Argumentative Essay

How to develop an effective argumentative essay
Argumentative Essay

❖ Purpose: Makes a claim about a topic and justifies this claim with specific evidence.

• The claim could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation.

❖ Goal: To convince the intended audience that the claim is true based on the specific evidence provided.
Breaking It Down, Step-by-Step

1. Read and dissect the prompt
2. Brainstorm
3. Create a thesis statement
4. Layout / Outline essay structure
5. Write rough draft, including:
   - Introduction
   - Body Paragraphs
   - Conclusion
6. Revise and edit
7. Produce final copy
In this section, you will read about the ongoing debate over the use of genetically modified (GM) food. What are the benefits and dangers of producing and consuming foods that have been genetically modified? You will write an argumentative essay in your own words supporting either side of the debate in which you argue for or against the use of GM food.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the two texts:

1. “GM Food Saves Lives”
2. “What We Don’t Know About GM Food Can Kill Us”

As you read the texts, think about what details from the texts you might use in your argumentative essay.
Read and Dissect the Prompt

• Carefully read the prompt

Now that you have read “GM Food Saves Lives” and “What We Don’t Know About GM Food Can Kill Us,” create a plan for your argumentative essay.

Think about ideas, facts, definitions, details, and other information and examples you want to use. Think about how you will introduce your topic and what the main topic will be for each paragraph. Be sure to identify the sources by title or number when using details or facts directly from the sources.

Write an argumentative essay in your own words supporting either side of the debate in which you argue for or against the use of GM food. Be sure to use information from both texts.
Read and Dissect the Prompt

• Now, read the prompt again and underline important points.
• Determine: What is the writing situation? What are the specific directions for writing? Who is the intended audience? What advice is offered to support the writing process?

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• Writing Situation
• Directions for Writing
• Advice about Writing Process
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• Writing Situation
• Directions for Writing
• Advice about Writing Process
Read and Dissect the Prompt

- Re-read the writing prompt from the pre-assessment ("Shut Down Your Screen")
- Highlight the writing situation, directions for writing, and advice about the writing process.
A group of parents and teachers in your school have made a proposal to the school board. In their proposal, they are suggesting that the school join in a national movement called “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” The parents and teachers in the group believe that not using any electronic media for an entire week would be good for students for many reasons.

They have taken the proposal to a teachers’ meeting, so that teachers can discuss the issue of whether or not to ask their students to participate in the “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” The teachers have decided they would like to hear from the students before they decide.

This is not a simple issue, so you need to think very carefully about it. You have three texts to read relating to the issue: “Social Media as Community,” “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” and “Attached to Technology and Paying a Price.” As you read and re-read these texts, think about what they show you about the issue. Think about what position you will take and what evidence you will use to support your thinking.

Finally, write an essay, in the form of a letter to the teachers, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

Should your school participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week?” Be sure to use evidence from the texts, as well as your own knowledge, to support and develop your thinking.
Brainstorm

• Be sure to consider all sides of the argument in order to identify which side you can BEST argue. Don't rule out any ideas at this point!
• As you think of ideas for each side, write them down so that you can easily sort them out and formulate the position you want to argue.

- Ban cell phones during class
- Improvements for Schools
- Give a two-hour break during the day
- Build an indoor water park on campus
Brainstorming for a text-based response requires that you develop your ideas based on the text.

If you plan to develop an idea in your essay, you must be able to refer specifically to the texts provided to support your argument.
Brainstorm

**Reasons for the use of GM food**
- Beneficial to people and business
- Produce more food at lower cost
- Increase the health value of food
- Make the food more desirable
- GM doesn't harm environment or people

**Reasons against the use of GM food**
- Researchers don't know the long-term effects of GM
- GM throws ecosystem off balance
- Current studies about GM could be flawed by financial interests
Develop Thesis Statement

❖ Based on your audience and the strength of your evidence, choose your position and develop your thesis statement.

❖ The thesis statement is the most important sentence in the entire essay as it serves as a map of the entire essay.

❖ The thesis statement
  • must be specific
  • must be a statement
  • must outline the content discussed in the body of the essay
  • must be supported by specific evidence in the body of the essay
  • must have parallel structure
Develop a Thesis Statement

- A thesis statement may be open or closed
- Open Thesis: A thesis that tells the reader only your position on a topic.
  - Boston is a better city than New York.
- Closed Thesis: A thesis that tells the reader both your position and the reasons you feel that way.
  - Due to its more intimate size, European architecture, and historical significance, Boston is a far more interesting place to live than New York.
Develop Thesis Statement

- The thesis statement is presented at the end of the introduction and is restated in the conclusion.
- Your ideas may change as you write the rough draft. Be sure to revise your thesis as needed so it continues to reflect exactly what is discussed in the essay.
Develop the Thesis Statement

GM Food Brainstorm

Chosen Position: For the use of GM food

Beneficial to people and businesses

Produce more food at lower cost

Increase the health value of food

Make food more desirable

Studies show that GM food doesn't cause harm to people or to the environment
Develop a Thesis Statement

• Develop both an open and a closed thesis for an essay arguing for the use of GM food.
Practice: Brainstorm and Thesis

- Re-read the prompt for the pre-assessment essay ("Shut Down Your Screen").
- Brainstorm ideas for writing
- Develop either an open or a closed thesis statement based on your chosen position
If you develop a closed thesis, your thesis will provide a basic outline of your essay.

Both businesses and individuals should be encouraged to produce and consume genetically modified food because genetic modification allows more food to be produced at a lower cost, it increases the health value of food, and it makes food more desirable.
Introduction with Thesis Statement: Both businesses and individuals should be encouraged to produce and consume genetically modified food because genetic modification allows more food to be produced at a lower cost, it increases the health value of food, and it makes food more desirable.

Body Paragraph 1 Topic Sentence: Using genetic modification allows more food to be produced at a lower cost.

Body Paragraph 2 Topic Sentence: Genetic modification also increases the health value of food.

Body Paragraph 3 Topic Sentence: The use of genetic modification can also make certain foods more desirable.

Conclusion with Restated Thesis Statement: Allowing more food to be produced at a lower cost, increasing the health value of food, and making food more desirable are all benefits of genetic modification.
Write the Rough Draft - Introduction

- Introduction = 4 sentences minimum!
- Begins with a hook/lead to grab the reader’s attention.
- Provides one or two sentences transitioning to the thesis statement, the map of the complete essay
- Clearly states the thesis statement, the “map” of the essay
- Transitions to the first body paragraph
With the global population rapidly increasing everyday, food shortages have become problematic in many countries around the world. One solution to this problem is genetically modified (GM) food. Since 1994, farmers in the United States have been using GM on both produce and animals (Wilson). The use of GM foods should be encouraged because GM lowers the production cost of food, increases the health value of food, and increases the desirability of food.
Write the Rough Draft - Introduction

- Refer back to your brainstorming and thesis statement for the "Shut Down the Screen" prompt and write your introduction.
Write the Rough Draft - Body Paragraphs

❖ The number of body paragraphs depends upon the number of ideas presented in the thesis statement

❖ Begin each body paragraph with a topic sentence which establishes the subject/topic of the paragraph

❖ The paragraph continues with specific, detailed evidence supporting your topic sentence
Write the Rough Draft - Body Paragraphs

❖ The body paragraph ends with a concluding sentence that relates back to the topic.

❖ The concluding sentence can also serve as a transitional sentence to begin introducing the next main idea.

❖ Typically there should not be fewer than five sentences in a body paragraph.

❖ **Never** include less than two-body paragraphs in an essay.
Genetically modified food can be produced at a lower cost than traditional methods of production. When researchers develop GM crops that "withstand disease and drought," they are developing crops that save money for farmers (Wilson). Farmers will expend fewer resources to grow crops; they will use less fertilizer and water. They will also lose fewer crops to circumstances previously beyond their control such as disease and drought. These factors combine to decrease the overall cost of production for farmers, which lowers the cost at the supermarket for all of us.
Write the Rough Draft - Body Paragraphs

❖ Refer back to your "Shut Down the Screen" prompt and outline.
❖ Develop your body paragraphs according to your outline.
❖ Be sure to include a topic sentence, evidence, explanation, and concluding sentence in each paragraphs.

What? How? Why?
The conclusion = minimum of four sentences

Begins with a restatement of the thesis statement. You may reword the thesis or flip the thesis; do not paste the thesis from introduction to conclusion.

Provide one to two sentences reminding the reader of the main arguments in the essay (look at each topic sentence to review the main points).

Close with a “call to action.” In other words, if the reader has been convinced by the arguments presented, tell him/her how to respond.

Another strategy for closing is to elevate or broaden the argument to a wider audience ("If every farmer in the world grew GM crops...") or to advance the argument into the future ("In the future, if more farmers grow GM crops...")
What NOT to do in the conclusion:

- **DO NOT** introduce new arguments
- **DO NOT** apologize for doing a poor job of presenting the material
- **DO NOT** say, “This essay was about,” “I hope you agree with me,” “Hopefully, you are convinced,” or anything similar
As we move into the future, production of GM food should continue. GM allows food to be cheaper, healthier, and tastier. Also, "it's safe, effective, and needed" (Wilson). With all of these documented benefits about GM food, it would be foolish to ever consider discontinuing the use of genetic modification. With GM, we may finally be able to make sure that everyone has access to affordable, healthy food.
Write the Rough Draft - Conclusion

- Refer back to your "Shut Down the Screen" prompt and outline.
- Develop a concluding paragraph for your essay
- Be sure to restate your thesis, **briefly** sum up your main points, and conclude your essay
Revising and Editing

❖ Do you have an introduction, 2+ body paragraphs, a counter-argument if applicable, and a conclusion?

❖ Does each paragraph have the proper structure (i.e., lead, topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding/transition sentence,)?

❖ Is there a clearly stated thesis statement?

❖ Does every point support your thesis, or have you gone off topic? No matter how much you like a point or a sentence, if it is off the topic, cut it.

❖ Have you provided adequate supporting details (count your sentences and make sure you meet minimum requirements)
Revising and Editing

❖ Does one generalization follow naturally from the previous one and lead naturally to the next one? Will the connection be clear to the reader? Fill in any jumps between thoughts.

❖ Have you made clear how the details are connected to a generalization? If not, connect them.

❖ Have you organized your material so that all your discussion of a single point is in one place in your essay, or does the same idea get discussed in more than one place in the essay? Combine all discussion of one generalization in one place, and cut any repetition.

❖ Is anything in your essay repetitious? Check the way you begin your sentences; do you use the same words or phrases to begin your sentences? Use varied sentence structure in general. Do not overuse any phrases, quotes, statistics, large words, etc.

❖ Is the grammar, punctuation, and spelling correct?
Producing a Final Copy

❖ If typed, use Times New Roman, size 12 font, double spaced, and print in black ink on white paper, single sided

❖ If hand-written, write legibly (cursive is preferred), use black or blue ink, double spaced on white paper, single sided

❖ Indent each paragraph and observe margins of the paper

❖ Title the essay

❖ Do not use “colorful writing” – text lingo, hearts to dot i’s, smiley faces, your athletic number beside your name, etc.