**Argumentative Essay**

The argumentative essay will present you with an excerpt or a statement. Once you understand what the passage is saying, you have to ask yourself: Do you think in the same way as the author (agree)? Do I think the writer is completely wrong (disagree)? Do I think some of it is correct and some incorrect (qualify)?

* + - You might be given a controversial quotation and asked to defend, challenge, or qualify what has been stated
    - You might be presented with an argument and asked to analyze it. In this case, you are expected to look at the logic of the argument, but not necessarily offer your opinion
    - You may be presented with two different views on an idea or belief, and then asked to explain each side of the argument and develop your opinion
    - The test is beginning to involve. Some prompts have asked students to consider two viewpoints before beginning their response.
    - Be aware of the Prompt’s Purpose. If it does not ask for your opinion or position do not give it but instead analyze the argument presented.

- You will use your observations, readings, and experiences to support your position. Your support should be rational and logical, not emotional. It should be objective rather than biased.

-The prompt might ask you indicate which idea in a given set is more valid or explore the validity of an assertion

-The prompt will ask you to defend (agree with), challenge (disagree with) or qualify (agree with some and disagree with other parts of the text) the:

* + - Author’s position
    - Statement’s main idea
    - The narrative’s main point

-**You need to do three things for this essay**

* + - Understand the nature of the position taken in the prompt
    - Take a specific stand-argue, qualify, or disagree-with the assertion in the prompt
    - Clearly and logically support your claim

-You may use any of the following to support your argument

* + - Facts/statistics
    - Details
    - Quotations
    - Recognition of the opposite
    - Examples
    - Anecdotes
    - Compare and contrast
    - Cause and effect
    - Appeal to authority
  + Your essay is graded for process and mastery and manipulation of language, not for how close you come to the viewpoint of your reader
  + Pre-writing. See notes above. List ideas for defense (agree), challenge (disagree), and qualify (agree with some parts and disagree with others).
  + Introduction
    - Refer specifically to the prompt (speaker and occasion, topic) and clearly state your position on the given issue.

**The classical formula for an argument is:**

* + - * Present the issue/situation/problem
      * State your assertion/claim/thesis
      * Support your claim
      * Acknowledge and respond to real or possible opposing views
      * Make your final comment or summary of the evidence

This essay also works well with the cause/effect format opening.

* + - * Ask Question about specific focus,
      * Use *Indeed,* transition and state the opposite of your position.
      * Use *However*, and list two to three big ideas supporting your stance.

**Example:**

* + - * + Does television have the power for limitless capabilities for good-and for evil? Indeed, television allows individuals to experience vast worlds unbeknownst to the common man. However, television has the capacity to negatively impact the mental, social, and physical well-being of those who become addicted to it.

**Body Paragraphs**

* + - Traditional Argumentative Essays follow this basic guideline:
      * State the purpose/claim (strong thesis with specific stance)
      * Anticipate objections from the reader (1st body paragraph)
      * Counter objections by supporting the claim with solid evidence (2nd-4th body paragraphs)
      * Conclusion restating stance that was derived from evidence

**Four Elements of a Logical Argument**

* + - * Claim-The specific proposition of a writer is the claim. A claim may be made directly or indirectly.
      * Objections-Knowing the main points of the opponent helps a writer answer objections effectively.
      * Evidence-A writer supports a claim with facts, interprets the facts, and explains- giving statistics, reasons, examples, or other evidence)
      * Conclusion-The end of an argument is often a restatement of the claim. It may be a summary of the main points or a logical generalization. It may attempt to motivate the reader to act.
    - You may briefly set-up your essay with the cause/effect opening format and use the first paragraph to address and anticipate objections to your stance. Use your last two paragraphs to build support for your position. Always leave your most powerful examples for the last body paragraph. Build up to your “power points”; don’t begin with them.
      * Block Organization:
        + Main points of opposing side appear in one chunk (1st body paragraph) before proponent’s argument. This conveys a sense of fairness but also postpones disagreement. In the body paragraphs following the 1st, the writer counters the opponent’s points and builds his or her position with specific evidence.
      * Alternating Method:
        + This organization pairs one of the opposing points with one of the proponent’s, arguing back and forth, emphasizing the answer to each point. A possible disadvantage is that it introduces disagreement early into the essay, and it requires more transitions. Always begin with a con point and answer with a pro. Remember con is simply whatever stance is against you, and pro represents your stance. Con and Pro do not mean “Good” and “Bad.”
        + Any unanswered points pose serious flaws for your argument. If you cannot answer a point adequately and decide to reverse your opinion within your paper, it is fine to do so. It shows you have an open, logical mind.
        + Main points are arranged in least-to most-important so that the argument gradually builds. The best point is placed last, where it receives the most emphasis.
        + Common Ground prepares the reader for a fair and reasonable argument. This should be established within the 1st body paragraph. If you can find any similar or “common ground” within the topic, state this to your reader.
        + Agreeing before disagreeing is a great way to draw your reader in. Use phrases such as

It is true…but

Proponents realize/agree…yet they believe…

Supporters recognize….; still they do not acknowledge

Indeed….however,….

Certainly….despite these claims

Granted…in contrast…

* + - Have an appropriate and respectful tone when first introducing the opponent’s possible objections. This is a “fair fight/discussion” in which you listen and hear what your opponent says before you begin. You must show that you heard them by addressing their specific concerns with specific evidence and details.
    - Refuting Opposing Points
      * To refute a point you show that it is irrelevant or only partly true or completely false.
      * In answering objections, avoid any hint of disrespect for the reader’s view. This will cause you to lose “points” in your reader’s mind.
      * To be convincing, a writer needs adequate evidence. The opinion of just one source is inadequate, you need multiple sources. Opinion must be substantiated by facts, reasons, and examples.
      * Use quality evidence and avoid weak evidence.
    - However you set up your essay, support your ideas with specific examples
    - Your argument can be
      * Ethical-appeal to the reader’s good sense, good will, and the desire to do the “right thing”
      * Emotional-an appeal to the reader’s fear, patriotism, and so forth. This particular essay should have its central focus on logical and rational support and be free of bias. Use caution with ethical and emotional appeals for this reason.

**Be aware of logical fallacies and AVOID them in your writing**

* + - * + Non sequitur argument (“Does not follow”). Diane graduated from Harvard. She’ll make a great lawyer.
        + Begging the Question (writer assumes something that is yet to be proven). Taking geometry is a waste of time, and high school students should not be required to take it.
        + Circular Reasoning (restates the premise rather than giving a reason). I like to eat out because I enjoy different foods and restaurants.
        + Straw-man Argument (attributing false or exaggerated characteristics or behaviors to the opponent and attacks him on falsehoods or exaggerations).
        + Ad hominem (attacks the person rather than the argument)
        + Hasty generalization (draws a conclusion on an entire group based on insufficient evidence). Ex. A voluntary national service would solve the United States’ problems.
        + Overgeneralization (stereotyping: writer makes a conclusion about a large number of people based on very limited evidence)
        + Post Hoc argument (cites an unrelated even that occurred earlier as the cause of a current situation). I saw a black cat cross the street five minutes before the accident. Therefore, the black cat is the cause of the accident.
        + Either/or argument: the writer asserts that there are only two possibilities when in reality there are more.

**Logical-appeal to inductive and deductive reasoning**

* Induction-forming a generalization from a set of specific examples. Margo has 17 stuffed bears, 3 stuffed cows, 11 monkeys, 4 camels, and 6 stuffed elephants. Margo loves to collect stuffed animals.
* Deduction-reaching a probable conclusion based on given premises. A premise is a proposition that is proven or taken for granted. All high school seniors at this high school must write a research paper. Sean is a senior at this high school. Therefore, Sean must write a research paper.
* Possible problems:Avoid making broad assumptions with words like ALL, ALWAYS, NEVER, etc.
* Conclusion
  + - Your conclusion is the final nail in the building of an argument. A conclusion should restate the thesis and leave the reader persuaded that the reasoning is valid. If action is advocated, the conclusion should convey a sense of immediacy. The conclusion of an argument should be sound, appropriate, and complete.
    - Quickly restate your position and main examples of support. If you can find a powerful way to reconnect all ideas, do so (quote, anecdote, etc.). If a creative conclusion doesn’t come to you immediately, sum up your ideas quickly in one to two sentences and move on to your next essay. You may use an anecdote, question, or challenging/powerful image/statement to close your argument.
* **Synthesis Essay**
  + You will be presented with an introduction to and a description of an issue that has varying viewpoints associated with it. Accompanying this is a selection of sources that address the topic. These sources can be written texts that could include nonfiction, fiction, poetry, drama, visual texts, photos, charts, art work, cartoons, etc. After reading and annotating the sources, the student is required to respond to the given prompt with an essay that incorporates and synthesizes at least THREE of the sources in support of your position on the subject. You will NOT be given “extra points” for incorporating more than three sources. You will NOT pass this essay if you fail to cite sources at any time.
  + Use the sources as springboards or buttresses for your argument. Do not let the sources drive your essay.
  + The College Board wants to determine how well a student can read critically, understand texts, analyze texts, develop a position on a given topic, support a position on a given topic, support a position with appropriate evidence from outside sources, incorporate outside sources into the texts of the essay, cite sources used in the essay
  + Use the sources and your observations, readings, and experiences to support your thesis.

This essay is a chance to demonstrate your ability to develop a “researched idea” using not only your personal viewpoint, but also the viewpoints of others.

* + Don’t be alarmed by the length or complexity of the sources. You will choose your position, and you will choose which texts to incorporate. As long as you address the prompt and cite the required number of sources, you will be fine.
  + You must be able to analyze the argument each source is making. What claim is the source making about the issue? What data or evidence does the source offer in support of the claim? What are the assumptions or beliefs (explicit or unspoken) that warrant using this evidence or data to support the claim?
  + Ask the questions:
    - What are two or three possible positions that I could take on this issue?
    - Which of these positions do I want to take? Why? Keep an open mind, and choose the topic that you will have the best essay and supporting details.
    - Many of the best essays don’t have a simple and “easy” thesis but instead take a more critical approach that recognize the complexities of the issue.
    - Imagine arguing the topic with an individual. Argue your position and feel free to say things like, “Source A takes a position similar to mine,” or Source C would oppose this position, but here is why I still maintain its validity,” etc.

**Common Errors**

* + - not taking a clear position or wavering between positions
    - Substituting a thesis-oriented expository essay (informing the reader of the different topics/positions) for an argumentative essay
    - Being reluctant to engage in verbal combat because “everybody’s entitled to his or her opinion” so there’s nothing to argue about
    - Slipping out of focus by discussing imagery in general
    - Trying to argue about photography by using evidence from a literary reading list (for example, *The Scarlet Letter*) and sliding off topic into theme of appearance and reality
    - Lacking clear connections between claims and the data, and the warrants needed to support them
    - Trying to analyze style or rhetorical strategies instead of arguing a point (wrong essay…that would be analysis!!!)
  + Carefully read the prompt and all introductory material. Many times the extra information will provide you with time-saving information.
    - With visual texts
      * Identify the subject/s
      * Identify the major components
      * Identify verbal clues such as titles, date, cartoonist, and dialogue
      * Notice position and size of details of images
      * Identify the primary purpose
      * How do the details support the purpose?
  + **Pre-writing:** Clearly mark and decide which position you will take and which sources will support your viewpoint.
  + Opening Paragraph: Specifically address the prompt and clearly state your position on the topic (thesis with 3 ideas). You may uses anecdotes, personal experiences, observations, startling facts/statistics, etc. to “catch” your reader’s attention.
  + Body Paragraphs: Use transitions to connect ideas. Build up to your strongest point with each paragraph. When citing sources, all you need to do is put the source in parenthesis (Source A) or say, “According to Source A…..”
  + Use a mixture of direct quotations, summary, and paraphrases when incorporating your sources. Remember that you MUST establish a position and each source you choose MUST support and develop your position.
    - Summary: read a text closely and locate the key words/phrases that enable you to reduce the piece to its essential points
    - Paraphrase: transpose the original material into your own words. It will be close to number of words in the original text.
    - Inference: drawing a conclusion based on specific material
    - Quotations:
      * Direct Quotation/Full citation provided at beginning of sentence: John Broder in his February 21, 2006, New York Times article titled “States Curbing Right to Seize Private Homes,” quotes Scott G. Bullock, “….”
      * Direct Quotation/Citation placed outside the text: In a 60 Minutes interview presented on July 4, 2004, Jim Saleet, a homeowner, stated, “.….” (Source E).
      * Paraphrase of and direct quotation third paragraph citation placed outside of the text**:** John Echeverria sees a danger arising from doing away with the powers of eminent domain. There is real danger the areas will experience “economic decline” (Source E).
      * Combination of Direct Quotation and Paraphrase citation provided outside of the text (note the use of ellipsis): In 2005, a supreme court decision ruled that “…the government taking of property from private owner…” (Source C).
      * Direct Quotation Citation after Sentence**:** 68% of survey respondents said that they “favored legislative limits on the government’s ability to take private property away from owners…” (Source G)
      * Direct Quotation with Citation with Sentence: According to a survey conducted by CNN on July 23, 2005, 66% of those responding said “never” to the question, “Should local governments be able to seize homes?”
      * Paraphrase Citation Outside Sentence: In recent polls conducted by both the Washington Times and CNN, over 60% said no when asked if local governments should be able to take over private homes and businesses (Source G).

Conclusion: Restate main idea but do not simply summarize. Try to powerfully connect ideas or find another source that somehow unites all items