How to Write an Argumentative Paper

Use of your Document Analysis Worksheets is highly recommended in constructing your essay, as they provide much of the information you will need to write each paragraph.

INTRODUCTION
• 1 paragraph

PURPOSE: To set up and state your thesis statement or claim.

Example of a thesis statement:

“Jonathan’s arrest by the police was unjust because of the lack of evidence found at the scene of the crime.”

• Make your introductory paragraph interesting. How can you draw your readers in?
• What background information, if any, do we need to know in order to understand your claim?

BACKGROUND PARAGRAPH
• 1-2 paragraphs

PURPOSE: Lays the foundation for proving your argument.

Will often include:
• Summary of works being discussed
• Definition of key terms
• Explanation of key theories

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE PARAGRAPH #1, #2, #3
• 1-2 paragraphs

PURPOSE: To prove your argument. Usually at least one paragraph but it can be longer.

• Topic Sentence: What is one item, fact, detail, or example you can tell your readers that will help them better understand your claim/paper topic? Your answer should be the topic sentence for this paragraph.
• Explain Topic Sentence: Do you need to explain your topic sentence? If so, do so here.
• Introduce Evidence: Introduce your evidence either in a few words (As Dr. Brown states “…”) or in a full sentence (“To understand this issue we first need to look at statistics…”).
• State Evidence: What supporting evidence (reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and/or quotations) can you include to prove/support/explain your topic sentence?
• Explain Evidence: How should we read or interpret the evidence you are providing us? How does this evidence prove the point you are trying to make in this paragraph? Can be based on opinion and is often at least 1-3 sentences.
• Concluding Sentence: End your paragraph with a concluding sentence that reasserts how the topic sentence of this paragraph helps us better understand and/or prove your paper’s overall claim.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT PARAGRAPH #1, #2
• 1-2 paragraphs

PURPOSE: To anticipate your reader’s objections; make yourself sound more objective and reasonable.

• What possible argument might your reader pose against your argument and/or some aspect of your reasoning? Insert one or more of those arguments here.
• Refute each argument posed against your topic by referring back to the validity of the information provided by your supporting evidence paragraphs.
• End paragraph with a concluding sentence that reasserts your paper’s claim as a whole.

CONCLUSION
• 1-2 paragraphs

PURPOSE: To illustrate that you have thought critically and analytically about this issue.

• Your conclusion should tell us why we should care about your paper. What is the significance of your claim? Why is it important to you as the writer or to me as the reader? What information should you or I take away from this?
• Your conclusion should create a sense of movement to a more complex understanding of the subject of your paper. By the end of your essay, you should have worked through your ideas enough so that your reader understands what you have argued and is ready to hear the larger point (i.e., the “so what”) you want to make about your topic.
• Your conclusion should serve as the climax of your paper. So, save your strongest analytical points for the end of your essay, and use them to drive your conclusion.
Introduction (1 paragraph)

(Thesis Statement goes here)

“Jonathan’s arrest by the police was unjust because of the lack of evidence found at the scene of the crime.”

Background (1-2 Paragraphs)

(Summary of the topic and any details, key terms, theories goes here)

“....Jonathan was just an innocent bystander that was wrongly accused of the crime because of his ethnic background and his past history as a former gang member....”

Supporting Evidence (1-2 paragraphs)

(Evidence that supports your thesis statement should be made here)

“...this document proves that Jonathan was not affiliated in any way with the crime, as it shows that his alibi was indeed the truth...”

Supporting Evidence #2 (1-2 paragraphs)

“...this eyewitness testifies that Jonathan was not at the scene of the crime when it occurred...”

Supporting Evidence #3 (1-2 paragraphs)

“...this blood test supports the fact that it was not Jonathan’s blood found at the scene of the crime, as claimed by police...”

Counter-Argument #1 (1-2 paragraphs)

(state opposing view here)

“...police claim Jonathan’s past as a former gang member makes him a prime suspect...”

Counter-Argument #2 (1-2 paragraphs)

(state opposing view here)

“...police imply that Jonathan’s ethnic background matched the profile of their suspect...”

Conclusion (1-2 paragraphs)

(State why your reader should care here)

“...as a result of the evidence presented here, Jonathan is clearly innocent and he should be cleared of these criminal charges that were brought against him...”