

The Argumentative Essay:

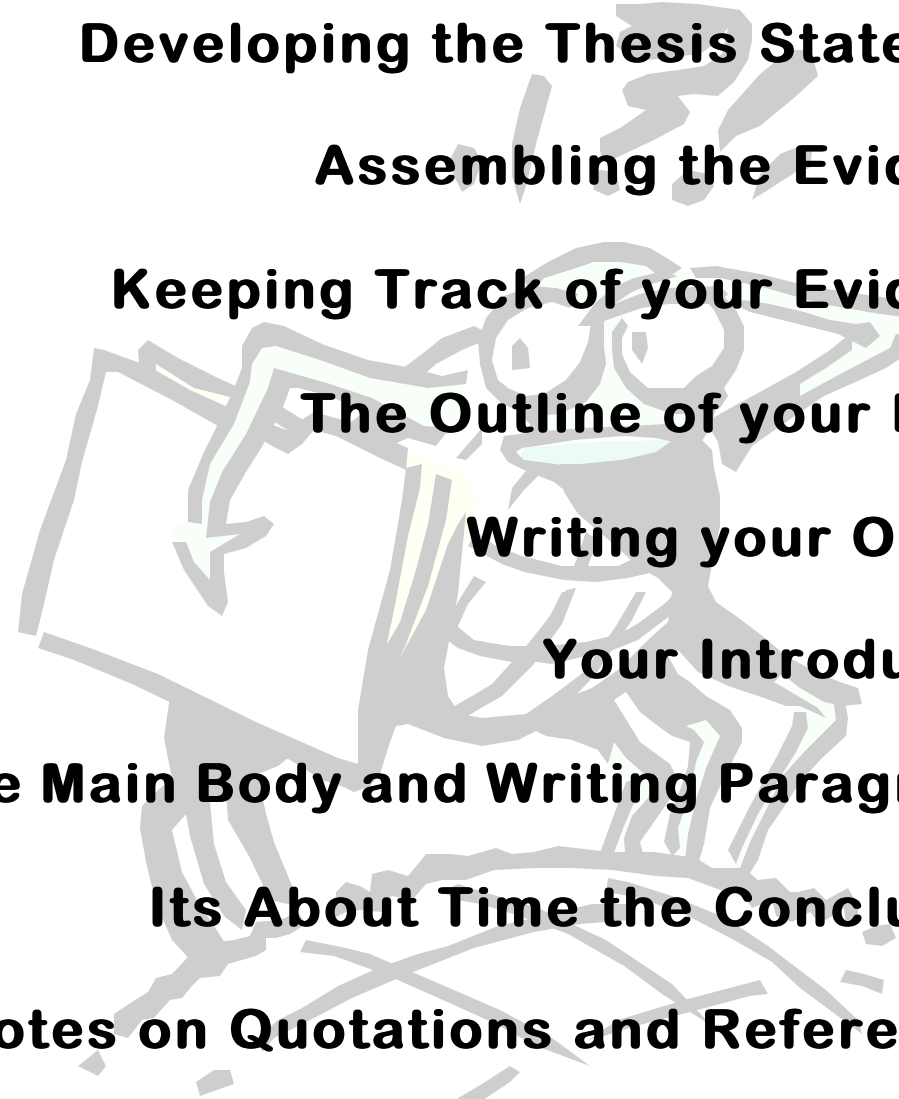


Everything you ever wanted to know
about it,
but were afraid to ask!

HPO 4A0 - Canadian Politics

Mr. Pearson

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The Argumentative Essay: An Instruction Manual for the Inexperienced

This manual is intended for Social Sciences students who are writing their first argumentative essay. The primary purpose of this manual is to try to ease your worries and to show you that writing an essay is not as difficult as it seems, if you follow all of the procedures. This manual will direct you through the writing process, from the creation of an idea, researching, drafting, to final proofreading. By following the steps outlined in the manual you will develop your skills of organisation and essay writing.

An Introduction to the Argumentative or Persuasive Essay

Before you begin the writing process you must understand its purpose. A persuasive essay's primary purpose is to present an argument or a thesis that will focus your ideas and by the end of the process, will demonstrate to the reader the worth and validity of your argument. Therefore, you must decide upon a topic that is not so broad that your argument becomes lost in the haze of background information. Remember, this is a persuasive essay not an expository essay or report. You must be able to show the reader the point or idea you are arguing.

Developing the Thesis Statement

A thesis is a statement of your idea, argument or point, which you will support with evidence throughout your essay.

In the Beginning!



- In most cases, you will not start the essay writing process with a well-developed thesis. Rather, you will either have a broad idea or topic that you will wish to cover with your essay.
- Once you begin your research and find articles and books that deal with your topic you will begin to narrow the focus of your essay. This is an important step in the process, because if your focus is too wide you will waste many hours gathering information that will be of little use to you.
- As you begin to narrow your focus your thesis statement will slowly start to emerge. Remember, you are writing an argumentative essay not an informative report. You must prove a point!

- A thesis statement is not ‘written in stone’, it is merely a starting point for further research and a beginning to the writing process. In fact, your thesis will go through many changes and revisions during the formation of your essay.
- A thesis statement should:
 - a) Have pertinence and relevance
 - b) Be well measured, snug and concise
 - c) Much like a compass, point in a definitive direction.

Assembling the Evidence:



- When researching, you must remember the purpose or thesis of your essay. This will maintain your sense of direction and dictate the type of evidence you should use.
- You should determine the type of evidence you use:
 - a) Statistics
 - b) Reasons
 - c) Personal Accounts
 - d) Primary Documents
 - e) Journal articles or Abstracts
- If you discover or locate evidence that takes the contradictory point of view to yours, do not ignore it. In fact, you should seriously consider using it. This type of evidence is called ‘Negative Evidence’ and you could include it in your essay and disprove it with facts and research of your own. This will help you avoid ‘tunnel vision’, it will keep you fair and objective throughout your essay and this will be demonstrated and recognised by reader.
- You should not base your essay entirely on a few sources or texts (books). You should try to avoid using texts and try to use periodicals and learned journals for your essay. Wherever possible, you will want to find as much primary evidence as possible.
- The primary evidence combined with information gained from journals and books will help you interpret your findings and decide on what is important to your essay. It may also assist you in eliminating any fraudulent or inaccurate resources.

Noting or Keeping Track of Your Resources:



- More often than not, the most common mistake made by beginners, is a failure to record the source of their information. This leads to countless wasted hours trying to track down information that should have been recorded at the beginning of your research.
- You are encouraged to write the information on sources in two places. The first is at the top of your research notes sheet. The second is on a separate sheet of paper, which will form the beginnings of your working bibliography.

- When noting where you found information, be sure to record the following data:
 - a) Author (first and last name)
 - b) Title of book or article
 - c) If it is a periodical, the name of the periodical
 - d) Edition, Publisher, Place and Year
 - e) The page number.
- Students view note taking as a painful experience and are often tempted not to do it. Do not succumb to this ‘temptation’! Your note taking is the foundation your essay. It will help you determine the validity, reliability and value of your sources. Ask the following questions as your are taking notes:



- a) Are the sources recent?
 - b) Are the sources reliable?
 - c) Do others respect the sources?
 - d) What are your reactions to the sources?
 - e) Are other sources, saying the same thing?
 - f) Will this source bring more variety to your essay?
- Remember, the overall objective of research is not just to record the basic facts. You must evaluate, synthesise and interpret your findings according to the viewpoint or thesis of your paper.

Starting the Outline of Your Essay:

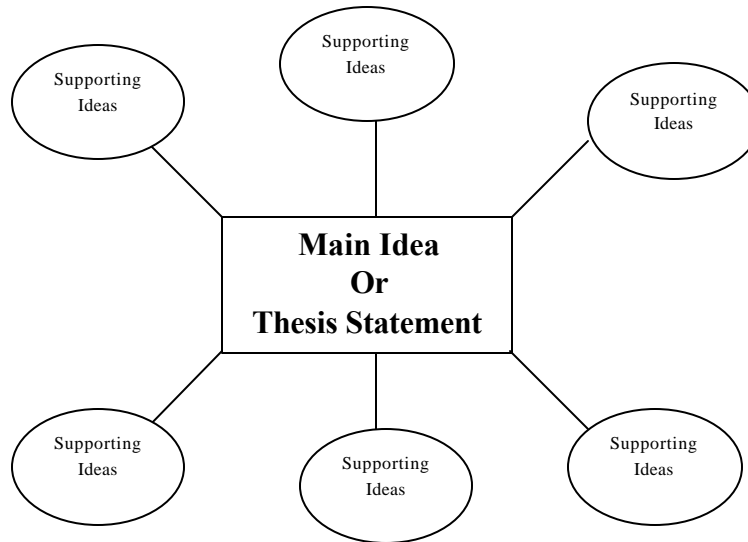
Sorting Through Your Ideas and Research:

- Before you begin to organise your thoughts and ideas there are several tasks you must perform first:
 - 1) Make sure you have established: the Thesis Statement and your purpose.
 - 2) Gather all of your notes and research, to ensure they are all in place.
 - 3) Begin to classify your material, if you have three reasons/causes/factors your most have three different forms or types of evidence to support your statements.
 - 4) Rank your points or evidence according to their importance. For example, you could prioritise your evidence into major and minor significance.
 - 5) Decide on what evidence you will most likely use and discard.

Preparing your Ideas: An Introduction to Spider Diagrams

- A spider diagram is a very effective way of organising your information and will provide a ‘visual’ checklist when you begin your outline.

- Your main idea goes in the middle of the diagram and then all of your ideas or supporting arguments go on the 'legs'.



Writing Your Outline:

- The outline will form the basis or the backbone of your essay; it is the further evolution of the development of your thoughts or ideas.
- As you begin to assemble your outline you may start to see pieces of evidence, that at one time seemed valuable to your argument, but now are unrelated to your thesis. Do not hesitate to remove them from your paper. Remember the main function of the outline is to show you how well your research and evidence fits your thesis.
- Below is a brief example of how essay outline should appear:

TOPIC: WIDGETS

- I) **INTRODUCTION:** Everyone has heard of widgets at one time or another, what a widget is changes from person to person.

THESIS STATEMENT: If widgets did not exist in our lives, the entire world structure would collapse and life on the planet Earth would cease as we know it.

II) **BODY:**

A) **Idea 1:** A Brief History of Widgets

- i) Where they come from
- ii) How they are made
- iii) What they are used in

B) **Idea 2:** What do Widgets Mean to You

- i) The Widget and the Individual
- ii) The Widget and the World
- iii) The Widget and You

C) **Idea 3:** A world without Widgets

- i) A terrifying Nightmare

- ii) A world of destruction and Chaos
- III) **Conclusion:** Widgets form the cornerstone of the modern world as we know it. If they should disappear we would fall into a state of Chaos and disorder.

Finally: The First Draft

The Introduction:

- The Introduction is one of the most important parts of your essay, as you must grab the reader's attention, you do not want to lose them in your first paragraph. Some things to keep in mind are:



- a) Try to present an interesting, moving piece of information, such as an interesting fact or quotation.
- b) Write with conviction, show the reader what you have written matters, avoid sounding bored.
- c) Include your detailed thesis statement, outlining exactly what you will attempt to prove in your essay.
- d) Provide a brief explanation of how you will attempt to prove your thesis.

The Main Body and Writing Paragraphs:

- It is now time to put all of your research together and start proving your thesis. Each paragraph you write will include a thought, idea or proof for your thesis.
- Each paragraph should contain the following elements:
 - i) A topic sentence which reveals the controlling idea or proof.
 - ii) Supporting evidence related to the topic sentence.
 - iii) Explanation for how your evidence relates to your topic sentence and thesis.
 - iv) A smooth transition to your next paragraph.

a) Transitions Between Paragraphs:

- The reader must be able to feel or appreciate how the paragraph fits into the essay.
- When writing transitions at the end and beginning of paragraphs, do not use firstly, secondly or thirdly. Try using some of the transitions below, that were suggested in Fit to Print:

b) The Voice of Your Essay:

- When writing history essays, you are for the most part, discussing events of the past. The tendency for most writers is to write your essay in the past tense. While this may seem like a logical conclusion to make, it cannot be further from the truth.
- When the passive voice is used the structure of the sentence is receiver, verb, actor. An example of this is:

The man was bitten by the dog.

- When the active voice is used the structure of the sentence is actor, verb, receiver. An example of this style of writing is:

The dog bit the man.

- Writing in the active voice will make your essay more clear and percise.
- The passive voice can be very awkward to use, and the idea of your sentence can be lost in a fog of descriptive words.

TO ADD:

- And
- Also
- In addition
- Furthermore
- As well
- Moreover

TO ENUMERATE:

- Of initial importance
- Of greater significance
- The most crucial
- If you are stuck: first, next, last (please try not to use these)

TO ILLUSTRATE:

- For example
- For instance
- In other words
- That is

TO SUMMARISE:

- In short

TO QUALIFY:

- Often
- Generally
- Specifically
- Usually

TO DRAW A CONCLUSION:

- Hence
- Thus
- Therefore
- As a result
- Consequently

TO CHANGE DIRECTION:

- But
- However
- Conversely
- Although
- Whereas

TO ESTABLISH CAUSE:

- For

Its About Time, the Conclusion:



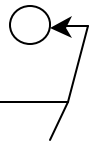
- When you begin to draw your conclusion, you will want to retrace your line of thought. Retracing does not simply mean repeating your thesis statement or introduction
- You want your conclusion to be a remind the reader of the steps of your journey together.
- You will want to mention several keywords and the most important facts.
- Make a different restatement of your thesis, in other words alter it.
- Take a wider, more general focus. Use a less stringent or tight view of your thesis in your conclusion.
- Relate your paper to broader concerns, try and relate to other past events or possibilities for the future.
- Leave the reader pondering or thinking about your point of view.
- Do not introduce new evidence or information.

Notes on using Quotations or Referencing

- Copying quotations or information from a source is cheating and is called plagiarism. When you are caught, (and you will be) your paper will receive a mark of zero.
- You should only borrow words, phrases and sentences if they had something essential to your paper.
- Be very careful about how many or how often you use quotations, overuse of quotations can diminish the power of your paper.
- Do not 'throw' quotations into your sentences; rather weave them in so there is a seamless transition from your writing to the quotation.

Formatting Quotations:

- a) Enclose short quotations (fewer than four lines) in quotation marks and include them in the main body of the essay.
- b) Use an ellipsis . . . to indicate where you have omitted words, to cut quotations down to the bare essentials.
- c) Use [square] brackets to show or indicate words you have added.
- d) When you introduce a quotation use a comma, "to separate the quote from the rest of the sentence."
- e) When you use a complete sentence to introduce a quotation, follow it with a colon; "to separate the quote from the rest of the sentence."
- f) If the quotation appears at an end of the sentence use a period to close it. (see the two examples above)
- g) Use "single quotation marks for, 'a quotation within' another quotation."
- h) Double-indent long quotations (four lines or more) 1/2an inch; omit enclosing quotation marks and make the quote single spaced.
- i) Make sure you explain a quotation. Do not leave it 'hanging' on its own, your must support it.
- j) Again, use quotations sparingly. The essay is meant to demonstrate your views on a subject not another author's.



Footnoting:



A) When to use footnotes?

- 1) **After direct quotations.** Each statement taken word for word from a source should be referenced at the end of the quotation and be properly identified in a footnote. The only exceptions to this are when you use well-known expressions, famous lines from literature or movies and from proverbs.
- 2) **After all important statements of fact or opinion taken from written sources and expressed in you're own words.** Facts are figures, dates, scientific data, a descriptions of events of which you have no first hand knowledge. Opinions and interpretations that are not your own which include, one writer's reasons for the causes of World War I, or an opinion on political reform from a magazine.
- 3) **To indicate where additional evidence or comment may be found in books or other sources.** For example, the statement "For additional information, see . . ." can be included in the footnote.

- 4) **To furnish additional material or discussion which is pertinent but which would disturb the flow of your essay if included.** You may refer to a speech in your essay without providing a portion of it. By placing the speech in a footnote, you can allow readers the opportunity to examine it.

B) How many Footnotes should be used?

If you have a full page in your essay without references, you should check it again to see if you ‘inadvertently’ missed any referencing. An overly large number of footnotes on a page may indicate that some material could be better combined or rephrased to eliminate unnecessary references. Remember that overusing footnotes affects the flow and credibility of your argument. A good rule of thumb to follow is; there should be about three (3) footnotes per page.

C) Some Points on Footnotes!

- Footnotes give credit to the person or people who wrote the source you have used.
- You must use footnotes to reference or document your sources in your essay.
- A footnote can be used for referencing and commentary (explain a point in your essay or providing background historical information that does not belong in your main body).
- When using footnotes, they are compiled at the bottom a page. The numbers in the body of your essay should correspond to numbers at the bottom of your page. Word processors handle this task for us.
- When using this style of documentation always-single space the note and leave a single space between each individual note.

D) What should a Footnote look like?

- The first note from a book should contain the following:
 - a) Note number¹
 - b) Name of author(s)
 - c) Title and subtitle, underlined
 - d) Name of editor or translator
 - e) Name or number of edition (if available)
 - f) Facts of Publication (place, name of publisher, date of publishing)
 - g) Page number of citation or quote
- The first note from an article should contain the following:
 - a) Name of author(s)
 - b) Title of article in “quotation” marks
 - c) Name of periodical, underlined
 - d) Volume number or issue
 - e) Publication date in (parentheses or brackets)
 - f) Page numbers, inclusive (pp 35-46)
- Notes after the first full reference to a work should contain the following:
 - a) Author’s last name
 - b) Page number

Examples of Footnotes in University of Chicago Style:

1) A book with one author:

1. Stephen Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 3rd. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 54.

2) A book with two or three authors:

2. J.L. Granatstein and R. Bothwell, Pirouette, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 7.

3) More than three authors:

3. F. A. Starke and others, Management Concepts and Canadian Practice, (Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, 1980), p. 3.

4) An edited book:

4. Politics: Canada, ed. P.W. Fox (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982), p. preface.

5) An Article in an edited book of selections written by various authors:

5. Robert A. Dahl, "What is Political Science" Politics: Canada, ed. P.W. Fox (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982), p. 11.

6) A Translated book:

6. Victor Hugo, Notre-Dame of Paris, trans. J. Sturrock (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 41.

7) A book for which no author is given:

7. What is Life, 2nd ed. (Nirvana: New Age Press, 1987), p. 79.

8) Signed Article in a magazine:

8. Kenneth Whyte, "Nice Guys Finish Last," Saturday Night, July/August 1993, p. 16.

9) Unsigned article in a magazine:

9. "Where to eat in Toronto," Toronto Eating, June 1992, p. 57.

10) Article in a scholarly journal:

10. Daniel Latouche, "It Takes Two to . . . Divorce and Remarry," Journal of Canadian Studies, 12 (1977), 29.

11) Signed article in a newspaper:

11. Jan Morris, "Legacy of Good from the Empire," The Globe and Mail (Toronto), August 25, 1978, p. A7.

12) Encyclopedia Article:

12. John Downs, "Reformation Art," World Encyclopedia, rev. ed. (Chicago: Fictional Co., 1973), XI, 169.

Bibliographies:

- If you followed the instructions for researching, assembling your bibliography should be a simple task.
 - Following the basic guidelines below should help you with the final stages of your notes and your bibliography.
- a) A bibliography is on a separate page
 - b) It is in alphabetical order and is NOT numbered.
 - c) The first line begins at the margin, the second line is indented one tab stop.
 - d) Follow the examples given and you will not have any difficulties.

Examples of Bibliographic Entries:

1) One author:

Mann, Golo. The History of Germany Since 1789. London: Pergine Books, 1988.

2) Two or three authors:

McRoberts, Kenneth, and Dale Postgate. Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980.

3) More than three authors:

Blair, Walter, et al. The Literature of the United States. 3rd ed. 3 vols. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

4) An edited book:

Shakespeare, William. The Complete Works of Shakespeare. Rev. ed. Harin, Craig and David Bevington, eds. Chicago: Hill: 1973.

5) An encyclopedia article:

McGuire, William. "Persuasion." Encyclopedia Britannica. Macropedia 14, 1974.

6) A translation:

Pasternik, Boris. My Sister, Life. Trans. Olga Carlisle. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1976.

7) A reprint:

Dexter, Walter. The London of Dickens. 1923; rpt. Philadelphia: Richard West, 1973.

8) A Dictionary:

"Historicism." The Oxford Dictionary of Current English. 1984 ed.

Periodicals:

9) A magazine:

Worthington, Peter. "The Journalist and the Killer." Saturday Night July/August 1993: 30-38, 50-55.

10) A Newspaper:

Morris, Jan. "Legacy of Good from Empire." The Globe and Mail 25 August. 1978: A7.

11) Article in a Scholarly Journal:

Latouche, Daniel. "It Takes Two to . . . Divorce and Remarry." Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 12, no. 3 (1977), pp. 24-32.

Audio-Visual:

11) A film or video:

The Mystery of Egypt. Dir. Sid Thorps. Edu-Media Corp Productions, 1990. 120 mins.

12) A television or radio program:

The Fall of France. Narr. Lord Howden. Writ and prod. M. Mclean. BBC Special report. London. 19 May. 1979.

13) A Reference CD:

"Gerontology." The McGraw-Hill Science and Technical Reference Set. 1991 ed.

14) On-line information:

Okrent, M. (1996). Why the mind isn't a program. The Electronic Journal of Analytical Philosophy [on-line] Available: <http://www.phil.indiana.edu/ejap/ejap.html>

- It is important to note that in your papers you may use web sites for general information, but take note that the validity of information on web sites is low, therefore, this will require research to interpret these sources.