing to change (or keep the same). In this instance, you are writing to argue for or against a change (and thus convince readers that a change should or should not occur). Keep this **audience** in mind by angling everything in your essay towards a strong argument that can appeal to a more general population.

Form:

This is a formal writing project, written in **third-person**, relying on strong **organizational strategies**, integrating **researched evidence** (the academic sources you choose), and following **MLA** formatting guidelines.

## Choosing a Topic for Your Argumentative Essay

**Selecting the right topic is an important step in ensuring your success in writing a Argumentative essay. You'll want to choose a topic that has the following features:**

- Of interest to you
- Relevant
- Current
- Debatable
- Well-researched

- [Narrow](#) in scope
- Academic or “scholarly” in nature

**Topics to avoid, as they are either too complex to argue in a single essay, or not considered appropriate for an academic or scholarly essay, are as follows:**

- The death penalty
- Euthanasia or self-assisted death
- Abortion
- The (il)legalization of drugs (e.g. marijuana)
- Religion or religious readings (e.g. existence of a higher order/being, or life after death)
- Gun rights/rules
- Global warming

Please do not select one of the above 7 topics, as your essay may be returned without grading, and you will be asked to rewrite it.

**Need assignment ideas?**

Take a look at the University of North Carolina at [Chapel Hill's Writing Center](#) for topic ideas and additional resources.

**Mini-Lesson on [ETHOS](#) - [PATHOS](#) - [LOGOS](#)**

Plan to use these appeals heavily throughout your Argumentative essay.

<p><b>Ethos</b></p> <p>This is an <a href="#">ethical appeal</a>. It relies on your reliability and credibility as the author.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes <a href="#">reliable sources</a></li> <li>• Is written from an unbiased perspective</li> <li>• Shows the writer’s expertise through the presentation of careful insight and research</li> </ul>
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### Pathos

This is an **emotional appeal**. It relies on the construction of careful connection between the **claims** presented and the emotions of the readers.

- Includes the writer's values and beliefs
- Uses stories or examples that convey emotion
- Contains broader appeal and **focus**

### Logos

This is an appeal to **logic** and reason. It relies on facts and figures that can convince the **reader** of the **claims**.

- Relies on fact and opinion
- Focuses on reasonable **claims** and **organization** of ideas
- Only includes relevant material with a **narrow focus**