

## Argument Essay

### Definition of genre

One common genre of academic writing is the argument essay. This type of essay presents a central claim (or claims, depending on length and purpose) and supports the claim(s) using an argument based on evidence and warrants.

### Questions to ask

- What are you claiming?
- Is your claim contestable, reasonable, significant, specific, and interpretive?
- What evidence do you have to support your claim?
- What counts as evidence in your discipline?
- How is this evidence relevant to your claim, either as part of a system of commonly held beliefs or based on empirical evidence or authority? The connections between evidence and claims are sometimes called “warrants.”
- What would you say to someone who said, “So what? Who cares?”

### Actions to take

- Use your introductory paragraph(s) to convey what your essay will be about and why readers should care. Introductions can also provide background information, define terms, and/or briefly sketch out your organizational plan.
- Avoid relying on introductory “Since-Time-Immemorial” strategies (for example, “Since *homo sapiens* first invented clothing, humankind has been faced with the challenge of keeping garments clean) when addressing the questions “So what? Who cares?”
- Consider the most effective way to organize your paper. Organizing by topic is generally more effective than organizing by chronology. Avoid organizing by source unless the prompt explicitly asks you to do so.
- Use topic sentences as useful signposts to readers. In addition to providing information important to the *content* of your essay, they also offer valuable *structural cues* that prepare readers for various twists and turns in your argument. Judiciously providing such signposts will help make your essay more “reader-friendly.”

- Use the reader-friendly approach of beginning a number of paragraphs with a claim, followed by evidence and a warrant.
- Think of academic writing as a dialogue—with your professor, peers, readers, and other thinkers who preceded you and whose published and unpublished work you draw on as you develop your own ideas. Distinguish clearly between your own voice and the other voices you incorporate into your discussion by summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting fairly and accurately.
- Consider including definitions of key terms and qualifying your argument if necessary (quantity: many, most, some; frequency: often, usually, frequently; probability: probably, unlikely; proof: suggests, indicates, points to)
- Include something at the end of your essay (pointing towards new lines of inquiry or posing unanswered questions) that you couldn't have said at the beginning.
- Check over your final draft by reverse outlining and reading out loud.

**Check out these related handouts:**

- [Developing a Central Claim](#)
- Working With Sources ([humanities](#) or [sciences](#))
- [Improving Your Writing Style: Clarity and Conciseness](#)
- [Editing for Clarity and Proofreading for Correctness](#)