

ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

Definition	Refuting opposing arguments
Organization	Language
Supporting our ideas	Sample argumentative essay

Definition: In this kind of essay, we not only give information but also present an argument with the PROS (supporting ideas) and CONS (opposing ideas) of an argumentative issue. We should clearly take our stand and write as if we are trying to persuade an opposing audience to adopt new beliefs or behavior. The primary objective is to persuade people to change beliefs that many of them do not want to change.

Choosing an argumentative topic is not an easy task. The topic should be such that

- it should be narrowed down
 - ✗ Marijuana should be considered illegal. (Not a good topic because it is too general. In some medical cases, marijuana is prescribed by the doctors and the patients are encouraged to use it in case of suffering from too much pain)
 - ✓ Selling and using marijuana in public places should be considered illegal.

- it should contain an argument
 - ✗ We should decide whether we want a bicycle or a car. (our stand is not clear: do we support having bicycles or cars?)
 - ✓ If we are under the age of 30 and want a healthy life, we should definitely get a bicycle instead of a car.

 - ✗ Are you one of those who thinks cheating is not good for students? (a question cannot be an argument)
 - ✓ Cheating helps students learn.

 - ✗ Considering its geological position, Turkey has an important geopolitical role in the EU. (facts cannot be arguments)
 - ✓ Considering its geopolitical role, we can clearly say that the EU cannot be without Turkey.

- it should be a topic that can be adequately supported (with statistics, outside source citations, etc.)
 - ✗ I feel that writing an argumentative essay is definitely a challenging task. (feelings cannot be supported; we cannot persuade other people)

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If you believe that you can find enough evidence to support your idea and refute others effectively, you can choose challenging topics as well. You can enjoy writing about such topics:

Cheating is beneficial for students.

Murat 124 is a very good choice for conscientious drivers.

Stress is good for the human body.

Polygamy is quite natural.

For women, there is no need for men.

Organization: All argumentative topics have PROs and CONs. Before starting writing, it is imperative to make a list of these ideas and choose the most suitable ones among them for supporting and refuting.

There are three possible organization patterns:

Pattern 1:

Thesis statement:

PRO idea 1

PRO idea 2

CON(s) + Refutation(s)

Conclusion

Pattern 2:

Thesis statement:

CON(s) + Refutation(s)

PRO idea 1

PRO idea 2

Conclusion

Pattern 3:

Thesis statement:

CON idea 1 -----> Refutation

CON idea 2 -----> Refutation

CON idea 3 -----> Refutation

Conclusion

The [sample essay](#) has been written according to the third pattern.

Thesis: Do Reiki instead of taking medicine.

<u>Counter arguments</u>		<u>Refutation</u>
1. People should trust medicine since it is effective and scientifically proven.	----->	Reiki is also scientifically proven and does not have side effects. (refutation method: insufficient claim)
2. Serious illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and cancer cannot be treated without medicine.	----->	Medicine also cannot treat serious illnesses if not diagnosed at an early stage. (refutation method: opponents are partially correct)
3. Reiki, like alternative healing methods, requires a lot of time.	----->	Reiki requires less time if done regularly. (refutation method: opponents are completely wrong)

Supporting our ideas: This is the most important part when persuading others. We are asking some people to change their beliefs or actions. We should be supporting our ideas with such facts, statistics and/or authorities that there should not be room for any doubts. Here are some *faulty* supports we should avoid:

Thesis: Leaving the university and starting to work is good for the adolescent because ...

- Feelings, emotional arguments (... it makes one feel much better.)
- Irrelevant examples (wandering off the topic) (... he would then be able to take his girlfriend to expensive restaurants.)
- Oversimplification (... only then would he understand what it means to be an adult.)
- Hasty generalizations (... it is a widely known fact that all adolescents look forward to earning money.)
- Unreliable, even false outside sources (... according to www.doubtme.com, 80% of working men wish they quit school when they were at university and started working at an earlier age.)

For more mistakes in the logic of arguments, see [Fallacies](#).

Refuting opposing arguments: Before we start saying that the opponents are wrong, we should *specify* their opposing ideas. Otherwise, it would be like hitting the other person with eyes closed. We should see clearly what we are hitting and be prepared beforehand so that he cannot hit us back. We can do this by knowing what we are refuting.

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e.g. **X** Some people may say that adolescents should not leave university education; however, they are wrong. (what they say is not wrong. Maybe their supporting idea is wrong /irrelevant /insufficient. We should state their supporting idea specifically to be able to refute it.)

✓ Some people may say that adolescents should not leave university education because they are not physically and psychologically mature enough to cope with the problems of the real world. However, they forget one fact: adolescents can vote or start driving at the age of 18 (in some countries even before that age!), which proves that they are considered physically and psychologically mature at that age.

Language: Signposts gain importance in the argumentative essay. They enable the readers to follow our arguments easily.

When pointing out opposing arguments (CONs):

Opponents of this idea claim / maintain that ...

Those who disagree / are against these ideas may say / assert that ...

Some people may disagree with this idea.

When stating specifically why they think like that:

The put forward this idea because ...

They claim that ... since ...

Reaching the turning point:

However,

but

On the other hand,

When refuting the opposing idea, we may use the following strategies:

- *compromise* but prove that their argument is not powerful enough:
They have a point in thinking like that.
To a certain extent they are right.
- completely *disagree*:
After seeing this evidence, there is no way we can agree with what they say.
- say that their argument is *irrelevant* to the topic:
What we are discussing here is not what they are trying to prove.
Their argument is irrelevant.

Sample argumentative essay:

HEALTH AND HEALING AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Throw out the bottles and boxes of drugs in your house. A new theory suggests that medicine could be bad for your health, which should at least come as good news to people who cannot afford to buy expensive medicine. However, it is a blow to the medicine industry, and an even bigger blow to our confidence in the progress of science. This new theory argues that healing is at our fingertips: we can be healthy by doing Reiki on a regular basis.

Supporters of medical treatment argue that medicine should be trusted since it is effective and scientifically proven. They say that there is no need for spiritual methods such as Reiki, Yoga, Tai Chi. These waste our time, something which is quite precious in our material world. There is medicine that can kill our pain, x-rays that show us our fractured bones or MRI that scans our brain for tumors. We must admit that these methods are very effective in the examples that they provide. However, there are some "every day complaints" such as back pains, headaches, insomnia, which are treated currently with medicine. When you have a headache, you take an Aspirin, or Vermidon, when you cannot sleep, you take Xanax without thinking of the side effects of these. When you use these pills for a long period, you become addicted to them; you cannot sleep without them. We pay huge amounts of money and become addicted instead of getting better. How about a safer and more economical way of healing? When doing Reiki to yourself, you do not need anything except your energy so it is very economical. As for its history, it was discovered in Japan in the early 1900s and its popularity has spread particularly throughout America and Western Europe. In quantum physics, energy is recognized as the fundamental substance of which the universe is composed. Reiki depends on the energy within our bodies. It is a simple and effective way of restoring the energy flow. There are no side effects and it is scientifically explained.

Opponents of alternative healing methods also claim that serious illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and cancer cannot be treated without drugs. They think so because these patients spend the rest of their lives in the hospital taking medicine. How can Reiki make these people healthy again? It is very unfortunate that these patients have to live in the hospital losing their hair because of chemotherapy, losing weight because of the side effects of the medicine they take. Actually, it is common knowledge that except for when the cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, drugs also cannot treat AIDS or cancer. Most of the medicine these patients use are to ease their pain and their sufferings because of the medical treatment they undergo. Instead of drugs which are expensive and have many side effects, you can use your energy to overcome the hardships of life, find an emotional balance, leave the stress of everyday life and let go of the

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everyday worries. Most of the chronic conditions such as eczema or migraine are known to have causes such as poor diet and stress. Deep-rooted anger or other strong emotions can contribute to viral infections as well. Since balancing our emotions and controlling our thoughts are very important for our well-being, we should definitely start learning Reiki and avoid illnesses before it is too late.

Some people may still maintain that in our material world, everything depends on time. It is even "lacking time" that causes much of the stress that leads to the illnesses we mentioned. How would it be possible to find time to do Reiki to ourselves and the people around us when we cannot even find time to go to the theater? This is one good thing about Reiki; it does not require more than 15 minutes of our time. There is no need for changing clothes or special equipment. It is a wonderfully simple healing art, an effective method of relaxation and stress-relief. Most important of all, it is less time consuming than medicine if we think of all the time we spend taking medicine for some complaints and taking some more for the side effects as well.

Having said these, resistance to Reiki would be quite illogical. Reiki is natural and drug-free. What is more, it is easy to learn by anyone, regardless of age and experience. It can be used anywhere, anytime. It also enhances physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being and the benefits last a lifetime. It is definitely high time to get away from the drug boxes we store in our drug cabinet!

Written by Oya Ozagac, September 2004
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