

What's an Argument Essay?

It's a type of writing that builds a convincing argument. To argue convincingly, a writer needs to support a claim with clear reasons and evidence.

What's in an Argument Essay?

Claim

The claim is the opinion or position taken by the writer regarding an idea or topic. The claim should be clearly stated in the introduction.

Opposing Claim

A good writer will always include opposing or alternate claims, just to show readers they have considered the subject from all sides. An argument is actually strengthened when counterclaims are logically addressed.

Reasons and Evidence

A good writer will support a claim with solid reasons and factual evidence. Reasons explain why the writer holds the opinion, while evidence—concrete facts and solid examples—support those reasons.

Logical Reasoning

The way a writer builds an argument is called reasoning. Effective reasoning is well organized and logical. Reasons and supporting evidence need to be presented in a clear, easy-to-follow way.



Why write an **Argument Essay?**

There are many reasons to write an argument essay. I'll list a few of them here. Can you think of any more?

To Convince

We all have opinions we feel strongly about—so strongly that we try to convince others to hold the same positions. An argument essay is a powerful tool to use when trying to change the opinions of readers.

To Inform

Learning is a lifelong process. An argument essay can help readers make positive changes in their lives and reap the benefits that come from understanding a topic in a new way.

To State a Position

People make decisions every day. But it's very important to make an informed decision. A good argument essay can help clarify an issue and get readers to act. Understanding all sides of an issue is the best way to form an opinion that is based on fact.



Linking Argument Writing Traits to an Argument Essay

In this chapter, you will build an argument to support your position on a topic. This type of argument writing is called an argument essay. Luis will guide you through the stages of the writing process: Prewrite, Draft, Revise, Edit, and Publish. In each stage, Luis will show you important writing strategies that are linked to the Argument Writing Traits below.

Argument Writing Traits

Ideas

- a clearly stated position or claim
- relevant supporting evidence that comes from reliable, credible sources
- alternate or opposing claims that are acknowledged and addressed with logical evidence

Organization

- a strong introduction that presents the writer's position, a body that presents the argument, and a conclusion that sums up the argument and/or offers a call to action
- transitions that clarify the relationships among ideas

Voice

- a voice and tone that are appropriate for the purpose and audience

Word Choice

- language that is compelling

Sentence Fluency

- sentences that vary in length and structure

Conventions

- no or few errors in grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling

Before you write, read Lori Kaspar's argument essay on the next three pages. Then use the argument essay rubric on pages 284–285 to decide how well she did. (You might want to look back at What's in an Argument Essay? on page 278, too!)

Argument Essay Model

Give a Student a Laptop, Give a Student the World

by Lori Kaspar

The world is a *big* place, and we eighth-grade students at Greenleaf Middle School deserve to explore it. Having technology in the classroom will open the door to discovery and opportunity. Laptops will help us build essential computer skills, improve our study time, and raise our grades. ← Claim

Evidence

Many studies show the benefits of having technology in the classroom. But did you know that laptops help raise students' grades? Consider this important data from the article, "Learning with Technology—The Impact of Laptop Use on Student Achievement" by James Cengiz Gulek and Hakan Demirtas. It shows that students' grades are higher with laptops. ←

Factual evidence

Program Enrollment (2003-04 Cumulative Grade Point Averages by Grade)

Grade	Laptop	Non-Laptop
6	3.50	3.13
7	3.28	2.94
8	3.23	3.07

Cons

Some believe that providing a laptop for each student in eighth grade will be too expensive. They do not want to spend the money on middle-school students. Others want to begin a laptop program in the middle school on a limited basis. They want students to share laptops and save money. Still others oppose them because they believe that the Internet is distracting and unreliable. These are valid concerns, but they can be easily addressed and proved false. ←

Opposing claims

Pros

Let me begin by asking, "What is the real cost of a student body that is behind in technological understanding?" There are students at Greenleaf who cannot afford their own computers or Internet access at home. This economic barrier is one our school district can and should overcome. In today's world, knowing how to use a computer for word-processing, communicating, and conducting research is essential. ←

Reasons

Additionally, limiting the number of laptops would shut out many more students. Who would be responsible for keeping track of shared laptops? Would they be available whenever students need to use them? It seems to me that repair and replacement costs can be reduced by teaching students how to care for their own laptops. Once students learn the basics and take responsibility for maintenance, replacement costs would be reduced.

Having access to one's own laptop makes better use of study time, too. Every student knows how time-consuming it can be to handwrite long papers and reports. It also consumes irreplaceable resources like paper.

Finally, with planning, most Internet distractions can be averted. Schools can set Internet policies, and teachers can review and recommend credible sites. With supervision, students will learn responsible computer and Internet habits. In the long run, I believe that *not* providing every student with a laptop will cost more in lost education opportunities.

Reasons

Solutions

If you oppose a laptop program at Greenleaf Middle School, could it be because you would rather spend the money on other activities? It's true that the district may need to reduce other programs to fund a laptop program in the middle school. But shouldn't academics come first? After all, access to a good education will keep students in school.

Conclusions

After answering the opposing claims, it seems clear that providing laptops for all students is a positive investment in our future. When you review all the evidence, I believe you will agree that the benefits far outweigh the initial cost. Laptops will help us perform better in school and help us succeed in a very big world!

Sources

Chen, Grace. "How Your Child Can Benefit from New Public School Laptop Programs." *Public School Review*. 3 Sept. 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2010. <<http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/142>>.

Gulek, James Cengiz, and Hakan Demirtas. "Learning With Technology: The Impact of Laptop Use on Student Achievement." Jan. 2005. Web. 10 Nov. 2010. <<http://pdfcast.org/pdf/learning-with-technology-the-impact-of-laptop-use-on-student-achievement>>.

"The Pros and Cons of Laptop Use in the Classroom." Associated Content from Yahoo, 2011. Web. 19 Mar. 2012. <http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/915119/the_pros_and_cons_of_laptop_use_in.html>.

Zucker, Andrew. "Starting School Laptop Programs: Lessons Learned." Nov. 2005. Web. 10 Nov. 2010. <http://www.ubiqcomputing.org/Lessons_Learned_Brief.pdf>.

Analyze

What do you think? How well has Lori used the Argument Writing Traits to convince her readers to agree with her opinion?