# Argumentative Essays

An argumentative essay is a piece of formal writing. There are various types of argumentative essays such as:
- outlining the advantages and disadvantages of a certain question,
- giving your opinion on a subject,
- providing solutions to problems and
- discursive essays.

You should start a new paragraph for each new point you make. Each paragraph should start with a key sentence (a key sentence is a sentence which summarises the paragraph). You should provide examples and reasons to justify your points of view.

Using quotations, whether writing the exact words spoken or paraphrasing, is a way of making your argumentative essay more interesting.
> e.g. *"There is enough in the world for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed."* Frank Buchman

Before writing your essay, you should first make a plan. Plans for argumentative essays are given below.

## Paragraph Plans for Argumentative Essays

| Advantages/ Disadvantages | Expressing opinions | Providing solutions | Discursive essays |
|---|---|---|---|
| **I n t r o d u c t i o n** | | | |
| **Paragraph 1** state topic | **Paragraph 1** state opinion | **Paragraph 1** state the problem | **Paragraph 1** state topic |
| **M a i n   B o d y** | | | |
| **Paragraph 2** advantages/ arguments for | **Paragraph 2** argument 1 and reason | **Paragraph 2** suggestion 1 and reason | **Paragraph 2** one point of view (e.g. political) |
| **Paragraph 3** disadvantages / arguments against | **Paragraph 3\*** argument 2 and reason | **Paragraph 3** suggestion 2 and reason | **Paragraph 3** another point of view (e.g. economic) |
| **C o n c l u s i o n** | | | |
| **Final Paragraph** Give a balanced consideration or your own opinion without using personal words or expressions | **Final Paragraph** restate opinion using different words (* you may also include the opposite point of view in a separate paragraph) | **Final Paragraph** summarise opinion or give best suggestion and reason | **Final Paragraph** give your own opinion based on the points already mentioned |

## Useful Tips for Argumentative Essays

- use formal style – do not include colloquial English
- do not use short forms (e.g. *haven't)*
- write well-developed paragraphs
- avoid strong feelings (**do not say:** *everybody hates …,* **or** *it is absurd to believe …*)
- use generalisations (e.g. *children assume/regard*), but do not use overgeneralisations (e.g. *all children assume that ..*)
- do not use strong personal expressions (e.g. *I know*) – use milder language (e.g. *In my view, it seems to me that, in my opinion, I tend to believe,* etc.)
- use linking words (e.g. *even though, on the other hand, yet,* etc.)
- use sequencing (e.g. *first, then, finally,* etc.)
- make reference to other sources (e.g. *Police officials believe that*)
- give examples – not personal thoughts (e.g. *excessive intake of alcohol can damage the liver*)
- do not refer blindly to statistics unless you are certain of a source (**do not say:** *"According to statistics, my statement about students is precise."* Which statistics?)
- avoid clichéd introductions – write something more original (**do not write:** *"Since the old days"* When? Too vague.)
- use quotations or paraphrasing of quotations

## First and Last Paragraph Techniques

In order to grab the readers' attention and make them want to continue reading, the **first paragraph** may:
- state an opinion, e.g. *I believe that by the end of the next decade, every home will have a computer …*
- make reference to a strange scene or situation, e.g. *A watch-style monitor will soon allow everyone to keep in touch with …*
- address the reader directly, e.g. *Has it ever occurred to you that computers will one day organise your life?*
- start with a quotation or a rhetorical question (question to which no answer is expected), e.g. *Do you feel threatened by computers?*
- start with a problem that needs a solution, e.g. *As time passes, our lives will be controlled by computers …*

The **last paragraph** may:
- state a personal opinion, e.g. *In my view …, I believe …*
- give the reader something to consider, e.g. *Life would be more convenient if everyone had access to the Internet …*
- summarise the essay, e.g. *To sum up …*
- end with a quotation or a rhetorical question, e.g. *"Progress is a comfortable disease."* or *"What does the future hold for us?"*

## Giving Advantages and Disadvantages

When giving arguments for and against a topic you should present both sides in a fair way by discussing them objectively in equal detail. Start your essay by making a general statement about the topic, then give the advantages and disadvantages in (at least) two separate paragraphs. Remember to start a new paragraph for each new topic and to make a plan before writing your essay. Finally, end your essay with a well-balanced consideration of the points discussed. It is possible to state an opinion without using strong, emotional or personal expressions. (Do not use words such as: *I know, I believe,* etc. Use words such as: *It seems that …, It can be seen that …,* etc.) If you believe that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, write them just before the final paragraph so that it will be easier for you to lead the reader to the conclusion.

## Expressing Opinions

This type of argumentative essay uses personal expressions, unlike the for and against essay, which does not include them. Your personal opinion should be expressed in the introduction and again in the conclusion, using phrases such as *"In my opinion", "I believe", "I think", "I strongly believe",* and *"In my view".* You should support your opinion by including examples and reasons for what you have said. When expressing the other side of the argument, you may include it in a separate paragraph. End your essay by restating your opinion, using different words.

## Providing Solutions to Problems

First, state the problem and the reason why it has arisen. You should mention that there are several possible solutions and then go through each suggestion in turn, including any expected results or consequences. The concluding paragraph should summarise the writer's opinion or give the best suggestion and explain why this is the case.

## Discursive Essays

A discursive essay should discuss the subject as broadly as possible without losing direction or flow. You should state various viewpoints and discuss them, including opposite opinions. Each viewpoint should start a new paragraph. Each paragraph should include a topic sentence, personal opinion and an opposite opinion. The paragraphs and the opposite viewpoints within the paragraphs should be linked together with appropriate linking words. Some of the following aspects should be included: *psychological, religious, scientific, artistic, economic, educational, social, political, moral, historical, geographical, personal.*