



# Argumentative Essay Cheat Sheet

KEEP THIS HANDY ↗

## ARGUMENTATIVE VS. PERSUASIVE — KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

|                 | PERSUASIVE                                  | ARGUMENTATIVE                                  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| MAIN GOAL       | Win the reader over using emotion + opinion | Prove a claim using logic, facts, and evidence |
| TONE            | Can be emotional, passionate                | Formal, objective, balanced                    |
| EVIDENCE        | Personal stories, feelings, opinions        | Research, statistics, expert quotes            |
| COUNTERARGUMENT | <b>X</b> Not required                       | <b>✓</b> Must address + refute                 |
| KEY QUESTION    | "Do you agree with me?"                     | "Here is the evidence — judge for yourself."   |

## PART 1 · INTRODUCTION

### STEP 1 · HOOK

#### Opening Hook

~~"Have you ever wondered..."~~

✓ TRY THESE INSTEAD:

- "Despite widespread belief, research suggests..."
- "Many students assume that... but the data tells a different story."
- "The debate over [topic] reveals a deeper tension between..."

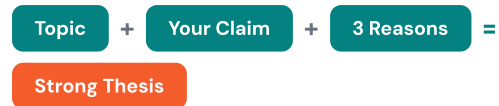
### STEP 2 · BACKGROUND

#### Context Sentences (2-3)

- 1 Introduce the **topic** in broad terms
- 2 Explain **why it matters** to your reader
- 3 Narrow toward your **specific claim**

### STEP 3 · THESIS

#### Thesis Statement Formula



## THESIS · GOOD VS. WEAK EXAMPLES

**X WEAK**

"Social media is bad for teenagers because it causes problems with their health and friendships."

**✓ STRONG**

"Unrestricted social media access harms adolescent development by disrupting sleep patterns, accelerating social comparison, and displacing the face-to-face interaction essential for emotional growth."

## PART 2 · BODY PARAGRAPHS



### Persuasive Body Paragraphs

Emotion · Opinion · Personal appeal

#### PERSUASIVE · STRUCTURE

### Paragraph Checklist

- 1 **Topic Sentence** — state your point with confidence
- 2 **Emotional Appeal** — connect to the reader's values or feelings
- 3 **Personal Example** or relatable scenario
- 4 **Explanation** — why this matters to your argument
- 5 **Concluding Sentence** — reinforce your claim

#### PERSUASIVE · TRANSITION WORDS

### Words that Persuade

Clearly

Obviously

Undeniably

Without a doubt

Most importantly

Above all

It is evident that

#### PERSUASIVE · WORDS TO AVOID

### Don't Say These

~~I think / I feel / I believe~~

~~everyone knows / obviously~~

✓ REPLACE WITH:

"Research indicates..." · "Many experts suggest..."

"Students who... are more likely to..."



### Argumentative Body Paragraphs

Evidence · Logic · Counterargument

#### ARGUMENTATIVE · PEEL STRUCTURE

### Build Each Paragraph

- P** **Point** — Topic sentence: state your claim for this paragraph
- E** **Evidence** — Cite a fact, statistic, or expert quote
- E** **Explain** — Analyze the evidence; tell the reader *why it matters*
- L** **Link** — Concluding sentence that ties back to your thesis

#### ARGUMENTATIVE ONLY · COUNTERARGUMENT + REBUTTAL

- ① **Acknowledge:** "Some argue that [opposing view]..."
- ② **Concede (optional):** "While this may be true in some cases..."
- ③ **Refute:** "However, evidence shows that [your stronger point]..."

#### ARGUMENTATIVE · EVIDENCE TYPES

##### STATISTICS

Numbers, percentages, research data

##### STUDIES

Findings from researchers or experts

##### EXPERT QUOTE

Direct words from an authority

##### REAL EXAMPLES

Historical events or real-world cases

## PART 3 · CONCLUSION

### CONCLUSION · DO'S & DON'TS

#### ✗ DON'T

- ✗ Start with "In conclusion, I think..."
- ✗ Introduce brand new evidence or ideas
- ✗ Copy your thesis word-for-word
- ✗ End with "That is why I wrote this essay."

#### ✓ DO

- ✓ Restate thesis in *different words*
- ✓ Briefly echo your 3 main points
- ✓ End with a call-to-action or larger implication
- ✓ Leave the reader thinking

### CONCLUSION · TRANSITION WORDS

#### Strong Closing Starters

Ultimately

In light of this evidence,

It is clear that

For these reasons,

Taking all of this into account,

It follows that

### COMMA RULES · QUICK REFERENCE

#### 1 AFTER TRANSITION

Moreover, students benefit from...

#### 2 JOINING 2 FULL SENTENCES

..., and they also learn responsibility.

#### 3 LIST OF 3 OR MORE

reading, writing, and speaking

### ♦ ADVANCED MODEL PARAGRAPH · ARGUMENTATIVE BODY WITH COUNTERARGUMENT

#### Topic: Should Artificial Intelligence Be Used to Grade Student Writing?

**POINT** Delegating the assessment of student writing to artificial intelligence undermines the very purpose of education by reducing a deeply human act of communication to a set of quantifiable metrics. **EVIDENCE** A 2023 study by the Stanford Graduate School of Education found that AI grading tools misidentified sophisticated arguments as grammatically flawed, penalizing advanced writers whose sentence structures deviated from conventional patterns. **EXPLAIN** This reveals a fundamental limitation: AI evaluates surface features such as vocabulary range and sentence length, but cannot interpret nuance, irony, or the originality of thought that characterizes genuinely strong writing. **COUNTER** Proponents of AI grading contend that it offers consistent, bias-free feedback that human evaluators — subject to fatigue and implicit expectations — cannot reliably provide. **REBUTTAL** However, consistency is only valuable when the criteria being applied are sound; a system that reliably rewards formulaic writing while penalizing creative risk-taking does not serve students — it trains them to write for machines rather than for minds. **LINK** **Ultimately**, if we allow algorithms to define what "good writing" looks like, we risk producing a generation of students who have mastered the appearance of thought without ever developing the substance of it.

■ Transition word ■ Evidence ■ Counterargument