Writing Argumentative Text Introduction

Writing Argumentative Text: Introduction

Would you consider yourself opinionated? Most people are, even if they don't realize it —after all, it's human nature to have a particular viewpoint and feel strongly about it.

That said, some people feel more comfortable than others about claiming that their particular viewpoint or stand on a topic is the most credible, or valid. Writers of argumentative text fall into this category; they argue effectively and without emotion by making a claim for a particular side of an issue and providing logical reasoning in support of that claim. Moreover, they acknowledge respect for their opposition by conceding one or more particular claims they might make, even as they demonstrate why those opposing claims should not be considered valid. Approaching an argument in this manner shows that the writer has considered any potential opposing views carefully and has valid reasons for dismissing them.

In this unit, you will join the ranks of argumentative text writers by studying techniques that these writers used to convey and support a particular argument and by ultimately writing an argumentative text in support of or against taking action to save something considered endangered.

Activate Prior Knowledge

You've likely had to contemplate an important decision in your life, and you'll definitely face such decisions in the future, whether they're focused on which college to attend or whether or not to take a certain job you've been offered. Any big decision involves looking at options from both sides; people often find it helpful to make a list of pros and cons in order to effectively—and as objectively as possible—determine the right choice. Knowing both sides of an issue or situation helps you evaluate it so that you can feel confident in the decision you ultimately make.

The same is true for writers of argumentative text. In their case, they've already made a decision: They are making a case for a particular side by stating a claim and providing factual and logical reasoning. But hearing about one side alone is not necessarily going

to persuade a reader—which is why strong writers of argumentative text include information about the opposing viewpoint and why that viewpoint is the less credible one. Approaching a claim from both sides is the best way to equip readers with the information they need to decide if the writer's claim is strong and credible. As a writer of argumentative text, you must demonstrate why any opposing arguments are invalid in order to show that your claim is credible. And you can't do that unless you understand exactly what point the opposition is making.

Activity 1

Choose a decision you're contemplating, one from which you have at least two options to choose from. Then, use a copy of the graphic organizer to make a list of pros and cons, or benefits and drawbacks, for each option. Consider how the pros and cons might be used as reasons and opposing arguments for a claim in support of the particular option you're analyzing.

Two Column Chart

Learning Coach Guide

This section will help you guide students through their learning.

Spark

a. Today, your student will begin a unit that will require them to write an argumentative text in response to a prompt focused on the question of whether or not effort should be made to save something considered endangered. Throughout this unit, your student will read a self-selected nonfiction text chosen on its own merits as well as on potential arguments it might convey. As they read and respond to their text and the unit's lessons, they will be asked to analyze and evaluate complex ideas and to note their observations and conclusions.

b. Discuss with your student what they know about how to differentiate argumentative text from informational text. If necessary, explain that argumentative text is similar to informational or explanatory text in that it presents information about a specific topic. Where the two genres differ is in their purposes: While writers of information/explanatory text typically inform readers about a topic in an objective manner, writers of argumentative text do so with the purpose of persuading readers to agree with a particular viewpoint or perspective.

c. Have your student read the Spark section and let them know that over the course of this unit they will read examples of argumentative texts in preparation for writing their own. Part of doing so will be to recognize a claim counter to that being discussed in the text; discuss why this is a critical part of argumentative writing.

d. Review the details provided about the topic your student will use to write their text, and discuss why this might be an engaging topic

for both your student as a writer and their audience as readers.

Activate Prior Knowledge

1. Have your student read this section. Explain that crafting a good argument, like making an important decision, requires facts and evidence, which means that it involves research. You can refute opinions, but not evidence. So, whether they're arguing in person or in writing, they should make sure they have evidence to back up their words.

2. Then, to help your student home in on topics they might want to read or write about, discuss specific issues they feel strongly about. You might want to discuss current issues in the news, for example, or strong opinions they have about issues that affect them personally.

3. Have your student complete the activity by circling back to the idea of decision-making and pros and cons; note that *pros* represent reasoning in support of a particular decision, while *cons* represent reasoning in opposition to the decision. After your student has finished, discuss their ideas, connecting the pros and cons to the claims, reasoning, and counterclaims your student as a writer might make about a particular topic.

Writing Argumentative Text: Introduction

The Basics of Writing Argumentative Text

Choosing one side of an issue and writing a strong argument meant to persuade others to support your claim is a little different from choosing one of several options in a decision that affects your life. You can tackle these tasks the same way, though, by informing yourself as best you can about each side of the issue so that you are prepared to anticipate a reader's rebuttals. Ideally, you should know the issue so well that you could effectively argue for either side.

Successful written arguments are focused; they include the following:

- a clear, relevant claim about a specific topic

- logical reasons and strong, factual evidence in support of that claim

- a counterclaim that states and discredits one or more opposing arguments

- a conclusion that restates the claim and sums up the evidence in support of it

To hear some tips about crafting focused, effective arguments, listen to two students discuss an argument in support of a particular topic.

Audio: Art Installation

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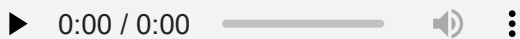
Activity 2

Recall that as part of this unit, you will write an argumentative text in support of or against taking action to save something considered endangered. As you begin to consider the writing you will do—as well as what you will learn about the writing form—think about considerations that will potentially impact how you approach the task of writing. Then, discuss your ideas with your Learning Coach.

Learning Coach Guide

This section will help you guide students through their learning.

View Learning Coach Guide
Hide Learning Coach Guide

The Basics of Writing Argumentative Text

1. Have your student read this section. Encourage them to note certain features of argumentative texts: how they are structured to state and support a claim, explain a counterclaim, and refute the counterclaim. Discuss a particular argumentative text your student has read and how the author of the text introduced the topic to spark interest and concluded the text to summarize their argument.

2. Introduce your student to the podcast by discussing aspects of an argument that impress you and aspects that turn you off. Baseless opinions are probably one of them. Exaggeration is probably another one. Point out the importance of specificity. Explain that the more focused their argument and the more specific the details, the more convincing they can be. Then, have your student listen to the podcast; when they have finished, discuss the three takeaways they felt most strongly about.

3. Have your student complete the activity and discuss their ideas with you.

Previewing the Unit Text

Select a Text

Now it's time to select the nonfiction text that you'll be reading during this unit. You will use the text to complete some of the Apply activities that appear before you begin your argumentative writing portfolio, so one purpose of the text should be to persuade readers to consider a particular perspective.

It's important to put some thought into your decision, given that you'll be reading the text for a good part of the next two weeks and that you'll need to consider the claims, reasons, and evidence the author uses in making their argument. To motivate your reading, you might consider choosing a topic that you know very little about; this will allow you to gain insight into a perspective you're unfamiliar with. Alternatively, you might choose a text that can inform the topic of the argumentative text you will write: taking action to save something endangered.

As you consider the titles available to you, keep the following strategies in mind:

- Examine the titles to determine which ones spark your interest and then review the table of contents. If you think you might want to use this text to inform your own argumentative essay, the table of contents might give you ideas for how to focus your topic.

- Read the first few paragraphs of the text, and possibly skim through other parts, to get a feel for the writing style and determine if you might enjoy it.

- Are you familiar with the author? If not, do some research to learn not only about their writing but about their particular viewpoints. Consider reading a review of the book, too, rather than simply relying on the publisher's blurb, which is meant to market the book to as large an audience as possible.

Pace and Prepare Yourself

You will have approximately two full weeks (about 12 weekdays, or 14 or so days, including weekends) to read your self-selected text. You will begin reading today and will have a full day of reading tomorrow, so consider your schedule and pace yourself so you can read at a comfortable rate and complete the text prior to beginning the Apply activities.

Here's one way you might set up a rough reading schedule:

- Examine your text and determine the number of chapters or pages it contains.

- Divide that number by the number of days you have available to complete the book. Remember to consider your schedule and any other commitments you might have so you can allot a sufficient amount of time to get your reading done without feeling stressed.

- Allow for flexibility. If you're having trouble focusing one day for one reason or another, give yourself a break and come back to it later.

- Be aware of your environment and where you can focus the best. Find a place where you feel comfortable and content—that's often the best place to be when you really want to immerse yourself in your reading.

In the Apply lesson that follows your reading, there will be questions that assess your understanding of how to write an argumentative text. You can prepare for them by considering the questions below as you read your chosen text. After each day's reading, write answers to the questions in your Reading Log:

- What is the main claim the author makes in the text? How clearly stated and appropriate to the interest and knowledge level of the audience are the topic and claim?

- Has the writer included logical reasons in support of the claim? Have they supplied factual, credible evidence to support the reasoning?

- Has the writer culled facts and other types of evidence from reliable sources, and are those sources appropriately documented?

- Has the writer included one or more counterarguments that are clearly stated, explained, and refuted with verifiable facts and evidence?

- Has the writer included a clear and concise conclusion that clarifies the main claim and a reason for supporting it?

As you consider these questions each day, review your answers from previous days. Note any new observations and insights that have occurred to you. This approach will build an understanding of how to approach your own argumentative writing.

Begin Reading

Consult the reading schedule you created and begin reading your selected text. Use the questions above to analyze the first day's reading, and write some short, initial observations in your Reading Log. Remember that as you proceed, you will have daily opportunities to elaborate and expand upon your first impressions.

Reading Log

Learning Coach Guide

This section will help you guide students through their learning.

Select a Text

1. Point out the suggestions for selecting a text and discuss them as needed.

2. Allow your student sufficient time to examine the available nonfiction text selections, and encourage them to choose a text that offers and supports a particular claim and that seems clear and informative.

Pace and Prepare Yourself

1. Discuss the information in this section with your student. Allow them sufficient time to create their schedule.

2. Review the bulleted questions with your student. Explain that as they read their selected text, these questions will help them build their argumentative writing knowledge so that they can apply it to their own written work in Apply.

Begin Reading

Guide your student into reading the first day's text as indicated in the reading schedule. Make sure that they have their Reading Log available for notetaking. Discuss with your student what they have read. Guide your student through the process of analyzing the reading using the questions in the Pace and Prepare Yourself section. Remind them that this is the procedure they will follow as they work through their text, and that you will be there to help them through the procedure as needed.

Writing Argumentative Text Reading Day

Reading Day

Please use today's lesson to read from the designated text for this unit. Use your reading log to take notes based on the guidance in the unit introduction reading preview. Refer to the pacing guide to plan your reading time during the rest of the unit. In the final lesson of the unit, you will be asked to apply skills learned during the unit to analyze the designated text.

Introducing an Argument

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will anticipate an audience's knowledge level and concerns when writing an argument.

Key Words

- **argumentative text** – a form of writing that presents a claim supported by logical reasons and relevant evidence

- **bias** – a personal feeling in favor of or against something

- **claim** – a statement of the writer's position on a topic

Introducing an Argument

An **argumentative text** presents a writer's opinion or stance on a topic in the main **claim**. The writer then constructs an argument with logical reasoning and relevant evidence supporting the claim. Before putting words on a page, the writer must choose a debatable topic, establish an opinion, and consider the intended audience.

Question 1

What is the writer's purpose in an argumentative text?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The writer's purpose is to persuade readers to adopt an opinion or take an action.

Identifying the Audience

Identifying the audience helps writers choose what information to include in their text, what approach to take, and what tone and style to use. When constructing an argument, writers should ask, "Whom am I trying to convince?" An audience might be members of the general public interested in the topic or government officials or business professionals that the writer is trying to persuade to take certain actions.

Often, student writers respond to a writing prompt. Sometimes, the audience—such as a state representative or readers of a local newspaper—is provided in the prompt. If the audience is not named, a student writer can often assume that the audience will be peers or a Learning Coach.

Question 2

How might the tone and style of an argumentative text vary depending on the audience?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The tone and style may be serious and formal when writing to a politician or community leader; it may be conversational when writing for peers.

Introducing an Argument

Assessing the Audience

Knowing details about their audience helps a writer assess how much audience members may already know about the topic. This allows the writer to determine how much background information to include, which concepts to explain thoroughly, and which domain-specific vocabulary will need to be defined. For example, if the audience is the general public, the writer will likely need to include background information, explanations of concepts, and definitions of domain-specific vocabulary. If the audience is professionals, their needs will depend on the topic and stance; a familiar topic may need little introduction, while new proposals will need more support. If it is an academic audience and the topic is in the academics' given area of study, little background information will likely be needed.

Consider this scenario: In an essay, a writer claims that the best green energy investment is wind power. How would the information in the essay differ for different audiences?

Source: paolo airenti. Shutterstock

If the essay targets the general public, readers will need significant background information. The writer will want to provide a general overview and simplify complex concepts. If the essay is written for the government agency in charge of allocating funds, the writer can assume the target audience understands the basics. In this scenario, it would be appropriate to present complex concepts and their explanations and use technical terminology but provide explanations. Suppose the essay is written for a conference of engineers. In that case, the writer can assume that the audience is familiar with domain-specific vocabulary and complex concepts regarding the building of wind turbines.

Considering Bias

In addition to the audience's level of knowledge, writers should consider the audience's **bias** and whether the audience generally agrees or disagrees with the writer's stance on the topic. Is the audience supportive, skeptical, or both? Determining the audience's perspective also affects the choices a writer makes regarding what information to include in the text.

Reread the scenario from above: In an essay, a writer claims that the best green energy investment is wind power. The writer would need to adjust the approach they take to meet the audience's concerns and biases. Consider the different approaches a writer might take based on a given audience:

Adapting Arguments for Different Audiences

Supportive Audience	Address one major opposing argument Address some possible concerns
Skeptical Audience	Organize the argument as a response to opposing arguments Address specific concerns based on audience bias

If the audience is skeptical, the writer will need a strong response to the opposing claims. For example, if the audience is biased toward solar energy, the writer would have to clearly explain why wind power is a better option than solar and provide relevant and sufficient evidence supporting that claim.

The audience greatly influences an argument's content, organization, and tone. By anticipating the audience's level of knowledge, biases, and concerns, a writer can create a convincing argument.

Check-In

Read the following prompt, and then use what you have learned about anticipating an audience's knowledge level and concerns when writing an argument to answer the questions.

Write an article for a newsletter for roofing specialists. Take a position on regulating the amount of recycled materials the industry is forced to use.

Question 1

Describe the intended audience of the response to the prompt.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The audience is professionals who work in the roofing community. Most of them are likely specialists within their field.

Question 2

How much background information should the writer include about the current use of recycled materials in roofing?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The audience's level of knowledge dictates how much background information is needed. For this prompt, the writer is addressing an audience of specialists who are likely familiar with the topic. The writer probably doesn't need to provide too much background information or explain technical or domain-specific terms.

Question 3

What else does the writer need to consider about the audience while planning their text?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The writer should consider the major concerns and opposing viewpoints this specific audience will have regarding the topic and the writer's claim. The writer should address those directly. The writer should also consider what biases the audience might have.

Need a little extra support?

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Practice

Read the sample writing prompt and the writer's notes for an argumentative text. Then complete the activity.

Prompt

Write an argument to present at a professional nursing conference. Argue whether the educational requirements to enter the profession should be increased.

Writer's Notes

Intended audience: General public

Background information: Provide detailed information regarding educational requirements for nursing.

Domain-specific vocabulary: Provide lengthy definitions of key terms.

Other notes: Most attendees will probably agree with me that the educational requirements should be increased. I might touch on an opposing viewpoint, but primarily I will focus on building a strong case for my point of view.

Activity

Use what you have learned about anticipating an audience's knowledge level and concerns when writing an argument to critique the writer's approach for responding to the prompt. What suggestions would you make?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The intended audience is attendees of a professional nursing conference, who will likely be nurses, people interested in becoming nurses, or other professionals in the healthcare industry. This is not a conference for the general public. Therefore, detailed background information and lengthy definitions are unnecessary and may even distract from the writer's points. The writer assumes that most attendees will agree with their position; however, that may not be true. Some audience members may feel that increased educational requirements will result in a more educated professional base; however, others may think that the increased requirements could steer people away from an industry that is understaffed. The writer should carefully consider the audience's major concerns, as well as their biases, and address them in the text.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I critiqued the writer's approach to the topic.
2. _____ I correctly identified the intended audience.
3. _____ I anticipated the audience's knowledge level.
4. _____ I anticipated the audience's possible biases and concerns.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will compare the introductory section/opening statements from two or more argumentative texts.

Key Words

- **anecdote** – a brief, interesting story about a real person or event

- **argument** – a written discussion in which reasons and evidence are given to support an opinion

- **claim** – a statement of a writer's position on a topic

- **compare and contrast** – to consider the similarities and differences between two or more things

- **hook** – an introductory element (e.g., anecdote, question) that captures the reader's attention

- **opening statement** – the main argument of an argumentative essay or text

Introducing an Argument

To begin an **argument**, a writer must write an introductory paragraph. A written introduction does just what its name suggests: it introduces the topic and stance in the argument. An introduction should draw readers in, present the writer's position, and prepare readers for the argument and evidence to come.

Comparing Introductions

Every writer has a singular style and a specific vision for his or her argument. Writers who argue the same topic—and even the same position—will likely introduce information in different ways. Regardless of position or style, an introduction to an argument includes the following elements:

- **hook**

- background information

- statement of importance

- **opening statement** or main **claim**

A hook, which is usually the element that starts the introduction, engages readers. A writer might share an **anecdote**, a short retelling of an interesting story, that relates to the topic; or a writer might begin with a question to get readers thinking about how they might answer.

The introduction should also include just the right amount of background information to help readers understand the topic without giving away too much of the argument. A writer may also include a statement of importance to explain why the topic and argument is important. For example, a writer might clearly state, "This is an important issue because . . ." and other times the reader will need to infer the importance from the details in the introduction.

Finally, an introduction should include the writer's main claim or opening statement—the main argument of an argumentative essay or text. The opening statement is the stance the writer will argue, so it should be clearly stated and concise. An opening statement must also be debatable.

To **compare and contrast** introductions means to look at the similarities and differences between them. When comparing introductions, readers should look for each of the necessary elements. Then, readers can determine what is missing, off topic, or particularly engaging or effective. Readers should consider how the independent elements work together in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the introduction as a whole.

As you watch the video, consider the elements of introductions and their use in the samples in the video.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Peer Model Video Transcript

Now, answer the questions.

Question 1

How do the hooks to the introductions in the video differ?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The first introduction hooks readers with an anecdote, while the second hooks readers with a strong, direct statement.

Question 2

In your opinion, which introduction is better? Why?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: I think the second introduction is better because the writer provides important background information about the national trend, not just an anecdote. Also, the second one includes more detail about why independent bookstores are good for communities.

Check-In

Use what you have learned about introducing an argument to answer the following questions.

Question 1

Why is an engaging hook important in an introduction?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: An engaging hook is important because it is the element that draws readers in and sparks their interest in a topic.

Question 2

If a writer was drafting an opening statement about why everyone should pay attention to local politics, what characteristics would make for an effective opening statement?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: An opening statement should clearly and concisely state the writer's opinion on a debatable topic. For a writer drafting an opening statement about why everyone should pay attention to local politics, the writer should clearly state their opinion with a statement such as "Everyone should pay attention to local politics because the decisions that these politicians make directly impact people's daily lives."

Question 3

Read the following opening statements:

- Everyone should participate in the arts to develop their creative thinking.

- Not everyone is an artist, but everyone can practice thinking creatively in their daily lives.

Compare these opening statements. What makes them similar and different?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both opening statements address the topic of creative thinking, but the opening statements take different positions on the topic. The first opening statement advocates for everyone to participate in the arts, but the second opening statement states that everyone can be creative regardless of if they are participating in the arts or not.

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Practice

Read the sample introductions to complete the activity below.

Introduction 1:

Did you know there is an alien civilization living on the moon? According to an 1835 headline of *The New York Sun,* it's a true story. In fact, the story made lots of money for the newspaper. Fake news has been around for centuries, but the stakes for readers are much higher in today's world of social media. Spreading misinformation about important topics—elections, vaccinations, pandemics, and so on—can alter the way people behave and put them at risk. Because of the inherent danger in fake news, social media platforms need to take responsibility for the fake news being spread across their sites and make sure it is deleted immediately.

Introduction 2:

When was the last time you fact checked a news story you shared on social media or retold to a friend? If the answer was "never," you are not alone. Fake news has spread like wildfire across social media sites, and the impact on people's behavior is real and documented. Although social media platforms attempt to limit the spread of damaging fake news, they ultimately fail. The onus of stopping the spread of fake news relies on social media users. The only effective way to stop the spread of fake news is for every reader to check the veracity of an article before sharing the information, whether online or in person.

Activity

In one or two paragraphs, compare the introductions. Identify the elements included in the introductions and look for the similarities and differences in

both content, style, and organization. Evaluate the effectiveness of the introductions based on the comparison.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both include all the elements of a well-written introduction—a hook, background information, statement of importance, and opening statement or main claim. The first hook uses humor in the form of a question to engage readers and introduce the topic, while the second uses a question to make readers think about their own behavior. Both are effective hooks. The second is especially effective given the opening statement the writer introduces. The introductions present different positions: the first puts the responsibility on social media companies, while the second puts the responsibility on social media users. Both clearly state the writer's position, but the second opening statement is not as concise as the first. Overall, both introductions are well-written, but the first introduction is more concise and more focused.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I compared the introductory paragraphs by finding similarities and differences between them.

2. _____ I identified the elements of the introduction.

3. _____ I evaluated the effectiveness of the introductions and made an overall comparison.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will write an opening statement for an argument.

Key Words

- **argumentative text** – a form of writing that presents a claim supported by logical reasons and relevant evidence

- **claim** – a statement of a writer's position on a topic

- **opening statement** – the main argument of an argumentative essay or text

Introducing an Argument

Think Creatively

What do the following statements have in common? *College athletes should be paid. The U.S. would be better off with a three-party system. The voting age should be lowered to 16. Video games teach important skills.* These statements are all opinions, or statements that express a personal feeling or belief. As such, they can be further developed to serve as an **opening statement** for an **argumentative text**, a form of writing that presents a **claim** supported by logical reasons and relevant evidence.

Developing an Opening Statement

An opening statement is the main argument of an argumentative essay or text. The opening statement presents a writer's claim**,** or statement of an opinion about a topic, and a preview of reasons that will be covered in the essay. The opening statement is the core of the argument, so to be convincing, it needs to be substantial enough to be supported with logical reasoning and sufficient evidence.

Consider how this opening statement is developed from a topic:

Source: CandyBox Images. Shutterstock

Effective Introduction for an Argument Essay

Topic	video games
Opinion	Video games teach important skills.
Claim	Video games should be used in education to teach important skills.
Opening Statement	Educational programs should use video games in their lessons to teach essential skills, including problem solving, strategizing, and risk-taking.

How did the writer move from a general topic of video games to a clearly stated opening statement? First, the writer considered the topic of video games and considered their opinion about that topic. From there, the writer made their opinion a little more specific by writing a claim that asks the reader to adopt an opinion or take an action. This step required the writer to think creatively to come up with an interesting way to address the topic. Here, the writer considered how and where video games could be used to teach skills and decided to argue for using video games in educational programs.

Once the claim is established, the writer can then consider the particular points to argue in support of the claim. In this case, the writer will argue that educational programs should use video games to teach problem-solving, strategizing, and risk-taking skills. These basic ideas are then identified in the opening statement to prepare readers for the ideas that will be presented in the argument that follows.

An opening statement is central to an argument; it previews the argument's structure and prepares readers for what is to come. As a writer builds an argument, they will likely research the topic and discover new ideas and information. At that point, the writer will need to decide which ideas are the most convincing. As a result, the opening statement might need to be adjusted to better reflect the ideas and information within the text.

Question

Why is constructing a clear and concise opening statement vital to argumentative writing?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: An opening statement needs to be clear and concise so readers can easily follow the argument because an opening statement is central to the argument and helps provide structure while stating the author's main claim.

Check-In

Use what you have learned about writing an opening statement to answer the following questions.

Question 1

What steps should a writer take to develop an opening statement for an argumentative text?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: A writer should consider a debatable topic and then determine their general opinion about it. From there, the writer can develop a claim that includes more specifics and an interesting perspective to argue. Finally, the writer needs to build an opening statement around the claim, noting some of the supporting reasons that will be included in the argument.

Question 2

Read this opinion: *The voting age should be lowered to 16.* How could a writer develop this opinion into an opening statement? Write an opening statement based on the claim.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The writer needs to think about an interesting angle and add specific information to develop an opening statement, such as: *Now that they can legally drive and work, sixteen-year-olds should be given the right to vote in order to establish good voting habits, encourage civic participation, and give them a voice in policies that affect their lives.*

Question 3

What is your opinion on paying college athletes? Write an opening statement that clearly expresses your opinion. Think creatively to come up with a perspective that will engage readers.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: College athletes deserve to be paid because of how much money they make for the universities and colleges they represent.

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Practice

Use the information in the following chart and what you learned about writing an opening statement to complete the activity.

Weighing the Pros and Cons of Screen Time

Screen Time	
Pros	**Cons**
social engagement	missing real-life opportunities
educational programming	addictive nature of TV and games
collaborating	encourages sedentary behavior

Activity

Read the chart, which provides a topic and several pros and cons related to screen time. Take a moment to consider your opinion on the topic. Do you think people should limit their screen time? How and why? Remember to

think creatively to come up with an interesting and valuable argument about the topic. Write an opening statement based on your claim.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Screen time is a valuable asset to help people connect, but it needs to be limited in both time and content in order for people to reap the most benefits from time spent on electronics.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I developed an interesting perspective for my claim.

2. _____ I wrote a concise and specific opening statement about the given topic.

3. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Organization

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will organize clear relationships among reasoning and evidence.

Key Words

- **claim** – an assertion that something is true

- **evidence** – the facts and information that support an idea or analysis

- **reasoning** – the thinking behind the evidence; why the writer believes the evidence supports or proves the claim

- **reasons** – statements that explain or support a claim

Organization

Building an effective argumentative text requires organization and thought. A writer needs to consider why and how to support a **claim**, which is an assertion that something is true. Writers can organize their thoughts by listing the different **reasons** they are making a certain claim. For instance, a writer could make the claim that consumers should switch to electric cars and give the reasons that electric cars are a better choice for the environment and will save consumers money.

These statements for why the writer is making a specific claim must be supported by **evidence**. Evidence includes facts, statistics, quotations, or other pieces of information that can be verified by a source. In the example about electric cars, the writer could find evidence about the environmental impact and cost of electric cars to support their claim.

The thinking behind choosing a particular piece of evidence to support a claim is called **reasoning**. Writers include their reasoning so that readers can clearly follow how the evidence is connected to the claim.

Consider how one writer organized the reasoning and evidence for their argumentative text about electric cars:
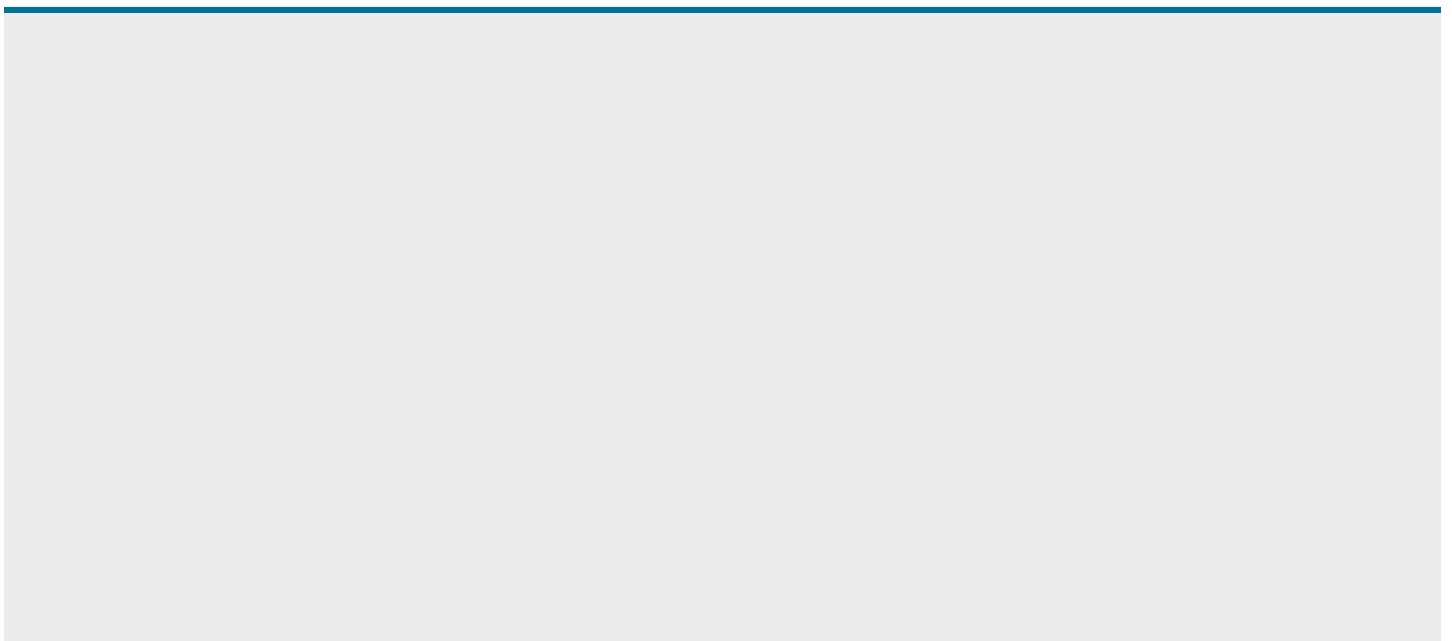
I. Claim: Consumers should switch to electric cars.

A. Reason 1: Electric cars are a better choice for the environment.

1. Evidence 1: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports that transportation is the largest contributor to U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, making up about a third of total emissions in 2020. Greenhouse gasses negatively impact the environment by trapping heat and raising the temperature of the planet.

2. Evidence 2: Electric vehicles typically emit fewer greenhouse gasses over their life cycle compared to traditional gas-powered cars, depending on their source of electricity.

3. Evidence 3: Traditional vehicles also emit air pollutants, which contribute to smog and health problems. Since pure electric vehicles do not emit carbon dioxide or other air pollutants through a tailpipe while being driven, the result is less air pollution and improved local air quality for pedestrians and cyclists.

B. Reason 2: Electric cars save consumers money.

1. Evidence 1: Pricing of electric vehicles is becoming increasingly comparable to that of traditional-fueled vehicle options, and they typically have lower maintenance costs over their lifespan.

2. Evidence 2: As of 2022, new electric vehicle purchases are eligible for federal tax credits up to $7,500 as well as state tax incentives.

3. Evidence 3: Electric vehicle fuel costs are about 60% less than gas-powered vehicles, according to a 2020 Consumer Reports study.

Here, the writer organizes the evidence that supports their claim into a logical sequence for each reason. This organization makes it clear why each piece of evidence supports the overall claim that consumers should switch to electric vehicles. The reasoning creates a clearer link back to the claim.

Watch the video and listen as a student discusses how to organize reasoning and evidence in argumentative writing.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Peer Model Video Transcript

Question 1

What is the relationship between reasoning and evidence?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Reasoning connects evidence to the claim, and it explains why the writer believes the evidence supports their claim.

Question 2

What is the purpose behind using an organizational tool, such as a chart or index cards, in argumentative writing?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The writer can more easily organize the reasons that support their claim and the evidence that supports each reason. These visual organization tools help the writer plan an effective way to present their argument.

Check-In

Think about what you learned about organizing the relationships among a claim, evidence, and reasoning as you read through the chart and answer the questions.

Claim: Election Day should be a federal holiday.

Reasons and Real-World Evidence

Reason	Evidence
to give people time to vote	• Voting reform bills in the past have listed extended hours, alternative voting methods, and making Election Day a federal holiday as ways to give more people enough flexibility to vote. • Some states require employers to provide time off for workers to go vote.
to remind people of the importance of voting	• According to the nonprofit ACLU, talking to friends about voting can increase voter turnout up to eight percent. • Historically underrepresented groups often face challenges to gaining voter access. Groups such

as the League of Women Voters advocate for more inclusive and fair voting processes that give more people a voice in government.

Question 1

What do you notice about the relationship among the evidence, reasoning, and claim?

Sample answer: The evidence is aligned to the relevant reason on the chart. The reasons explain why the claim should be supported, and the evidence is organized to support each reason.

Question 2

Decide where the following piece of evidence belongs, and then explain why: *When Virginia recognized Election Day as a state holiday in April 2020, Governor Ralph Northam said, "Voting is a fundamental right and these new laws strengthen our democracy by making it easier to cast a ballot, not harder."*

Sample answer: This evidence supports the reason that making Election Day a federal holiday would remind people of the importance of voting. The quotation shows that the Virginia governor equated making Election Day a holiday with strengthening the democratic right to vote.

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Practice

Read the outline for an argumentative text below and then complete the activities.

Claim: International space programs are a worthwhile endeavor.

Reason 1: Space programs increase our knowledge of the world around us.

Reason 2: Space programs improve technological innovation.

Evidence:

A. To make up for contaminating the local environment around rocket launch sites, NASA created an effective cleanup method that is now also used to clean up other types of toxic chemicals that have contaminated the environment.

B. Satellites in space help scientists to gather data to better predict natural disasters such as hurricanes. They also gather data to better understand and track asteroids that may pass near Earth.

C. NASA researched ways of farming indoors with less energy, no soil, and limited water. This would enable them to feed astronauts on long missions, and it also developed into a new agricultural industry for producing food for regular consumers.

D. Under the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters," space agencies around the globe pledge to provide satellite data to support rescue efforts and emergency responders during times of natural disasters. Between 2000 and 2020, this resource was called on 678 times in 126 countries.

Activity 1

What would be an effective way to organize the evidence under the two reasons?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Evidence B and D support Reason 1 by showing examples of how space programs increase the knowledge that scientists and emergency responders have to work with. Evidence A and C support Reason 2 since these are both technological innovations that began as developments for space programs.

Activity 2

In what order would you present the reasons? Why?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Reason 1 could be presented first since this suggests how space programs are currently beneficial, while Reason 2 suggests how space programs will continue to benefit the future. This order feels more chronological and allows the argument to build toward more important ideas.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I organized clear relationships among the reasoning and evidence.
2. _____ I logically sequenced the claim, reasons, and evidence.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will organize clear relationships among claims and counterclaims.

Key Words

- **claim** – the main argument of an argumentative essay or text

- **counterclaim** – a claim that is the opposite of the main argument of an argumentative text

- **refute** – to disprove an opposing argument

Organization

When writing an argumentative text, it is important to think about how to organize the ideas to make them clear for readers. A writer may have one or more **claims**, or statements that give their position on a topic. After establishing the significance of the claims, the writer then supports them with reasoning and evidence to convince readers to share the writer's position. It's possible that readers may already be familiar with the topic, but they hold a different position than the writer. The writer can anticipate these arguments, or **counterclaims**, by acknowledging and disproving the opposite viewpoints and by clearly distinguishing the claims from the counterclaims.

Writers who acknowledge and address counterclaims to their argument create a stronger argumentative text. Organizing a text to include counterclaims helps a writer to do the following:

- Show a wider understanding of the alternate views on a topic

- Distinguish their own claim from other views

- Strengthen their own argument when they **refute** or disprove critiques of their own claim

Consider the following example:

Source: Elena Schweitzer. Shutterstock

Claim: Cold viruses are ubiquitous and unavoidable, so people should consume more citrus fruits to reduce symptoms and discomfort when they inevitably suffer from a cold.

Possible Counterclaim: There is no cure for the common cold, so people will get sick regardless of the amount of citrus in their diet.

Here, the writer establishes the significance of a claim that argues for consuming more citrus fruits, but at the same time they anticipate that the counterargument that citrus does not make a health impact. Bringing this critique into the argumentative text will give the writer an opportunity to directly address it, distinguish it from their own claim, and provide reasoning and evidence to strengthen their own claim. Each counterclaim should have a corresponding claim that refutes it and instead supports the writer's position. But where should the writer place the counterclaims?

Organizing Claims and Counterclaims

The organization of the claims and counterclaims should clearly show the relationship between the claim and each counterclaim, but there is more than one way to accomplish this purpose. The claims and counterclaims can be presented in different orders depending on how the writer decides to structure their text.

Counterclaim Placements in Argumentative Writing

Organization	Reason
Place the counterclaim(s) near the beginning so they can be refuted by the writer's claim(s), reasons, and evidence.	This works well if readers are more familiar with the counterclaim, and the writer intends to anticipate this opposition.
Place the counterclaim(s) and refutation before the conclusion. The writer has already given their claim(s), reasons, and evidence but still wants to acknowledge and address concerns.	This method is a typical structure in argumentative essays, especially where the counterclaims are equal to or less persuasive than the writer's claims.
Place the counterclaim(s) into the body of the essay, acknowledging and refuting them point by point.	This strategy is ideal for convincing an audience when the counterclaim points are strong and well accepted.

The writer can think about the strength of their claims and counterclaims when deciding on an organization that would be most effective for their argumentative text. They may ask themselves how familiar readers will already be with opposing opinions on the topic. This reflection will help when deciding how to establish, organize, and distinguish the claims and counterclaims.

Question 1

What is the relationship among claims and counterclaims in an argumentative text?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: A writer includes counterclaims to acknowledge opposing viewpoints and to distinguish the claims from alternate views. Each counterclaim provides the writer with an opportunity to use reasons and evidence to refute or disprove it. The result is a stronger argument for the writer's claims.

Question 2

What are some advantages and disadvantages of placing counterclaims in different parts of a text?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Beginning a text with a commonly held counterclaim and refuting it can be a strong hook for readers, but it does require the audience to be knowledgeable about the argument already. Placing counterclaims in the body of the text is good for clearly distinguishing claims and counterclaims and for linking counterclaims to refutations. If the discussion is complex, however, there is a risk of going off track. Putting counterclaims near the end of the text allows the writer to inform and prime the reader about the claim in advance but may risk distracting them from the conclusion.

Think about the different ways of organizing claims and counterclaims and what this suggests about their relative strengths in relation to each other.

Check-In

Consider what you learned about organizing relationships among claims and counterclaims as you read the following claims for a writer's text about the Civil War. Then complete the activities.

Claims

- The American Civil War made the nation stronger.

- The Civil War unified areas of the United States to defend and strengthen the nation's ideals.

- The Civil War led to increased factory production and new industry that encouraged immigration to the U.S.

Activity 1

Propose a counterclaim for each of the above claims.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Possible counterclaims, in respective order, are:

- The American Civil War weakened the country.

- The Civil War made clear that there were fundamental rifts among different regions of the United States.

- The Civil War resulted in destroyed property and significant loss of lives.

Activity 2

Choose one claim and its counterclaim from the previous activity. Distinguish the claim from the counterclaim.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The claim that the American Civil resulted in destroyed property and significant loss of lives can be countered by a claim that it also led to increased factory production and new industry that encouraged immigration. One is a negative outcome, while the other is positive.

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Activity 3

Contrast three ways to organize claims and counterclaims in the writer's text. Determine which would be most appropriate for this text.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The writer could start with the counterclaim that the American Civil War weakened the country and then present the first claim and evidence in contrast. With multiple counterclaims, however, this might lead the reader to think the text is taking the opposite position of what the writer intends. Presenting all the counterclaims at the end might also be a poor choice because the counterclaims and refutations may require too much context. I think the best organization is for the writer to introduce the claim that the American Civil War made the nation stronger first, and then weave in the counterclaims point by point as they introduce reasons and evidence for the paired claim. This organization could be effective because the audience is likely familiar with the national division and destruction tied to the Civil War. Splitting up the counterclaims and discussing them individually makes them more manageable to convince the audience to support the claims.

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Practice

Think about the issue of pet adoption. Every year, millions of pets enter shelters and need a home, but responsible pet ownership requires knowledge, resources, time, and other things. Now use what you learned about organizing relationships among claims and counterclaims to complete the activity.

Activity

Make a list of three claims and three counterclaims. The claims and counterclaims should be paired in a logical way. Then, choose one claim and counterclaim and describe an organization that you think would be effective.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer:

The claims I would make are:

- Pet adoptions should be made faster and easier.

- Animal shelters should introduce more inclusive policies when considering adoptions, fostering, and volunteers.

- Animal shelters provide a valuable service for those unable to keep a pet or those looking to adopt a pet.

The corresponding counterclaims I would make are, respectively:

- Pet adoptions should be a thorough vetting process to ensure a lasting fit.

- Volunteers and adoptive families without proper background and training may cause harm to an animal's welfare.

- Animal shelters are an imperfect solution to the problem of animals without homes.

I would recommend placing the first counterclaim near the beginning, so the writer can distinguish it from the claim and refute it with reasons, and evidence. Readers are likely familiar with the idea of a vetting process for pet adoptions, so the writer can anticipate this opposition.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I constructed paired claims and counterclaims.

2. _____ I gave my recommendation regarding organization.

Criteria

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will determine criteria for judging the strength of a claim or counterclaim when writing an argument.

Key Words

- **argument** – a written discussion in which reasons and evidence are given to support an opinion

- **bias** – an inclination towards a particular point of view

- **claim** – an argument or assertion that something is true

- **counterclaim** – an opposing argument or assertion

- **evidence** – the facts or ideas that support an idea or analysis

Criteria

When writing an **argument** to persuade the reader to share their opinion, writers want to present a clear, logical **claim** of what they believe. It's also a good idea to address **counterclaims** or opposing ideas. To ensure the claims and counterclaims make sense and are convincing, writers need to back them up with strong **evidence**. So, what makes evidence strong?

The criteria for strong evidence varies depending on the nature of the claim, but some good things to look for are:

- Is the evidence relevant to the claim?

- Does the evidence support the claim?

- Does the evidence come from credible and verifiable sources?

- If currency matters, is the evidence current?

- Is the evidence specific?

Suppose you are writing to convince people to play an escape room. An escape room is a game in which players are put in a room and must solve a series of puzzles to accomplish a goal, usually escaping the room, hence the name. You've already spent some time researching the topic, and now you're going through your notes to decide what to include in your argument.

- A popular horror movie in which the characters must escape from a series of lethal traps: This movie is popular and the basic concept of using your wits to escape resembles escape rooms. However, moviegoers enjoy films for many reasons; many may enjoy the movie for reasons aside from the plotline. This piece of evidence just isn't relevant enough, so you decide not to use it.

- An article titled "What's With All These Escape Rooms?": When searching the internet this was one of the first articles you came across, so you added it to your list of possible sources. Looking closer, however, you realize that the

writer actually dislikes escape rooms and is complaining about how common they've become. This piece of evidence does not support your claim.

- A blogpost by a user named PrimoRoomEscapeCo.: This blogger gives glowing descriptions of some escape rooms in your town. However, you realize that their username is the same as the company owning the escape rooms. It seems likely that this is a company account, and so they almost certainly have a **bias**. In addition, they use vague descriptions, like "millions of people enjoy escape rooms." These inexact numbers would be hard to verify. The lack of credibility and verifiability makes this source undesirable.

Question 1

What is the problem with the blogpost as a piece of evidence?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: It lacks credibility. The person who wrote it had financial reasons to praise escape rooms, so it is hard to know if they are being honest. They were also vague, so fact-checking them would be difficult.

- A statistic on how many escape rooms operate in the United States in 2015: This one seems promising. It's relevant to your claim and uses exact numbers. However, you notice that it is dated 2015. Most of your other sources describe escape rooms as gaining popularity recently. You feel certain that a more current source would provide stronger support.

Question 2

Why is it important for evidence to be current?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Things change over time, and if the claim is about something that might have changed, then it may no longer be true.

- A book on recreation: You found a book at the library about popular pastimes, but it seems to be an overview of many different ways people have fun. You decide it probably isn't going to be very helpful because it is just too general.

By going through your sources and checking them against the criteria, you've managed to eliminate some of the weaker pieces of evidence. Now, your argument will be much harder to dispute because the evidence is more relevant, supportive, credible, verifiable, current, and specific.

Question 3

What is evidence, and what determines its strength or weakness?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Evidence are the facts and ideas that support a claim, and strong evidence should generally be relevant, supportive, credible, verifiable, current, and specific.

Check-In

Read an excerpt from an early draft of an argumentative text on escape rooms. Then recall what you learned about the criteria for judging the strength of a claim or counterclaim as you answer the following questions.

Escape rooms, games in which teams of people solve puzzles to escape a room, have exploded in popularity. In 2014, there were only around 24 in all of the United States. Within five years, that number would increase almost a hundredfold. The reason is simple: people like to do puzzles. The Rubik's Cube is the best-selling toy, with more than 450 million sold. I have personally heard that many escape rooms have secret cash prizes if you break their record for completion time. Escape rooms are also great exercise for your mind.

Question 1

What evidence does the writer present to support their claim that readers should play escape rooms?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The writer states that escape rooms have grown in popularity, that people like puzzles, that escape rooms offer monetary rewards, and that they are good for the brain.

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Question 2

Which pieces of evidence should the writer remove or replace, and why?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The statistic on Rubik's Cubes is not very relevant; something specific to escape rooms would be better. The rumor of a secret cash prize doesn't sound credible and would be difficult to check. The statement that escape rooms are good for the mind could be strong evidence if the writer expands on it.

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Question 3

What could the writer add as a counterclaim?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Some possible counterclaims to look into could be how much escape rooms cost to play and whether or not they can be played again.

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Practice

Activity

Source: Victor Moussa. Shutterstock

Read this excerpt from an early draft titled "Escapism."

Escape rooms have a variety of themes to suit the players' tastes: surviving a zombie apocalypse, escaping Dracula's castle, or finding the cure to a mad scientist's

experiment. Whichever theme the players choose, they follow the same formula. Players search for clues, decode messages, open locks, and do other things. They must work quickly, as these rooms usually have a time limit. All the players love the challenge.

In a paragraph or two, identify the evidence the writer presents to support their claim that readers should play escape rooms and explain why the evidence is weak. Make suggestions for how to make the argument stronger, including at least one counterclaim. Keep in mind what you learned about the criteria for judging the strength of a claim or counterclaim.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The first piece of evidence for escape rooms being fun is that they have a variety of themes. However, the examples the writer gives are all horror themed. This doesn't support the claim that there is a strong variety, so the writer should replace some of the examples. Next, the writer describes what happens in an escape room. Describing them as following a formula, however, contradicts the claim that they are fun, as it makes them sound monotonous. Instead of describing the rooms in general, it might be better to describe one specific room. The mention of a time limit supports the idea of escape rooms being challenging, but it would be better to be specific: how long do most rooms take? The final piece of evidence, that all players love the challenge, isn't verifiable. A better piece of evidence might be quotes from people who have played escape rooms.

A counterclaim should be an opposing statement that the writer thinks a reader might make in disagreement. Some possible counterclaims could be that escape rooms are too difficult and people find them frustrating rather than fun. The writer could then refute this by explaining how rooms vary in difficulty to suit first timers and experienced players.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I identified the evidence the writer presented for their claim.

2. _____ I used criteria to evaluate the strength of the writer's evidence.

3. _____ I made suggestions for replacing the weak evidence with stronger evidence.

4. _____ I gave a suggestion for a counterclaim.

5. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

Determine criteria for limitations of evidence for claims and counterclaims when writing an argument.

Key Words

- **claim** – an argument or assertion that something is true

- **counterclaim** – an opposing argument or assertion

- **limitations of evidence** – weaknesses in evidence that might influence the outcome of research

Criteria

Writing that seeks to promote or defend a viewpoint is called an argument. A good argument should have **claims** that support it; it should also address **counterclaims** against it. Both claims and counterclaims should be based on strong evidence.

Question 1

What are some different forms of evidence?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Evidence can be facts, statistics, or anecdotes.

Evidence can come in various forms suitable for different situations and topics. When making a claim related to science, for example, facts and statistics are convincing. For matters of opinion, where facts may not be available or relevant, emotional appeals and anecdotes can be effective. Regardless of what writers use, they must make sure it is specific, relevant, and supportive. Writers should also make sure it comes from a credible, current, and verifiable source.

Some limitations are more common to particular kinds of evidence. Facts and statistics, for example, may turn out to be irrelevant or misleading in context. For example, it is a fact that dihydrogen monoxide is a chemical that can be lethal if inhaled and is found in many toxins. Arguing to remove it from food, however, becomes much weaker if you know that dihydrogen monoxide is just another term for water.

Anecdotes can also be convincing, but may not represent typical experiences. A person may recover from a flu a day after eating a sandwich with anchovies and peanut butter. Does that mean the sandwich is a miracle cure, or did the person's immune system simply overcome the illness around the same time that they ate the strange sandwich? Many such objections can be made to evidence, so it pays to check carefully for limitations before making a claim and when investigating counterclaims.

The following table contains criteria writers pay attention to when they are assessing **limitations in evidence**:

Criteria for Evaluating Source Credibility and Reliability

Criteria	Questions to consider
Credibility	Is the source credible? Is the source reputable? Is the author listed on the source? Is the author an expert in their field of study? What qualifies the author to speak on the topic?
Reliability	What is the author's purpose in publishing the source? Does the author have anything to gain financially or otherwise? Is the evidence recently published? Is the source acceptable or mainstream for your audience?

As you watch the following video, observe how the students discuss criteria for determining the **limitations of evidence** for claims and counterclaims.

Now, answer the questions.

Question 2

What are the strengths and weaknesses of anecdotal evidence?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Anecdotal evidence can gain audience sympathy, but it is the

experience of a single person and thus may be an exceptional case.

Check-In

Use what you learned about determining criteria for limitations of evidence to answer the questions below.

Source: Lisa F. Young. Shutterstock

Question 1

A writer claims that the minimum age to drive a car should be raised. As evidence, they cite a survey from the 1980s saying a majority of adults think

teenagers are too immature to drive. What are the limitations of this evidence?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The survey is a collection of opinions, not facts, and teenagers today are different in many ways from those in the 1980s.

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Question 2

A writer is arguing in favor of adopting pets from shelters rather than pet stores. Would an anecdote be appropriate evidence?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: If the writer had a positive experience adopting a pet, then yes. People often have emotional bonds with pets, so a personal story would be good evidence for this claim.

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Practice

Read the following claim and the writer's notes and then complete the activity.

Claim: The United States should switch to the metric system.

Notes:

- In the metric system, units differ by factors of ten.

- Most of the world uses the metric system.

- People have been arguing for or against the metric system for a long time.

- The scientific community uses the metric system.

- Conversion has caused problems in the past, such as the loss of the Mars Climate Orbiter in 1999.

- Changing equipment to metric would be expensive.

- Changing equipment to metric would be a large project.

Activity

In a paragraph, argue in support or in opposition of the United States switching to the metric system. Ensure that your evidence is strong and appropriate. Determine and apply the criteria for limitations of evidence.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The United States should switch to the metric system. Most of the rest of the world and the scientific community use metric. Having units differ by factors of ten makes conversion much simpler; you would no longer need to look up how many feet are in a mile or stop cooking to figure out how many tablespoons

are in a cup. Having to convert has led to problems in the past, like the loss of the Mars Climate Orbiter in 1999. The main resistance to this is the expense of changing equipment for metric. However, I believe that this project would actually benefit the economy by creating jobs.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I made a reasonable argument for or against switching to the metric system.

2. _____ I included strong evidence.

3. _____ I addressed and refuted at least one counterclaim.

Development

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will develop claims fairly and supply evidence for each claim when writing an argument.

Key Words

- **claim** – an argument or assertion that something is true

- **counterclaim** – a claim that is the opposite of the main argument of an argumentative text

- **evidence** – facts, details, statistics, observations, or quotations from experts that support the claim or show why the claim is true or believable

- **Fair claim** - a claim is considered fair when it contains a clear position, unbiased supporting evidence, a counterclaim and a rebuttal to that counterclaim

Development

When writers develop an argumentative text, they begin by developing a **claim**, or an argument or assertion that something is true. To develop their claims, writers use **evidence**—such as facts, details, statistics, observations, or quotations from experts. This evidence provides the support for an idea or analysis. To make their argument even more effective, writers should also address **counterclaims**, or the arguments against their position.

As part of their writing process, writers draft a claim and then conduct research to find evidence that supports their claim. If needed, writers revise their claim to make it stronger. Next, writers consider what arguments can be made against their position and what evidence would support these counterclaims. As writers develop these counterclaims, they also consider how they can refute them to strengthen their own claim.

Writers should try to make claims as fairly as possible. A **fair claim** is considered strong when it contains the following components:

1. a clear position
2. unbiased evidence such as:
    a. facts
    b. statistics
    c. expert information
3. a counterclaim for balance
4. a rebuttal of the counterclaim

As you watch the following video, observe how the student develops claims and counterclaims about paying college-level student athletes.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Now, answer the following questions:

Question 1

In the video, how do the examples of counterclaims balance out the examples of claims?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The video's first claim is that athletes are exploited because they produce money for the college. The counterclaim disputes this by pointing out that only some athletes generate money; many do not. The second claim is that students struggle financially because they are unpaid, and the counterclaim posits that they are paid, in a sense, through reduced tuition and other expenses.

Question 2

Choose a technique that the student in the video uses to develop their claim. How might you use this technique in your own writing?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: I like that the student in the video tests their claims to determine if the claim is fair or not. I want to try that in my own writing to check that my claims are fair and balanced before I start writing.

Check-In

Recall what you learned about developing claims fairly and supplying evidence for each claim as you answer the following questions.

Question 1

Make a fair cl[aim on the topic of sports.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Soccer is a cultural element in many parts of the world.

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Question 2

Revise the following claim to be fairer, and then develop a counterclaim with two ideas for supporting evidence:

Claim: College athletics are detrimental to the college experience.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer:

Revised Claim: College athletic activities hurt students academically by diverting funds and should become club activities instead.

Counterclaim: College athletics should remain an integral part of campus life.

Possible Evidence: Anecdotes from student athletes who received college athletic scholarships.

Possible Evidence: Statistics about how successful college athletics programs fund improvements to academic programs and facilities.

Practice

Read this excerpt from a student's outline and use it to complete the activity.

Topic and opinion: College education is not worth it.

Compelling reason: The cost is too high.

Claim: College education is not worth the cost because the fees can be tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Counterclaim: College education is worth the cost because it makes a person more well-rounded.

Activity

The student has developed a claim and counterclaim. Evaluate the claim and counterclaim: are they strong and fair? Revise them if necessary. Then, provide an example of possible evidence for the claim and counterclaim. Finally, give a way to refute the counterclaim.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The claim is not very debatable. It is a fact that colleges are expensive, but the topic isn't about the expense but about its worth. Likewise, the counterclaim that a college education makes a person more well-rounded doesn't explain how that is beneficial. A better claim might be, "College education is not worth the cost because there are alternative opportunities that are more affordable." I could support this by finding statistics on student loan debts and examples of jobs that do not require a college degree. A possible counterclaim is,

"College education is worth the cost because it opens up more job opportunities." I could support this with statistics about jobs and earnings from college graduates and anecdotes from college graduates. This could be refuted with examples of entrepreneurs who found great success without completing college.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I evaluated and described problems with the claim and counterclaim.

2. _____ I revised the claim and counterclaim to be fairer and more debatable.

3. _____ I included ideas for credible evidence.

4. _____ I gave a refutation for the counterclaim.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will develop counterclaims fairly and supply evidence for each counterclaim when writing an argument.

Key Words

- **bias** – a personal feeling in favor of or against something

- **claim** – the argument you're making; the position to take on an issue and the reasons and evidence to support the claim

- **counterclaim** – the opposite of the point you're arguing, plus evidence to support it

- **evidence** – facts, details, statistics, observations, or quotations from experts that support the claim or show why the claim is true or believable

- **rebuttal** – a response to a counterclaim that further supports your claim

Development

In addition to **claims**, writers of argumentative texts need to provide **counterclaims,** or claims that make the opposite point. Counterclaims need to be supported with **evidence** to be fair, and they need to anticipate the audience's knowledge level and concerns, values, and possible **bias** toward an issue. This means that writers may need to change the audience's mind about an issue in order to persuade them. Examples of bias can include:

- Ageism – bias against people because they are perceived as too young or too old

- Confirmation bias – disposition to only being open to information that supports something the audience already believes

- In-group and affinity bias – bias toward agreeing with people from shared demographic groups

- Racism – prejudice toward a minority racial or ethnic group

- Sexism – tending to agree or disagree with a position based on stereotypes on gender identity

- Status quo bias – preference against change

Beyond considering potential biases of their audience, argumentative text writers should provide a **rebuttal** to counterclaims to strengthen their own claims. When a counterclaim is presented fairly and addresses the audience's knowledge level and concerns, values, and possible biases toward an issue, then the writer has a strong argument.

Source: Matej Kastelic. Shutterstock

See how the writer develops a counterclaim about electric vehicles after anticipating the audience's values and possible bias toward an issue:

Claim: In order to thoroughly combat harmful emissions, all new vehicles should be electric.

Evidence: Statistics about emissions from electric vehicles versus gas-powered vehicles; quotations from climate experts about how electric vehicles would impact emissions; facts about how electric vehicles are becoming less expensive

Anticipation of the audience's values and possible bias toward an issue: Many audience members may want to keep their vehicles or may prefer gas-powered vehicles, so they may have a status quo bias. They also may not see how switching to electric vehicles would benefit them or the environment.

Counterclaim: If an area's power comes from coal or natural gas sources, then electric vehicles still create carbon emissions while they are being charged.

Evidence: Statistics about where power comes from in different areas around the United States

Rebuttal: Even though electric vehicles may create emissions during charging, electric vehicles still generate less emissions than gas-powered vehicles. While it may be an adjustment to switch to electric vehicles, the switch is still beneficial for the environment.

In this example, the writer uses the audience's possible status quo bias to draft a possible counterclaim and create their rebuttal. The writer acknowledges that electric vehicles can still indirectly contribute to carbon emissions, but the writer can refute that idea by explaining why electric vehicles are still a better, more environmentally friendly choice than gas-powered vehicles.

Question

How do audience biases connect with the strengths and limitations of a counterclaim?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: An audience's pre-existing thoughts on an issue make certain counterclaims particularly strong or limited, and a writer needs to anticipate any biases against their position in their counterclaims.

Check-In

Recall what you learned about developing counterclaims fairly and supplying evidence for each counterclaim as you answer the following questions.

Question 1

Write a counterclaim for the following claim.

Claim: Gas-powered vehicles are better for consumers because they are less expensive to purchase and maintain.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Electric vehicles become more affordable as more people buy them.

Question 2

Develop a claim and counterclaim about changing the driving age from sixteen to eighteen. Anticipate ageism bias in your counterclaim.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer:

Claim: The driving age should be increased to eighteen because that would increase driver safety.

Counterclaim: Although it may seem prudent to increase the driving age, doing so would delay valuable real-world experiences that teenagers need.

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Practice

Read the following claim. Complete the activity.

Claim: Photo editing and retouching should be banned because it sets up unrealistic standards of beauty that can be harmful for everyone.

Activity

Flesh out the argument by listing possible evidence to support the claim and note what you anticipate as the audience's possible bias toward the issue. Then, draft a fair and thorough counterclaim with relevant evidence to address your anticipation of the audience's values and possible bias toward the issue. Provide an idea for the type of evidence the writer could use and provide a rebuttal to the counterclaim.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer:

Possible Evidence: Interviews from social media experts, studies about how edited images impact teenagers and other people, facts about why photographers and publications edit images.

Anticipation of the audience's values and possible bias toward an issue: Audience members have cultural ideas around standards of beauty, or they may think that everyone understands that photos are altered, so photo editing isn't an issue.

Counterclaim: Although it changes reality, photo editing and retouching should be allowed because it enables photographers and other media experts to manipulate images in a way that fits their vision.

Evidence: Quote professionals who use photo editing and retouching software.

Rebuttal: Although some may argue that photo editing and retouching can be a form of expression, professionals need to be careful not to use that expression in a way that negatively impacts the way their audience sees themselves and others.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I developed a counterclaim fairly and thoroughly and anticipated the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

2. _____ I supplied ideas for relevant evidence that would support the counterclaim and my rebuttal.

3. _____ I rebutted the counterclaim.

Writing Conventions

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization and punctuation, including observing hyphenation conventions.

Key Words

- **compound modifier** – a compound of two or more words that collectively modify a noun

- **conventions** – rules that most writers agree with, such as rules of grammar and usage

Writing Conventions

When writing a text of any genre, writers follow certain **conventions**, or agreed-upon rules of writing mechanics, such as capitalization and punctuation. By following these rules, writers can make sure that their writing looks polished and professional. But conventions serve another purpose as well. Following conventions allows writers to let their readers know the exact meaning and interpretation of the words they are using.

Source: Gustavo Frazao. 123RF

Capitalization Conventions

Capitalization conventions can help writers show when a new sentence begins and when they are referring to a specific person, place, or thing. Look at the table to see conventions of capitalization and examples:

Capitalization Rules and Examples

Capitalization Convention	Example
Capitalize the first letter of the first word in a sentence.	We drove to the store.
Capitalize *I* when used as a first-person pronoun.	My friend and I went for a walk.
Capitalize proper nouns.	My friend Stacy is from Ohio.
Capitalize words in titles except for prepositions, articles, and conjunctions *unless* they are the first word in a title.	We are reading *The Catcher in the Rye*.
Capitalize months, days of the week, and holidays.	Every year, Thanksgiving falls on a Thursday in November.
Do not capitalize a word immediately following a colon.	I have one goal: to win the race.

Punctuation Conventions

Punctuation can indicate several things to readers. Every sentence ends with a punctuation mark that indicates the type of sentence. A period shows that a sentence is declarative, stating a fact, or imperative, giving a command. A question mark shows that a sentence is interrogative or asking a question. An exclamation point shows that a sentence is expressing strong emotion.

Commas can be used to break apart elements of sentences, helping readers comprehend sentences more easily. Writers should use commas to do the following:

- separate independent clauses

- separate an introductory word, phrase, or dependent clause from the main clause of the sentence

- separate a series of three or more words, clauses, or phrases

- introduce a quotation

- separate words, clauses, or phrases that are not essential to the sentence

- set apart names of geographical places, titles in names, and the month, day, and year in dates

Writers use hyphens to connect words. A hyphen can create a **compound modifier**, or a unit of two words that work together to modify a noun. The words should only be hyphenated if they appear before the word they are modifying. Read this sentence from an argumentative text in favor of colleges and universities paying their athletes:

Many athletes come from low-income backgrounds.

In this sentence, the words "low" and "income" work together to modify "backgrounds." Using a hyphen to connect the two words indicates that the words should be taken as one unit. This is different from saying, "Many athletes come from families who make a low income." In this case, "low income" should not be hyphenated, as the words are not working together to describe another noun.

Hyphens should also be used to connect words in the following scenarios:

- spelling out the numbers twenty-one through ninety-nine

- using hyphenated compound words, such as *father-in-law*

- including the prefixes *ex-, all-,* and *self- (ex-husband, all-knowing, self-serve)*

Some other types of punctuation writers may use in argumentative texts include the following:

- quotation marks to set off the exact words of someone else

- colons to introduce a new idea or list

- semicolons to separate independent clauses

- parentheses to set off a related but nonessential thought

Select the button. Select each pin to explore how one writer applies the conventions of punctuation in an argumentative text. There are seven pins.

Although colleges and universities make significant profits from their sports programs, the athletes do not see any of those profits. College sports bring in most of their money through various channels; these include ticket sales, corporate sponsorships, advertising, and licensing fees. Some schools even charge the hard-working players fees to participate in sports! School administrators argue that this is fair for one reason: many student athletes receive scholarships. However, these scholarships typically do not cover most expenses (such as housing and textbooks). With how all-consuming life as a student-athlete can be, many players do not have time to take on a job to earn money.

Question 1

Why should writers follow conventions of capitalization and punctuation?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Writers should follow conventions of capitalization and punctuation to ensure that their writing is polished and professional and to let readers know the exact meaning of the words they are using.

Question 2

When should writers capitalize letters?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Writers should capitalize letters when beginning a new sentence, when referring to a specific person, place, or thing, and when using *I* as a first-person pronoun. Writers should also capitalize the first letter of most words in titles and the first letter of months, days of the week, and holidays.

Question 3

Why do writers use commas?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Writers use commas to break apart elements of sentences, which helps readers understand sentences more easily.

Check-In

Think about what you have learned about the conventions of capitalization and punctuation as you answer these questions.

Question 1

Which sentence correctly follows hyphenation conventions?

a. The new stadium has state-of-the-art features.

b. The football program is the school's biggest-source of income.

c. All of the athletes are extremely well-known.

d. The school is extremely highly-regarded for its basketball program.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

a. The new stadium has state-of-the-art features.

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Question 2

Which of the following does *not* follow capitalization conventions?

a. on Monday night

b. from Canada

c. the novel *Pride And Prejudice*

d. my friend Tom and I

c. the novel *Pride And Prejudice*

Need a little extra support?

Question 3

Which sentence correctly follows punctuation conventions?

a. The school's top player is originally from Missoula Montana.

b. Many students have asked, "Why aren't our athletes paid?"

c. Although he has a scholarship; he cannot afford basic necessities.

d. However the players do not receive any compensation.

b. Many students have asked, "Why aren't our athletes paid?"

Need a little extra support?

Practice

Read another paragraph from an argumentative text in favor of colleges and universities paying their athletes.

athletes at some of the top earning schools like the university of alabama risk everything to play sports, their physical health a chance at other careers and their free time. with time devoted to practicing traveling working out and playing many athletes do not have much time to devote to their studies. so it can be difficult for athletes to get a high quality education.

Activity

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization and punctuation, including observing hyphenation conventions, by revising the capitalization and punctuation of the paragraph.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Athletes at some of the top-earning schools, like the University of Alabama, risk everything to play sports: their physical health, a chance at other careers, and their free time. With time devoted to practicing, traveling, working out, and playing, many athletes do not have much time to devote to their studies. So, it can be difficult for athletes to get a high-quality education.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I demonstrated command of the conventions of standard English capitalization.

2. _____ I demonstrated command of the conventions of standard English punctuation.

3. _____ I demonstrated command of hyphenation conventions.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will resolve issues of complex or contested usage, consulting references as appropriate.

Key Words

- **conventions** – rules that most writers agree with, such as rules of grammar and usage

- **usage** – widely accepted ways in which people use words and phrases

Writing Conventions

Usage

Language is dynamic and changes along with the world around it. The way Shakespeare used language is different from how we use language today. Modern editions of Shakespeare's plays, after all, must include glossaries explaining terms from the Renaissance that English speakers no longer use. And writers before Shakespeare, such as Geoffrey Chaucer—who wrote in Middle English—used the language in ways that are even less familiar to people today.

But changes in English **usage**—that is, widely accepted ways in which people use words and phrases—are not just a thing of the past. Dozens of words and phrases in common use today did not exist until quite recently—often, but not always, because the things they refer to did not exist. The terms *tweet, e-bike, social distancing, unmute,* and *hybrid learning,* for example, were introduced recently.

Certain coinages may be acceptable in formal writing, while others are used only in informal writing or in speech. The term **conventions** is used to describe agreed-upon rules of writing and using language, including rules pertaining to grammar, spelling, and punctuation. But because language is constantly changing, conventions are constantly changing as well. This can create problems for writers by making them uncertain whether a particular usage is acceptable—and if it is, under what circumstances. Just as language is constantly changing, new usages are continually being questioned and contested.

Checking Reference Sources

To find out whether a particular usage is acceptable or not, writers can begin by deciding if the sentence they are writing sounds right. But they should also check recognized references on usage and style, such as the well-regarded *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* or *Garner's Modern American Usage.* These style guides can provide guidance on whether a particular usage is widely accepted.

Also note that many organizations have style guides of their own, and writers should familiarize themselves with them if they are writing for these organizations or using their style. For example, the Modern Language Association, or MLA, puts out a style manual, as does the American Psychological Association, or APA. These and other style guides help writers determine whether it makes sense to use a particular word, phrase, or sentence structure.

While style guides typically agree about some usages, they may not agree on others. One long-standing example involves a rule saying that sentences should never end with prepositions. For example, some style guides would recommend that the sentence *You have many political ideas that I disagree with* should be recast to read *You have many political ideas with which I disagree* to avoid ending the sentence with the preposition *with.* Then again, other style guides adopt a different perspective. They point out that sentences with final prepositions have been in use for hundreds of years and argue that these sentences represent perfectly acceptable idiomatic English. When authorities disagree, careful writers can usually adopt whichever stance they wish. In this case, however, a reasonable compromise might be to reserve final prepositions for less formal writing and avoid final prepositions in writing intended for a more formal audience.

A more recent example could be the use of the word *because* as a conjunction. You've likely heard someone say *I don't like that mayoral candidate because reasons.* This is a relatively new use of the word *because* that is just beginning to make its way into English. Some dictionaries include it; others do not. Again, good advice, for now, might be for writers to limit the use of *because* in this context to informal writing while substituting *because of* or *owing to* where more formal writing is concerned.

Source: Lightspring. Shutterstock

Question

When might it make sense to use *because* as a conjunction? Provide an example.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: It makes sense to use *because* as a conjunction in very informal writing. Example: The race for governor will be close because excitement.

Writing Conventions

Punctuation

There are also controversies about punctuation usage. One example involves what is sometimes called the comma splice. In a comma splice, two independent clauses are joined by a comma. Here's an example:

> The argument in favor of repairing the city's streets was compelling, it will save us money in the long run.

The general consensus among grammarians is that comma splices should not be used. They are considered off-limits because they produce what is sometimes known as a run-on sentence—that is, two sentences joined together improperly. And indeed, style manuals generally suggest several ways of avoiding comma splices:

- Creating two separate sentences: *The argument in favor of repairing the city's streets was compelling. It will save us money in the long run.*

- Combining the sentences with a semicolon: *The argument in favor of repairing the city's streets was compelling; it will save us money in the long run.*

- Combining the sentences by using a coordinating conjunction, such as *and* or *but,* or a dependent marker word such as *after* or *although*: *The argument in favor of repairing the city's streets was compelling because it will save us money in the long run.*

Not all writers avoid the comma splice. In the works of best-selling Scottish novelist Kate Atkinson, for example, comma splices are frequent. And many writers use comma splices to create short, informal sentences such as *Read the book, you'll enjoy it*. Still,

it's wise for most writers to keep comma splices out of their work unless they have specifically been told by their editors—or by a style manual—that comma splices are acceptable, especially in more formal writing.

The goal of establishing conventions is to help writers achieve clarity in their writing, which makes reading texts easier for their audiences. Sometimes authorities agree as to what proper usage is; sometimes they do not. Because language is always changing, we can be sure that this will always be the case.

Question 1

Which of the following sentences includes a comma splice?

a. Voting should be open to 9-year-olds, they are intelligent people.

b. Voting should be open to 9-year-olds, but not younger children.

c. Voting should be open to 9-year-olds; they can understand the issues.

d. Voting should be open to 9-year-olds, although they tend to be short.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

a. Voting should be open to 9-year-olds, they are intelligent people.

Question 2

Write a corrected sentence (or two sentences) for the comma splice you identified in the previous question. Try to find three different ways of fixing the comma splice.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer:

Voting should be open to 9-year-olds. They are intelligent people.

Voting should be open to 9-year-olds; they are intelligent people.

Voting should be open to 9-year-olds because they are intelligent people.

Check-In

Think about what you have learned about applying your understanding of usage and writing conventions as you answer these questions.

Question 1

How are the words *tweet* and *e-bike* examples of how usage and convention can change over time? Invent some new words that may describe future innovations.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: These words refer to things that did not exist until recently. To recognize these new innovations, language and conventions needed to change.

Marsplain: a condescending statement from someone living in a colony on Mars

AI-mate: a robotic friend created through artificial intelligence

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Question 2

Suggest two ways to fix the following comma splice:

Janice baked chocolate cupcakes, they are her mom's favorite birthday treat.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer:

Janice baked chocolate cupcakes; they are her mom's favorite birthday treat.

Janice baked chocolate cupcakes because they are her mom's favorite birthday treat.

Need a little extra support?

Question 3

When writers are in doubt about acceptable writing styles and conventions, what can they do?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Writers can use such sources as *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, Garner's Modern American Usage*, or style manuals associated with organizations such as the American Psychological Association.

Need a little extra support?

Practice

Read the following notes and apply your understanding of usage and writing conventions in the activity below.

- Library board election is soon, many candidates are running
- The importance of the vote for library resources that community can be proud of
- Bad candidates won't create a better library, they have controversial ideas about slashing the budget that the community objects to
- High voter turnout is important because enthusiasm

Activity

Develop the notes about the library board election into a paragraph for a formal newsletter for your community. Make sure your usage is appropriate for your purpose. Check your paragraph when you finish to make sure you did not include comma splices, contractions, *because* as a conjunction, or prepositions at the ends of sentences. Consult an authoritative reference source if you have any doubt about word usage or punctuation.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The library election is coming up soon, and there are many candidates running for the board. It is important to vote for board members who will commit to giving our community a library that makes us proud. We need board members who are happy to spend money to buy books and resources for the library; the weak candidates on the ticket have controversial ideas about slashing the budget to which our community objects. We need voters to show up on election

day with enthusiasm to make their voices heard. We must protect one of our community treasures—the public library.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I applied my understanding of English usage to write a paragraph in a formal style for a community newsletter.

2. _____ I applied my understanding of writing conventions in a formal style, including avoiding comma splices, contractions, the word b*ecause a*s a conjunction, and prepositions at the ends of sentences.

3. _____ I consulted an authoritative reference source if I had any doubt about word usage or punctuation.

Sentence Construction

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will manipulate phrases and clauses in sentences, paying attention to logical use of tenses and agreements between pronouns and their antecedents.


Key Words

- **absolute phrase** – a set of two or more words that includes a noun and a modifier and modifies a sentence

- **adverbial clause** – a dependent clause that functions as an adverb

- **antecedent** – the word or phrase that a pronoun refers to

- **clause** – a group of words that includes a subject and a verb

- **dependent clause** – a clause that does not form a sentence

- **independent clause** – a clause that forms a sentence

- **participial phrase** – a phrase that begins with a participle and acts like an adjective

- **phrase** – a group of words that works together as a unit within a sentence

- **prepositional phrase** – a preposition followed by its object and the object's modifiers

- **relative clause** – a dependent clause that functions as an adjective

Manipulating Phrases and Clauses
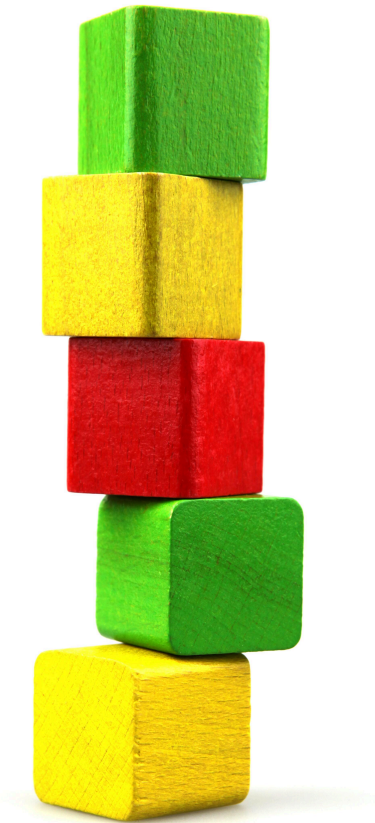
The building blocks of sentences include a variety of **clauses** and **phrases**. As writers develop their skills, they can create more complicated sentences to express higher-level content. Clauses and phrases are among the key tools needed to craft these sentences.

Both clauses and phrases are groups of words, but a clause contains a subject and a verb, and a phrase does not. Clauses, therefore, are usually longer than phrases.

Many phrases and clauses can be moved to different positions in their sentences without changing the correctness of the sentences' grammar. But these manipulations do have an effect on what the sentence emphasizes or focuses on. Phrases and clauses at the front of a sentence will generally receive more of the reader's attention than phrases at the back of a sentence. Placing phrases and phrases toward the middle of a sentence can create a pause and is another option for a writer.

Manipulating Phrases

Among the phrases needed to craft higher-level sentences are **prepositional phrases**, **participial phrases**, and **absolute phrases**. Let's begin with the prepositional phrase, which consists of a preposition plus a noun called the object of the preposition.

Just as with other phrases and with clauses, the position of a prepositional phrase can affect the emphasis of the sentence. The following example shows the same prepositional phrase in two different locations within a sentence:

- **After practice,** nine team members had lunch at a Mexican restaurant.
- Nine team members had lunch at a Mexican restaurant **after practice.**

The first sentence emphasizes the "when" part of the sentence by putting the prepositional phrase in bold type first; the second sentence emphasizes the "who" part

of the sentence. Notice that there is another prepositional phrase in the sentence: "at a Mexican restaurant." Moving this phrase to the start of the sentence would emphasize the "where" part of the sentence.

When working with phrases and clauses, writers are careful that pronouns agree with their **antecedents**. The antecedent is the noun or pronoun that a pronoun refers to. The following demonstrates a common type of mistake:

Incorrect

One of my sisters is working as an environmental activist. **They** are especially concerned about the oceans.

Correct

One of my sisters is working as an environmental activist. **She** is especially concerned about the oceans.

In the first sentence, the pronoun "they" does not match the antecedent, which is "one." The second sentence shows a pronoun that agrees with the antecedent.

Prepositional phrases can function as adjectives, adverbs, or nouns, depending on what they modify. Participial phrases always function as adjectives. A participial phrase is a phrase that features a present participle or a past participle. A present participle always has *-ing* at the end. A past participle often has *-ed* at the end, but not always.

Writers can emphasize actions when they place participial phrases at the beginning of sentences. Consider the difference in focus in these two sentences:

- Allison was too nervous to look down, **climbing up the face of the cliff.**

- **Climbing up the face of the cliff, Allison was too nervous to look down.**

Placing this participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence emphasizes the action and makes the sentence more engaging to the reader. It also places the phrase closer to the noun it modifies.

When you place a participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence, you must follow it immediately with the noun that it modifies. Otherwise, you will have what is known as a dangling participle, or misplaced modifier.

Incorrect

Having backed into a vehicle that was double-parked, the local resident and the delivery truck driver began a heated argument.

Correct

Having backed into a vehicle that was double-parked, the delivery truck driver began a heated argument with the local resident.

In the first sentence it is not clear who backed into the vehicle; putting the word modified by the participle phrase immediately after the phrase clarifies the situation.

Another mistake is not putting a sequence of events in the right order when using a participial phrase.

The first sentence gives the strange impression that a rock could be yelling.

Next, let's look at absolute phrases. An absolute phrase is a set of two or more words that include a noun and a modifier and modifies a sentence. The modifier is either a present participle or a past participle. An absolute phrase can appear at the beginning or the end of a sentence, but sometimes one of the positions is better. Here are two examples of absolute phrases:

- The candidates' debate will be held at the outdoor stage of the fairgrounds, **weather permitting.**
- **The last guest departed, the hosts began cleaning up the living room.**

In the first sentence, the absolute phrase can appear at either the beginning or the end of the sentence without affecting meaning. In the second sentence it is better for the absolute phrase to appear at the start of the sentence, because if it were at the end readers might wonder if the guest left when the hosts started cleaning.

Question 1

Explain the error in the following sentence.

Two members of my family ordered the chicken, but it got grilled chicken.

The antecedent of the pronoun is "members," not "family." The pronoun "it" should be changed to "they."

Question 2

Explain how to fix the error involving the participial phrase in the following sentence.

Swooping down out of the clouds, the mouse was not able to avoid the falcon's attack.

Sample answer: The participial phrase should be followed immediately by the word it modifies, "falcon." The sentence could be corrected like this:

Swooping down out of the clouds, the falcon made an attack that the mouse was not able to avoid.

Manipulating Phrases and Clauses

Manipulating Clauses

Clauses differ from phrases in that they have both a subject and a verb. An **independent clause** forms a complete sentence. A **dependent clause** does not form a complete sentence. A dependent clause can be an adjective, an adverb, or a noun.

A dependent clause that functions as an adjective is called a **relative clause**. Relative clauses begin with relative pronouns, words such as *that*, *which*, and *who*. A dependent clause that functions as an adverb is called an **adverbial clause**. Adverbial clauses begin with subordinating conjunctions, words such as *because*, *when*, and *if*.

A complex sentence consists of an independent clause and a dependent clause. Changing the position of a clause in a complex sentence affects the emphasis in the sentence in a way similar to that of changing the position of a phrase. The following shows an adverbial clause, in bold type, in different positions in a complex sentence:

- **After a massive volcano erupted in Indonesia in 1883,** volcanic ash blocked out sunlight in the surrounding area for two days.

- Volcanic ash blocked out sunlight in the surrounding area for two days **after a massive volcano erupted in Indonesia in 1883.**

Notice that when the adverbial clause comes first in a complex sentence, it is followed by a comma. When the adverbial clause comes second, however, there is no comma.

Relative clauses are less easy to manipulate because, like participial phrases, they need to be close to the noun that they modify.

- The ice cream flavor **that they wanted was sold out,** and so they decided to get smoothies.

- They decided to get smoothies, because the ice cream flavor **that they wanted was sold out.**

Manipulating this relative clause requires adding the word "because." It emphasizes the smoothies rather than the sold-out ice cream.

Dependent clauses can also function as nouns. In the following sentence, the noun clause functions as the subject:

What we wanted to know was how the squirrel had gotten into the attic.

In a compound-complex sentence, there is one dependent clause and at least two independent clauses. The dependent clause is usually connected with one of the independent clauses, and so it must appear next to that independent clause.

Compound-Complex Sentence

The emergency room workers had difficulty taking their lunch breaks, because more patients kept walking in, and some of their cases were serious.

Correct Manipulation of Clauses

> Because more patients kept walking in, the emergency room workers had difficulty taking their lunch breaks; some of their cases were serious.
>
> **Incorrect Manipulation of Clauses**
>
> The emergency room workers had difficulty taking their lunch breaks, because some of their cases were serious, and more patients kept walking in.

In the last sentence, the antecedent of the pronoun "their" in "their cases" is confusing because of the way the clauses are arranged.

Finally, be careful to keep verb tenses consistent when writing complex sentences.

> The professor will now begin the chemistry lab, and students needed to put on their goggles.

The verb "needed" is incorrect; either "need" or "will need" is acceptable, to fit with the tense "will now begin."

Question 1

Answer the questions about the adverbial clauses in the following sentences.

> **1.** I like researching controversial issues after I finish my homework.

2. Mr. and Mrs. Rojas, who just moved in next door to us, are living in a neighboring suburb previously.

Which kind of dependent clause is used in sentence 1? How does switching its position affect the emphasis sentence 1? What error appears in sentence 2?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Sentence 1 has an adverbial clause: "after I finish my homework." Moving this clause to the start of the sentence emphasizes when the writer does the research. In sentence 2 there is a verb tense error: "are living" should be "were living."

Question 2

Review the following table and then answer the question.

Functions of Dependent Clauses in Sentences

Function of Dependent Clause	Example
adjective	I needed to determine the chemical equation, which was a key part of the grade.
adverb	When the elections grew near, we received more and more political mailings.
noun	She wanted to know who was in charge of the party planning.

Explain which type of dependent clauses are used in the following sentences and how their manipulation affects the meaning.

1. The mountain climber, who had reached the summit, saw a dangerous storm moving in quickly and worried about the trip back down.

2. Although the mountain climber reached the summit, the sudden approach of a storm made the journey back down extremely dangerous.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The first sentence contains a relative (adjectival) clause, and the second sentence contains an adverbial clause. Manipulating the sentence to change the clauses makes the situation less personal to the mountain climber in the second sentence.

Check-In

Use what you've learned about manipulating phrases and clauses to complete the activities below.

Activity 1

Read the sentences and answer the questions about phrases.

Two members of the girl scout troop cleaned up the nature trails in the forest, and the troop leader complimented its work. Showing her appreciation, the girls received two outdoors badges.

Identify the two errors in the passage and explain how to fix them.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer:

In the first sentence, the possessive pronoun "its" does not agree with the antecedent "two." "Its" should be changed to "their." In the second sentence, there is a dangling participle. The writer needs to add the word modified by the participial phrase—for example, "Showing her appreciation, the troop leader gave the girls two outdoors badges."

Activity 2

Write three complex sentences.

- The first should include an adverbial clause.

- The second should include a relative clause.

- The third should include a dependent clause that functions as a noun.

 Make sure each complex sentence has verb tenses that agree.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer:

Adverbial clause: After the tsunami, the shoreline was significantly altered.

Relative clause: The manager, who arrived to work late, was reprimanded by his superior.

Dependent clause that functions as a noun: What Tad was curious about was how Lola got in without a key.

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Practice

Read this excerpt from an article about an important civil rights activist. Pay close attention to the way phrases are used.

(1) Most Americans know the story of Rosa Parks and how she refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus in Alabama in 1955. (2) But far fewer people know the story of Jo Ann Robinson, who helped lead a successful movement protesting Parks's arrest. (3) Tensions rising, Robinson was among the organizers of a boycott of the buses in the city of Montgomery. (4) For twelve months, African Americans refused to ride the buses in Montgomery because you were required to sit in the back. (5) Leading a local civil rights group, a plan was developed by Robinson for the boycott and persuaded many people to participate. (6) The U.S. Supreme Court ruled the bus regulations were unconstitutional, and the buses in Montgomery were eventually desegregated. (7) Jo Ann Robinson deserves more recognition for her achievements.

Activity 1

- Identify a prepositional phrase from the passage.

- Then, explain the effect that would be produced by moving it to a different part of its sentence.

- Next, identify an absolute phrase.

- Then, identify a participial phrase and an error connected with it.

- Finally, identify one error involving lack of agreement between a pronoun and its antecedent.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Now read another excerpt, from an article about the fishing industry. Pay close attention to the way clauses are used.

In 2022, Alaska canceled snow-crab fishing season in the Bering Sea for the first time in history. The cancellation was the result of a collapse in the snow crab population caused by warming ocean temperatures. Within just a four-year period, the population of these crabs had dropped from 8 billion to 1 billion. Warmer waters resulted in the crabs' growing more quickly and needing more food. When they exhausted their usual food sources, the crabs are beginning to eat each other. To make matters worse, warmer oceans also contributed to a growth in the population of a species of cod that is a leading predator of young crabs.

Activity 2

Identify a relative clause and an adverbial clause in the passage. Then describe the effect of moving the adverbial clause to another location in the sentence. Also identify an error in verb tense usage and explain how to fix it.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer:

relative clause: "that is a leading predator of young crabs"

adverbial clause: "when they exhausted their usual food sources"; the effect of switching the position of this clause to the end of the sentence is to emphasize the cannibalism of the crabs

verb tense error: in the next-to-last sentence, "are beginning" should be "began"

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activities by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I identified different types of phrases and described the effects created by manipulating them.

2. _____ I identified different types of clauses and described the effects created by manipulating them.

3. _____ I identified errors in pronoun-antecedent agreement.

4. _____ I identified errors in verb tense agreement.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will manipulate phrases and clauses in sentences, paying attention to a variety of sentence patterns.

Key Words

- **absolute phrase** – a set of two or more words that includes a noun and a participle and modifies an entire sentence

- **adverbial clause** – a clause that modifies the verb in an independent clause

- **complex sentence** – a sentence that contains an independent clause and at least one dependent clause joined by a subordinating conjunction

- **compound sentence** – a sentence that contains two or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction

- **dependent clause** – a clause that does not form a sentence

- **independent clause** – a clause that forms a sentence

- **participial phrase** – a phrase that begins with a participle and acts as an adjective

- **prepositional phrase** – a preposition followed by its object and the object's modifiers

- **relative clause** – a dependent clause that modifies a noun in an independent clause

Manipulating Phrases and Clauses

Sentence Variety

When writing argumentative texts, creating a sound thesis statement and strong supporting details is a good start, but writers should be mindful of how they put their ideas together into sentences. Including a variety of sentence types is characteristic of good writing. For example, writers should be careful to avoid long strings of short sentences, which can make writing choppy and uninteresting.

Writers can use phrases and clauses to combine shorter sentences into longer sentences. Both clauses and phrases are groups of words, but a clause contains a subject and a verb and a phrase does not. There are different kinds of phrases and clauses. Understanding some of the main types of phrases and clauses will allow you to incorporate them into your writing. You can create a balanced mix of sentence types to make your writing more interesting, helping you to communicate clearly with readers.

Using Phrases for Sentence Variety

A common type of phrase is a **prepositional phrase**, which consists of a preposition and a noun. The noun is called the object of the preposition. Remember that prepositions show position or relationship and include such words as *at, for, from, in, of, on, to,* and *with*.

Short Sentences

My cousins and I ate dinner together.

We went to a restaurant called Sweet Basil.

Sentences Combined with a Prepositional Phrase

My cousins and I ate dinner *at Sweet Basil*.

The writer turned the second sentence into the prepositional phrase *at Sweet Basil*. The prepositional phrase functions as an adjective that modifies the noun *dinner*.

A prepositional phrase can also connect two sentences by functioning as an adverb:

Short Sentences

James and Lucie visited their aunt last summer.

Their aunt lives in Paris.

Sentences Combined with an Adverbial Prepositional Phrase

James and Lucie visited their aunt *in Paris* last summer.

The prepositional phrase *in Paris* modifies the verb *visited.*

Another type of phrase is a **participial phrase,** which is formed from a present participle or a past participle. Present participles end in *-ing*. Regular past participles end in *-ed,* but irregular past participles have many forms, such as *became, left,* and *saw.* Participial phrases always function as adjectives. Here are some examples of participial phrases:

Short Sentences

The speaker was summarizing his argument.

He made sure to remind the audience of the importance of voting.

Sentences Combined with a Participial Phrase (Present Participle)

Summarizing his argument, the speaker made sure to remind the audience of the importance of voting.

In this example, the participial phrase *summarizing his argument* has a present participle *summarizing*. Here is another example of combining sentences with a participial phrase, this time with a past participle:

Shorter Sentences

Mina received feedback on her painting.

The critical feedback was provided in an insulting way.

Sentences Combined with a Participial Phrase (Past Participle)

Provided in an insulting way, the feedback on Mina's painting was critical.

Notice how the writer rearranged some of the words when changing the second sentence to a participial phrase and combining the sentences.

When using participial phrases, be careful to immediately follow the phrase with the noun it modifies. Otherwise, you will have a dangling participle, a type of misplaced modifier.

Incorrect

Entering the museum, a famous sculpture impressed the students.

Correct

Entering the museum, the students were impressed by a famous sculpture.

The second sentence makes it clear that it was the students and not the sculpture who entered the museum.

Another type of phrase that functions only as an adjective is the **absolute phrase**, which is a set of two or more words that includes a noun and a modifier and modifies an entire sentence. The modifier is either a present participle or past participle. An absolute phrase can appear at the beginning or the end of a sentence.

Short Sentences

Fog was descending on the field.

The soccer game was in danger of being canceled.

Sentences Combined with an Absolute Phrase

Fog descending, the soccer game was in danger of being canceled.

Question 1

Read these sentences and answer the question.

a. The special celebration was at our favorite neighborhood park.

b. It was our grandparents' wedding anniversary.

Combine the two sentences into one sentence by using a prepositional phrase.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The special celebration for our grandparents' wedding anniversary was at our favorite neighborhood park.

Question 2

Read these sentences and answer the question.

a. Gina slowly reviewed the information she had gathered from her meticulous research.

b. She was determined to avoid biased and inaccurate material.

Combine the two sentences into one sentence by using a participial phrase that begins with a past participle.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Determined to avoid biased and inaccurate material, Gina slowly reviewed the information she had gathered from her meticulous research.

Question 3

Read this sentence and answer the question.

Running for cover, the rain slashed the field as fans headed for shelter.

Fix the dangling modifier in this sentence.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Running for cover, the fans headed for shelter as rain slashed the field.

Manipulating Phrases and Clauses

Using Clauses for Sentence Variety

Unlike a phrase, a clause has both a subject and a verb. An **independent clause** forms a sentence, and a **dependent clause** does not form a sentence. Writers can use clauses to combine short sentences into compound or **complex sentences**. Writers can combine two short sentences into a **compound sentence**, which is a sentence that contains two or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction, such as *and, but,* and *or.*

Separate Sentences

> The store could charge customers 5 cents for every plastic bag.
>
> The store could stop using plastic bags altogether.

Compound Sentence

> The store could charge customers 5 cents for every plastic bag, or the store could stop using plastic bags altogether.

The writer combines the sentences by using the coordinating conjunction *or.*

Writers can also combine sentences to make a complex sentence, which is a sentence that contains an independent clause and at least one dependent clause joined by a subordinating conjunction. Dependent clauses are sometimes called subordinate clauses. The most common kind of dependent clauses are **adverbial clauses** and **relative clauses**.

An adverbial clause functions as an adverb. It modifies the verb in the independent clause. Adverbial clauses begin with words such as *because, even though, if, unless,* and *when,* which are referred to as subordinating conjunctions.

Separate Sentences

We need a new captain for our basketball team.

The current captain is not doing enough to boost team morale.

Complex Sentence

We need a new captain for our basketball team **because** the current captain is not doing enough to boost team morale.

The writer uses the subordinating conjunction *because* to combine the two sentences into one. The adverbial clause *because the current captain is not doing enough to boost team morale* modifies the verb *need* in the independent clause.

A relative clause, also called an adjectival clause, functions as an adjective. It modifies a noun in the independent clause. A relative clause begins with a relative pronoun, such as *that, which,* and *who.*

Separate Sentences

My teammate made an amazing three-point shot to win the game.

My teammate has been playing basketball for only one year.

Complex Sentence

> My teammate, who has been playing basketball for only one year, made an amazing three-point shot to win the game.

The relative clause *who has been playing basketball for only one year* modifies the noun *teammate.*

Question 1

Review the following list and then answer the questions.

Words That Connect Clauses

- Coordinating Conjunctions: *and, but, or, so, for, yet, nor*

- Subordinating Conjunctions: *after, although, as, as if, as long as, because, before, despite, even if, even though, if, in order that, rather than, since, so that, that, though, unless, until, when, where, whereas, whether, while*

- Relative Pronouns: *that, which, who, whom, whose*

Fill in the blanks with the correct type of word, clause, or sentence.

1. A _____ connects a relative clause with a(n) ._____

2. A _____ connects two independent clauses to form a _____ sentence.

3. A _____ connects a dependent _____ and a(n) t_____ o form a se_____ ntence.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

A relative pronoun connects a relative clause with an independent clause.

A coordinating conjunction connects two independent clauses to form a compound sentence.

A subordinating conjunction connects a dependent clause and an independent clause to form a complex sentence.

Question 2

Read the following sentences and answer the question.

1. The summer festival is scheduled at the park next week.

2. The band will need good weather to have a chance of reaching their fundraising goal.

Combine the two sentences into a complex sentence by using the subordinating conjunction *if.* Replace or delete words as needed but do not change the meaning of the sentences.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: If there is good weather at the summer festival at the park next week, the band will have a chance of reaching their fundraising goal.

Question 3

Read the following sentence and answer the question.

The volunteer whose bike was the only one left on the rack was working late at the community center.

Identify the type of dependent clause in the sentence and explain what it modifies.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: relative clause; "whose bike was the only one left on the rack," modifies "volunteer"

Check-In

Use what you've learned about communicating clearly by manipulating phrases and clauses for sentence variety to answer the questions below.

Question 1

Describe the type of phrase that is used to combine two sentences into one in each of the combined sentences below. Identify what each phrase modifies. Then, write your own two sentences that employ the same structure as the examples.

1. Wind gusting, the seagulls had difficulty returning to their nests.

2. Moving quickly, the young cat hid under the bed.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answers:

1. absolute phrase; modifies entire sentence

The work being done, the loggers circled around the campfire to eat a meal.

2. participial phrase; cat

Thinking hard, the mathematician looked perplexed by the new equation.

Question 2

Create a compound sentence by connecting two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: I am a phenomenal saxophone player, but Ingrid is even better than I am.

Question 3

Create a complex sentence by connecting an independent clause with an adverbial clause beginning with a subordinating conjunction.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Unless Antonio practices the piano every night this week, he will not be prepared for the recital.

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Practice

Read this outline for an argumentative text about conservation.

Section 1: For centuries, tallgrass prairie covered much of the midwestern United States.

- Farmland needs of settlers from eastern states in the late 1800s and early 1900s

- Recent prairie restorations by conservationists

Section 2: These areas have included parkland and nature preserves controlled by local governments.

- Prairie restoration first step—growing plants native to prairies that need protection

- Second—removing invasive, non-prairie plants

Section 3: One unusual aspect of prairie restoration involves setting controlled fires.

- Prairie plants deep root systems okay to endure fire

- Invasive species don't endure fire as much

- Restoration benefits

Activity

Develop the outline into a sentence or two for each section. In Section 1, include a sentence with a participial phrase as well as a complex sentence.

In Section 2, include a compound sentence. In Section 3, include a compound sentence and another sentence with a relative clause.

Sample answers:

Section 1:

Sentence with participial phrase: Clearing much of this prairie in the late 1800s and early 1900s, settlers from eastern states wanted farmland. Complex sentence: Over the last few decades there has been a positive change because conservationists have been restoring the prairie in some areas.

Section 2:

Compound sentence: One change is growing plants native to prairies, and the other is keeping out or removing invasive, non-prairie plants.

Section 3:

Compound sentence: Prairie plants can survive fires thanks to their deep root systems, but few invasive species can survive the fires.

Complex sentence with relative clause: Prairie restoration is a valuable activity that deserves broad support from the community.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I manipulated phrases in sentences.

2. _____ I manipulated clauses in sentences.

3. _____ I created compound and complex sentences as directed.

Transitions

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link major sections of a text and create cohesion.

Key Words

- **cohesion** – the effective linking of ideas and of sections within a text

- **syntax** – the arrangement of words and phrases in a particular order

- **transition** – a word or phrase that shows the relationship between two ideas

Transitions

One of the goals of writing an argumentative text is to create a text that persuades a reader to accept an idea or undertake a task. To do this, argumentative texts need to have **cohesion**, which means that the various parts of the text must be carefully connected so the writer's overall points are clear. Without cohesion, it can be difficult for readers to tell what the writer is asking of them and why, and the text is likely to fail in its purpose.

There are several ways that writers can arrange an argumentative text so it is as cohesive as possible. One of the most important involves **transitions**—words or phrases that show the relationship between two ideas.

Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitional words and phrases help link ideas and tell readers how they are connected. They are especially useful in showing how two ideas are alike or how they are different, but they have other purposes as well.

Here's a list of some common transitional words and phrases and the relationships they describe:

Words and Phrases for Connecting Ideas

If writers want to show that:	then they should consider using these words and phrases:
two ideas are alike	similarly, along the same lines, likewise, also, moreover
two ideas are different	on the other hand, alternatively, despite, but, however, although
one idea causes another	because, since, as a result, as, therefore, consequently
one idea follows another	first, next, last, then, finally, after that
one idea is an example of another	for instance, for example, specifically, namely, that is to say

And here are some examples of these transitional words and phrases in action:

- Two ideas that are alike:

1. Using bicycles instead of gasoline-powered cars will help the environment.
2. Bicycling is good for people's mental and physical health *as well*.

The first sentence states an advantage of bicycle use. The phrase *as well* indicates that the second sentence states another advantage.

- Two ideas that are different:

1. If everyone switched to riding bicycles, we'd save money and fuel.
2. This day is a long way off, *however*, as cars remain very popular.

The first sentence states why it would be a good idea for people to ride bicycles. The second sentence contrasts this statement using the word *however*.

- Two ideas that express a cause-and-effect relationship:

1. People don't like sharing roads with cars when they bicycle.
2. *Therefore*, they don't commute to work by bicycle as much as they might.

The first sentence describes a concern that many people have. The second sentence uses *therefore* to show a consequence of that concern.

- Two ideas that come in sequence:

1. We should levy high taxes on ordinary gasoline.
2. We can *then* convince people to switch to bicycles more easily.

The first sentence expresses a plan. The second sentence describes the next step using the time order word *then*.

- Two ideas indicating an example:

1. Making it difficult to drive cars will convince people to switch to bicycling.
2. *For instance,* we could convert superhighways into wide bicycle-only paths.

The first sentence describes an idea. The second sentence narrows the idea by using the phrase *for instance* to show a movement from the general to the specific.

Note that in some of these examples, the transitional word opens a new sentence, whereas in others it comes in the middle or at the end of the sentence. These are examples of varied **syntax**, or the ordering of words and phrases. Writers can experiment with switching the order of transitional words and phrases to make the connections between ideas clearer and stronger.

Question

What relationship between ideas is given in the following sentences? What transitional word or phrase signals that relationship?

Electric cars are better for our society. That's because we save both money and fuel by converting to electric.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: This is a cause-and-effect relationship signaled by the use of the word *because*.

Transitions

Developing Cohesion

Cohesion in argumentative writing doesn't just appear on the sentence level; it also comes as a result of careful linkage between sections of a text. In this section, we'll look at how to connect the introduction and conclusion of an argumentative essay to the body of the text.

Suppose Janelle is writing an argumentative text in which her introduction is as follows:

> We need nothing short of a transportation revolution in our country. The trucks, cars, and other vehicles in widespread use today pollute, waste valuable resources, and cost our society enormous amounts of money. We need to work together to replace these outdated monstrosities with vehicles that save money, fuel, and the environment, among them bicycles, electric-powered cars, and energy-saving buses and trains.

What will the first paragraph of the body of her essay look like? Ideally, it will create cohesion by taking one of the ideas from the introduction and developing it. Janelle might discuss bicycles in the first body paragraph. By linking the mention of bicycles in the introduction to an actual discussion of bicycles in the paragraph below, Janelle is reminding the reader of the claims she made in the introduction and making it clear to her audience where she is taking her argument. Janelle might follow up a paragraph on bicycles with a paragraph on electric-powered cars and then a paragraph on buses and trains. By repeating key words like *bicycles* and *energy-saving* from the introduction to the body of the text, Janelle can make the connections as clear as possible and help her audience follow her reasoning.

Alternatively, Janelle might devote her second paragraph to a more thorough description of the problems with gasoline-powered cars and trucks—another theme referred to in the introductory paragraph. In this case, she would repeat words such as *pollute* and *resources* to show her readers how this paragraph is connected to the introduction.

Similar guidelines apply for connecting the body of the text to its conclusion. This time, writers will want to write a conclusion that repeats key words and phrases appearing in the body of the essay. There's another way to connect a conclusion to the rest of the text, however, and that's beginning the conclusion with a phrase such as *To sum up* or *In conclusion.* These phrases signal the reader that the body of the text is at an end and that the conclusion is about to begin.

Question

How can writers create cohesion between the first paragraph of the body text and the introduction of an essay?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The first body paragraph can repeat important words and phrases from the introduction to more closely link the ideas in the text.

Check-In

Think about what you have learned about cohesion and transitions as you answer these questions.

Question

How could you use a transitional word or phrase to strengthen the link between these two sentences?

1. We need to think creatively about improving transportation.

2. Developing bicycles with built-in umbrellas might be a good solution.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: We need to think creatively about improving transportation. For example, developing bicycles with built-in umbrellas might be a good solution.

Practice

Read the following paragraph, which represents the last paragraph in the body of an argumentative essay. Then complete the activity.

Expanding public transportation is perhaps the most important solution of all. It makes no sense for millions of Americans to sit in traffic daily, their cars idling and filling the air with noxious fumes, when they could be riding in comfort and style on dedicated train tracks. It makes no sense for Americans to spend thousands of dollars on personal vehicles when there could be a national plan of subsidies for riding buses. We need to wake up before it's too late and create a network of public transportation as part of the broader goal of reforming the way people move around.

Activity

Apply your understanding of cohesion and transitions by writing a short paragraph that explains how to connect the paragraph above to a conclusion paragraph of the essay. Give examples and reasons why these examples would make sense.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: First, it would make sense to start the conclusion with a transition such as *In summary, In conclusion*, or *To sum up*; this alerts readers to the fact that they are now in a different part of the essay and are likely not going to be exposed to new ideas. Second, the conclusion should use words and phrases that appeared in earlier paragraphs. In this example, it would make sense for the conclusion to repeat *trains, buses,* and *public transportation* along with *polluting* and *personal vehicles* as well as words and phrases from earlier in the text; the repetition of these words and phrases helps connect the reader's mind to the ideas that have come before and makes the essay more cohesive.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I made suggestions for how the writer could use appropriate and varied transitions in a conclusion.

2. _____ I explained my reasoning and how my suggestions would create cohesion.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts through word choice, transitions, and syntax.

Key Words

- **syntax** – the arrangement of words and phrases in a particular order

- **transition** – a word or phrase that shows the relationship between two ideas

Transitions

Transitions, or words and phrases that connect ideas and concepts, are both common and necessary in argumentative texts. You have probably seen many transition words and phrases in your reading, among them:

- however

- also

- although

- in addition

- for example

- finally

Source: igorlale. Shutterstock

Why do writers use transitions? Clarity. Readers can often figure out what the connection between two sentences or ideas is just from the context. But it doesn't hurt for writers to spell it out by using words and phrases that make the connection clear. For example, a writer might use *despite* to show contrast, *consequently* to show cause and effect, or *furthermore* to show similarity. The goal of argumentative writing is to get the reader to believe something or to act in a certain way, and including transitions helps realize that goal. Consider the difference between these two sentence pairs:

- Video games are often criticized. They should not be.

- Video games are often criticized. They should not be, though.

That word *though* helps the reader by signaling that the second sentence contrasts with the first. It allows the reader to better understand the writer's point.

Transitions and Complex Ideas

Transitions are used very often within sentences and to link sentence pairs. But they are also used frequently to link bigger ideas, such as the ideas within a paragraph. This is especially important when these ideas are complex.

Let's take a look at an example. Luis is writing an argumentative article on video games. One of his arguments is that video games are educational. He writes the

following paragraph:

Video games are educational. Players must strategize to determine how best to achieve the goal of a game, such as defeating an opposing monster, making their way into a castle, or rescuing another character from certain harm. In the same way, video games encourage creative, divergent thinking in ways that are essential to educating the whole child. Video games, moreover, develop eye-hand coordination, which is an essential skill in a modern world. In summary, the people who say that video games are not educational don't know what they're talking about.

This paragraph uses several transitions to help the reader follow Luis's argument:

- In the second sentence, Luis includes the phrase *such as*. This phrase moves the reader from the general to the specific. It indicates that Luis is about to provide a list of examples of goals for different video games, and indeed he does just that.

- Luis introduces the third sentence with the phrase *in the same way*. This phrase signals to the reader that this sentence will make a point much like the previous one. *In the same way* is a transitional phrase that emphasizes the similarities between two ideas. The reader now knows that this sentence will also identify a reason why video games are educational.

- The fourth sentence begins with *moreover*, another transition word that focuses on similarities. Again, Luis is telling his reader to expect another reason why video games are educational. He is using *moreover* as he used *in the same way*: to group ideas that are alike.

- The final sentence begins with the phrase *In summary*. This phrase does not suggest similarity. Instead, it alerts the reader that Luis's next statement will

summarize the information already presented in the paragraph. The final sentence of the paragraph, then, will be a mini-conclusion.

Luis could also have used other types of transitions. In particular, he could have used words and phrases that show contrast. Just as *moreover* groups ideas, *such as* introduces examples, and *in summary* signals a conclusion, words and phrases like *but* and *even though* tell the reader that an idea presents a contrast to a previous one.

Not every sentence needs a transitional word. Nonetheless, it is a good idea for writers to provide them when possible. They serve to strengthen the writer's argument by making it clearer and easier for readers to follow.

Syntax and Word Choice

Note that writers can also make use of **syntax** to guide their readers through complex ideas. Syntax refers to the arrangement of words and phrases within sentences. Transitional words can often be placed in different spots within a sentence. Reread the following sentence from Luis's paragraph: *Video games, moreover, develop eye-hand coordination, which is an essential skill in a modern world.* To make the connection between this sentence and the previous one more immediately obvious, Luis could have moved the word *moreover* to the beginning of the sentence: *Moreover, video games develop eye-hand coordination, which is an essential skill in a modern world.*

Finally, word choice can be an important way to link ideas in an argumentative text. Luis used the word *educational* or *educating* three times in the paragraph. Each use helps remind the reader that the paragraph is essentially about the educational value of video games. Like the use of transitions or rearranging words and phrases, repeating words is an excellent way to guide the reader through a series of complicated ideas.

Question

How could a writer use syntax to revise the following sentence?

Many people argue that video games are overly violent; they are wrong, however.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Many people argue that video games are overly violent; however, they are wrong.

Check-In

Think about what you have learned about transitions and complex ideas as you answer these questions.

Question 1

Explain how you can use transitional words or phrases to strengthen the link between two complex ideas in an essay or article.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Transitional words and phrases can help the reader determine whether two or more complex ideas are linked by being similar, being different, showing cause and effect, or in other ways.

Question 2

Morty wants to use a transitional word or phrase to connect the two ideas below. What word or phrase would you suggest he use? Explain your answer.

1. Video games today require much more complex thinking than they did in the 1980s.

2. Today's games use more interesting graphics.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: He could insert the word *too* at the end of the second sentence. The sentences express the same general idea—that video games are better than they used to be—and *too* is one of several transitional words and phrases that signal a relationship of similarities.

Question 3

How is word choice important in helping readers understand the links between complex ideas? How can a writer use word choice to help make these connections clear?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Word choice can more closely link ideas and make the relationship between them more evident. Repeating key words throughout a paragraph or an essay can help writers clarify and emphasize these connections.

Need a little extra support?

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Practice

Use what you have learned about transitions and complex ideas to complete the activity.

Activity

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I identified examples of how word choice clarified the relationships between ideas in the paragraph.

2. _____ I identified examples of transitions that clarified the relationships between ideas in the paragraph.

3. _____ I explained how syntax could be used to make ideas clearer.

Style

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline when writing an argument.

Key Words

- **argument** – a written discussion in which reasons and evidence are given in support of an opinion

- **argumentative text** – a form of writing that presents a claim supported by logical reasons and relevant evidence

- **formal style** – a style of writing in which the text structure and syntax are complex, the vocabulary level is advanced, and rules of grammar and usage are closely followed

- **objective tone** – a writer's attitude toward a subject that is fact-driven, serious, and seemingly neutral

- **style** – the way a writer tells a story or presents information; created through the use of word choice, syntax, descriptive techniques, and other literary devices

- **tone** – the attitude of a writer toward a subject

Style

Argumentative text can be found not just in an academic setting but in the real world as well. Politicians present **arguments** in their speeches, journalists present arguments in opinion pieces, blogs may present informal arguments, and magazines often feature arguments. Understanding what makes an argument effective can make you a better reader and a better writer.

Argumentative Writing and Style

An effective argument is persuasive. It includes a claim that is supported by logical reasons and relevant evidence. Once these standard elements of an argument are in place, a writer can focus on the **style** that best fits the situation.

The style**,** or way the writer presents information, is determined by the kind of writing and anticipated audience. A writer establishes style through word choice, syntax, descriptive techniques, and other literary devices. To create a persuasive argument, a writer should tailor the style to the audience. For example, expert readers of an academic journal will likely respond better to **formal style** than to the informal style that can be found on an online blog.

A formal style features complex syntax, advanced vocabulary, and standard English grammar and usage. These elements of a formal style enables readers to take an argument seriously. Read the opening of the opinion article titled "Climate change puts ocean at risk" by Vikki Spruill, President and CEO of the New England Aquarium:

Is Spruill's style formal or informal? What makes you think so? The sentence uses complex syntax to provide precise information about the subject and the source of disappointment. The writer chooses advanced vocabulary, such as *advocates, global governments, climate talks,* and follows the rules of standard English grammar and usage. All these add up to a formal style.

Notice, too, that the writer does not include contractions or colloquial language. She does use the first-person pronoun *I* to place herself within the argument, which is not strictly formal, but is effective in this instance. This specific departure from strictly formal style is intentional and serves a rhetorical purpose.

The writer conveys a strong opinion through specific word choice, such as with the phrases "deeply disappointed," "lack of leadership," and "worst impacts"—all of which convey negative connotations and express her dissatisfaction with events.

Question

How does style affect the way a reader receives an argument?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Style can be used to appeal to a reader. For example, a formal style can enable a reader to take an argument seriously because the writer presents the information in a way that emphasizes logic over emotion.

Style

Argumentative Writing and Tone

Opinions are subjective in that they are typically based on personal feelings or evaluations. An argumentative text, which presents reasons and evidence in support of an opinion, is, in turn, subjective. Even so, a writer can present supporting reasons and evidence using an **objective tone**. **Tone** is the attitude a writer takes toward the subject or audience. An objective tone establishes a serious, fact-based attitude toward the topic.

Think about tone as you read the following excerpt from "Climate change puts ocean at risk" by Vikki Spruill:

Source: Chris Hill. Shutterstock

Next, listen to this podcast to see how one writing instructor explains Spruill's use of tone:

Audio: An Objective Tone

▶   0:00 / 0:00   ━━━━━━━━━━━━━   🔊   ⋮

Question

What characteristics mark an objective tone?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: An objective tone is serious and fact-based. It does not include inflammatory language or overly emotional appeals.

Check-In

Use what you have learned about formal style and objective tone to answer the following questions.

Question 1

Can a claim be objective? Explain your answer.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: No. Claims, which are statements of opinion, are based on personal beliefs, so they are by nature subjective, not objective.

Question 2

Where in an argument should a writer strive for an objective tone?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: A writer should strive for an objective tone in the presentation of facts to support the claim.

Question 3

How can a writer's style impact an argument?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: By following the standard rules of English and choosing precise vocabulary, writers can construct arguments that readers will take seriously because the writer takes the topic seriously.

Need a little extra support?

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Practice

Read the facts regarding climate change to complete the activity.

- Scientists have proven that the rise in temperature in the past decade is a direct effect of human activity.

- The global temperature has risen 1.01ºC (33.8ºF) since 1880, the height of the Industrial Revolution.

- The ocean has absorbed around 90 percent of the heat Earth has gained in the past 50 years.

- The sea level has risen 4 inches in the past 30 years.

- Ways to halt climate change include energy efficiency, relying on renewable resources, conserving and protecting water, and preventing pollution to name a few.

Activity

Read the facts above. Use the information to create a claim for an argument. Then write one to two paragraphs in support of the claim. Be sure to maintain a formal style and objective tone as you support your claim with factual evidence.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The evidence is unquestionable: human activity is the cause of the global rise in temperature. In fact, the global temperature has risen 33.8ºF since 1880, when humans started using fossil fuels to run machinery during the Industrial Revolution. The ocean, which absorbs much of the heat gained, has suffered as a result. In turn, sea levels have risen 4 inches over the last three decades. Before further damage is done, nations need to cooperate to halt climate

change by subsidizing energy efficient appliances and cars, mandating moves to renewable energy sources, and legislating protection for water and land from industrial pollution.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I wrote a claim and supported it with factual evidence.

2. _____ I maintained a formal style.

3. _____ I maintained an objective tone.

4. _____ I chose advanced vocabulary and followed standard English grammar and usage.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will compare two examples of argumentative text focusing on style.

Key Words

- **formal style** – a style of writing in which the text structure and syntax are complex, the vocabulary level is advanced, and rules of grammar and usage are closely followed

- **style** – the way a writer tells a story or presents information; created through the use of word choice, syntax, descriptive techniques, and other literary devices

Style

Reading helps writers become skilled in their own work. Seeing how another writer accomplishes a task can provide important guidance. Looking at two or more passages provides a context for evaluation of a text. Comparing texts involves critical analysis and effective reasoning, which can help a writer see how particular characteristics, such as **style**, are established.

Comparing and Contrasting Arguments

To analyze and evaluate texts, a reader can compare and contrast. Comparing and contrasting requires a reader to use effective reasoning skills to draw conclusions about writers' choices in content, organization, and style.

First, a reader should identify the elements of each argumentative text, or its claim or claims, reasons, and evidence. Doing so provides a structure for comparison. Then, the reader can focus on specific characteristics, such as style and how it is established, as a point of comparison.

Read the excerpts from the introductory paragraphs of two argumentative texts:

Source: Fabio Formaggio. 123RF

Question

What is the first step in comparing and contrasting an argumentative text?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The first step in comparing and contrasting is identifying the basic elements and considering how they are similar and different.

Style

Establishing Points of Comparison

To better understand how a writer establishes style, a reader might use style as a point of comparison. Style is the way a writer presents information through word choice, sentence structure, descriptive techniques, and other literary devices. Style can be formal or informal, academic or conversational. Complex syntax and advanced vocabulary, along with a third-person point of view, are indicators of **formal style**. First-person pronouns, contractions, and colloquial language work together to convey an informal or conversational style. Knowing these features allows a reader to analyze and compare the specific elements that create style.

Consider the styles of each paragraph below:

The first paragraph features complex syntax and some advanced vocabulary, such as using the phrase "traumatic circumstances." However, it also features contractions such as *don't* and first-person pronouns such as *we,* as well as colloquial language including the phrases "don't get a shot" and "American Dream."

The second paragraph includes advanced vocabulary—such as the terms *amplified, buffer, capacity*—and features complex syntax. The writer adopts a third-person point of view, avoiding the use of first-person pronouns. Also, the writer avoids contractions.

From these details, a reader can reason effectively to determine that the first paragraph has a conversational style, while the second has a formal style. From there, the reader can determine which style is more convincing. If a writer is using the comparison to determine how to establish style, that writer can then choose which style to adopt and study how the writer or writers of the model text created it.

Question

What specific points of comparison should a reader make in focusing on style?

Sample answer: A reader should consider word choice, syntax, and pronoun usage.

Check-In

Read the following two claims. Use what you have learned about style and comparing texts to answer the questions below.

Claim 1: Cancel culture—refusing to support or interact with someone who has done something offensive—is a powerful way to convey one's disapproval; however, canceling a friend should not be used as a first line of response to their offensive behavior. When used as such, cancel culture becomes an offensive behavior in itself.

Claim 2: Imagine a time when you did or said something rude. You'd love to take it back, but you can't. How would you feel if the person you offended quit talking to you—permanently? Cancel culture sends a strong message, but sometimes the message is unwarranted. Talking it out, if possible, is a much better starting point for resolving a conflict.

Question 1

How are these claims similar, and how does each claim employ different styles??

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both claims essentially make the same point about the same topic: Cancel culture is a powerful tool that should be used as a last resort. Claim 1 has a formal style with advanced vocabulary and complex syntax. The writer approaches the topic from a third-person point of view. Claim 2, though it features complex syntax, has an informal style, addressing the audience as *you* and using contractions.

Question 2

How does the style of the writing impact your reaction to it?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The formal style makes me feel like I am about to learn something. It engages my intellect. The informal style draws me in, making the topic feel like it is personally important to my life.

Question 3

For what type of audiences might a writer best employ the two different styles in the claims?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The style of the first claim may work best for an academic essay for an explanatory or argumentative stance, while the style of the second claim may work best for a narrative piece or an informal debate.

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Practice

Read the following excerpts. Then use what you learned about comparing elements of style to complete the activities below.

Activity 1

In several paragraphs, compare and contrast these excerpts. Use effective reasoning to identify the style of each and discuss similarities and differences between the two. Support your conclusions with evidence from the texts.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both excerpts follow standard rules of grammar and usage and feature complex syntax. In addition, both use the pronouns *we* and *our* to engage readers and to promote specific action. That said, the two excerpts feature different styles.

Bridgeland and Raikes use a conversational style except when they provide statistical support. In sentences such as the one that begins "The campaign aims to achieve . . . ," the writers present information in a formal way, which subtly influences the reader to view the subject seriously. The conversational style shines through in the end when the writers state, "We owe it to our kids and our country. . . ." Here, Bridgeland and Raikes draw the reader in and use emotional language to provide a convincing call to action.

Spruill, on the other hand, uses a formal style and covers a scientific topic. Spruill presents specific details and uses advanced vocabulary, such as in the phrase "climate mitigation and adaptation measures." She also uses phrases such as "its inhabitants" instead of a colloquial "people who live here." The writer also carefully chooses the use of the pronoun *we* to encourage readers to join the campaign.

Activity 2

Rewrite each excerpt to use a different style—more formal for the first and more informal for the second. Provide a new title with your revision.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer:

Homelessness is a serious problem for American students.

More than 1.3 million students are homeless across the country. Groups including America's Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises, the Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness, and SchoolHouse Connection are leading the Education Leads Home campaign to work on this problem. Campaign goals are 90 percent high school graduation rate for all homeless students by 2030, a 60 percent post-secondary attainment rate by 2034, and equal rate of participation in quality early childhood programs for homeless children as their housed peers by 2026. Education Leads Home intends to spread best practices from places like Tukwila, Deer Park, and Virginia across the country; raise awareness of the importance of focusing on this population of students; and bring together a coalition of organizations and leaders to support homeless students.

The problem of climate change will soon boil over in the oceans.

This year, under the Government of Chile's miraculous leadership, COP25 focused on puzzling out ocean-based solutions to make the goals of the Paris Agreement real. They dubbed the effort "BlueCOP."

While BlueCOP's success is great, the failures of other nations to live up to the Paris Agreement are worse. This highlights that overall world leaders are not listening to the concerns of global citizens about the environment. If we can't all work together on saving the oceans, then the only thing we'll agree on is that we'll all miss how they used to be when it's too late.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activities by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I identified the style of each of the excerpts.

2. _____ I compared the two argumentative excerpts by noting the similarities and differences between the writers' styles.

3. _____ I reflected on the writers' style choices and their impacts.

4. _____ I rewrote passages to practice using different styles.

Conclusion

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will identify the points to be included in the concluding statement or section that align with and support the argument.

Key Words

- **argument** – a text that presents a position or opinion on an issue and supports that position with reasons and evidence

- **argumentative text** – a form of writing that presents a claim supported by logical reasons and relevant evidence

- **call to action** – a statement in which the writer of an argumentative text indicates what action or actions the audience should take

- **claim** – the writer's main point, position, or stance in an argumentative text; the idea the writer must support with evidence and reasoning

- **concluding statement** – the final section of an argumentative text in which the writer restates the claim, summarizes supporting points, and provides a call to action or underscores the significance of the claim

- **counterclaim** – an opposing argument or assertion

- **evidence** – facts, details, statistics, observations, or quotations from experts that support the claim or show why the claim is true or believable

- **rebuttal** – a statement that presents opposing evidence or reasoning

Conclusion

Source: LineTale. Shutterstock

Concluding Statement

When writers compose an **argumentative text**, they don't just want to express their views; they want to win an audience over to their side of an issue. Clarity and logic are crucial. So, to begin their **argument**, writers introduce their **claim**. Then, in the body of

the text, they provide several supporting points or reasons—usually one point per paragraph—and develop each with logical **reasons** and relevant **evidence**. To finish off their argument, writers need a **concluding statement** or section that reminds readers of the points they supported in the body of the text.

The purpose of the concluding statement is to leave readers with a clear understanding of the writer's position, why it's valid, why the issue matters, and what readers can do about it.

The following example of a concluding statement is from a text titled "Do you know where your trainers come from?" It shows how one writer concludes an argumentative text.

> It's time that all footwear companies supply information on where their products are made so that we can hold them accountable for ethical and fair labor practices. Many of the most popular sneaker brands are made in countries where labor is cheap—or sometimes even free, and in many places, working conditions are unhealthy. Workers labor long hours without breaks and are exposed to toxic chemicals that go into the making of the shoes. While some argue that poor working conditions in other countries is not our problem to solve, we consumers support unfair and unsafe practices every time we rush to buy our favorite brands. The choice is clear: we must demand that U.S. footwear brands disclose details about where they are manufactured so that they can be held accountable for workers' health and safety.

The writer begins the concluding statement by restating a claim that footwear companies should be transparent about where their products are made so that working conditions are ethical and fair. Next, the writer recaps the reasons why the claim is valid—workers work long hours and are exposed to toxic chemicals. The writer briefly touches on a **counterclaim**—that working conditions in other countries isn't our

problem—but the writer only does that in order to offer a **rebuttal**: through our shopping we support these unfair and unsafe conditions. Finally, the writer closes with a **call to action**: consumers should require U.S. footwear companies to disclose exactly where they are made so that the companies can be held responsible for working conditions there.

Question 1

What is the purpose of the concluding statement?

Show Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The concluding statement sums up the argument by restating the claim and summarizing the key points or reasons that support it. It also lets the audience know what they can do about the issue or problem in a call to action.

Question 2

How does the writer of the example concluding statement emphasize why the issue should matter to readers?

Show Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The writer argues that American consumers support unfair and unsafe working conditions in other countries every time they shop.

How to Identify Points for a Concluding Statement

In order to create a strong concluding statement, the writer should include only points that align with and support the argument. Here are lists of what to include and not include in your conclusion.

Include:

- a restatement of the claim

- a summary of the key points or reasons that support the claim

- a statement that underscores why the issue is important

- a call to action that lets readers what they can do to help

Do NOT include:

- a detailed example, fact, or statistic that supports a key point in the body of the argument

- a new point or reason that wasn't already introduced in the body of the argument

- any information that does not align with or support the claim

- a counterclaim if it's not followed with a rebuttal that supports the writer's position

Question 3

Why wouldn't a writer want to include a detail in the concluding statement?

Show Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Details should be presented in the body of the text to support each idea or reason. They don't belong in the concluding statement because that section should be reserved for the big ideas or key "takeaway" for readers.

Check-In

Use what you've learned about how to identify the points to be included in the concluding statement to complete the activities below.

Activity 1

Activity 2

Explain your answer or answers to Activity 1 above.

Hide Answer

Sample answer: Most college graduates have a degree but no work experience: This point aligns with and supports the claim because it makes the point that colleges don't provide most undergraduates with work experience; that's one way to prepare young people for the labor market. Many classes that undergraduates are required to take are not relevant after college: This point also aligns with and supports the claim because it's arguing that the classes young people take aren't helpful. The other two points don't align with or support the claim because neither focuses on the things that four-year colleges are not doing well.

Activity 3

Read this claim and counterclaim.

Claim: Too much social media time harms teens.

Counterclaim: Social media is great for teens when it's used wisely.

If the writer arguing against too much social media time wants to briefly mention the counterclaim in their concluding statement, how could they do that effectively?

Show Answer

Sample answer: If the writer wants to mention the counterclaim in the concluding statement, then the writer should also sum up the rebuttal that they gave in the body of the text. For example, "While opponents argue that social media can be great when used wisely, the problem is that most teens don't use it wisely."

Activity 4

What types of ideas or information should a writer NOT include in their concluding statement, even if the information aligns with or supports the argument?

Sample answer: The writer should not introduce new points, reasons, or evidence that were not already discussed in the body of the text. Also, detailed information—such as examples, facts, or statistics—should not be included because it could make readers forget the key points that were argued and supported earlier in the text.

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Practice

Review the outline for an argumentative text on fracking and read the two versions of possible concluding statements. Consider which is more effective and why.

Background: Fracking, short for "hydraulic fracturing," refers to the process of drilling into shale rock and blasting into the hole with a mix of water, sand, and chemicals. The pressure releases gas and oil trapped inside the rock.

Claim: Fracking should be banned in the U.S. because it's too damaging to the environment.

1. Fracking could contribute to dangerous earthquakes.
   a. When fluid is injected into the Earth at high pressure, it can cause dozens of earth tremors or tiny "earthquakes."
   b. Many small tremors can trigger larger quakes.
2. Fracking harms the environment.
   a. It uses huge amounts of water that has to be carried by trucks to the site. Environmental impacts include air pollution, noise pollution, damage to roads.
   b. Water that flows back after blasting can contaminate water supplies.
3. Allowing companies to extract fossil fuels through fracking keeps us from investing more in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind energy.
   a. Companies are getting wealthy from fracking.
   b. Future generations will pay the price for not switching to green energy sooner.
4. Counterclaim: Those who support fracking argue that it's better than relying on foreign oil. Rebuttal: But overreliance on fossil fuels has already

led to too much environmental devastation. It needs to be stopped.

Concluding Statement: Version #1

Fracking is a means of extracting gas and oil from shale rock. It's an alternative to the drilling that companies do on land and offshore. It's an ineffective and potentially damaging technology that the government should regulate in order to protect the environment. If the government ensures that fracking only takes place in limited locations, then it can help prevent the environmental destruction that comes from fracking.

Concluding Statement: Version #2

Fracking should be banned in the U.S. because it's too damaging to the environment. Not only could fracking contribute to dangerous earthquakes, but it is already polluting our air and water. The worst thing about fracking is that for the sake of short-term financial gain, companies are selling out future generations. We, as a country, need to commit to switching to renewable energy sources. Contact your state and federal legislators and urge them to ban fracking before it's too late.

Activity

Write a paragraph in which you explain which concluding statement is more effective. Consider which points in each version align with and support the argument and should be included in the concluding statement.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Version #2 is more effective than Version #1. Version #2 aligns with and supports the argument developed in the outline. Version #2 makes that argument clear by restating the claim in the first sentence; summing up the supporting points/reasons; and providing a call to action—contacting legislators and urging them to ban fracking. Version #1 includes too much information that

doesn't align with or support the argument. The first two sentences align with the argument, but they don't support the argument in any way. There is no evidence in the outline to support the idea that fracking is inefficient. Finally, the claim is to ban fracking, so regulating it or keeping it limited to certain locations doesn't support the argument.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I compared two versions of a concluding statement for an argumentative text.

2. _____ I explained which concluding statement was more effective based on how well the points aligned with and supported the argument.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will write a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Key Words

- **argument** – a text that presents a position or opinion on an issue and supports that position with reasons and evidence

- **argumentative text** – a form of writing that presents a claim supported by logical reasons and relevant evidence

- **call to action** – a statement in which the writer of an argumentative text indicates what action or actions the audience should take

- **claim** – the writer's main point, position, or stance in an argumentative text; the idea the writer must support with evidence and reasoning

- **concession** – a writer's admission that a counterclaim is valid

- **concluding statement** – the final section of an argumentative text in which the writer restates the claim, summarizes supporting points, and provides a call to action or underscores the significance of the claim

- **counterclaim** – an opposing argument or assertion

- **evidence** – facts, details, statistics, observations, or quotations from experts that support the claim or show why the claim is true or believable

- **rebuttal** – a statement that presents opposing evidence or reasoning

Conclusion

Concluding Statement

When writers compose an **argumentative text**, they need a **concluding statement** that sums up the **argument** they developed in the body of the text and leaves readers with a clear sense of what's at stake and what they should do if they agree with the logic of the writer's argument.

The body of the argumentative text is where the writer does the heavy lifting of arguing their position. Each paragraph or section should focus on a key point or reason why their **claim**, or position on an issue, is valid. For each point, the writer presents **evidence** in the form of facts, details, statistics, observations, or quotations from experts to show why the claim is logical and valid.

The writer may also address at least one **counterclaim**—a claim that the opponents would make against the claim the writer is arguing. A writer has two options for handling a counterclaim. Either a writer can offer a **rebuttal**, or a statement or argument that explains why the counterclaim is illogical, incorrect, or insignificant, or the writer can offer a **concession**. A concession is an acknowledgment that the counterclaim has some value. Most writers will only concede minor points briefly before returning to their own argument. For example:

1. Claim: Cats make better pets than dogs.

2. Counterclaim: Cats aren't any fun to take on walks.

3. Concession and rebuttal: While it's true that most cats don't enjoy taking long walks, vigorous exercise is overrated. Cats are at their best when they are draped across your lap as you watch a movie.

Once a writer has thoroughly supported their argument, it's time to wrap up with a strong concluding statement.

Writing a Strong Concluding Statement

Depending on the length of the text, the concluding statement or section may be one or more paragraphs. A concluding statement should:

- restate the claim of the argumentative text

- summarize the key points or reasons that support the claim

- make the significance of the issue clear to readers

- make a **call to action** that let's readers know what they can do to support the claim that was argued

The concluding statement needs to align with and support the argument that was presented in the text. It's important that the writer:

- avoid introducing new evidence

- avoid making any new counterclaims, especially if they aren't rebutted

- avoid including details; the writer should stick to the main points so that they will stick in the reader's mind long after reading

Question

Why might it be helpful to make a minor concession in a concluding statement?

Show Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: It can be helpful because it's a way for the writer to acknowledge that there are those who have other views, and it's also an opportunity to remind them that the writer's views are more valid in comparison.

Check-In

Use what you've learned about how to write a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports an argument to answer the questions.

Question 1

Why does an argumentative text need a strong concluding statement or section?

Show Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: The writer of an argumentative text wants to make a strong impression on readers in order to effect some kind of change.

Question 2

Which of the following does a writer need to include in an effective concluding statement? You can choose more than one.

a. a few pieces of evidence to win over those who are not yet convinced

b. a summary of the key points or reasons why the claim is valid

c. a counterclaim that gives equal time to opponents' views

d. a restatement of the claim that the writer made in the introduction

Show Answer
Hide Answer

b. a summary of the key points or reasons why the claim is valid; d. a restatement of the claim that the writer made in the introduction

Question 3

Why is it important that the concluding statement in an argumentative text align with the ideas in the text?

Sample answer: The concluding statement needs to follow from the reasons and evidence presented in the body of the text in order to strengthen the argument; any ideas that don't align with the argument will weaken it. The closing statement is the writer's last opportunity to show how the logic of their reasoning and the strength of their evidence are enough to justify their claim.

Need a little extra support?

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Practice

Source: c0llinsphoto. Shutterstock

Activity

Read a student's response to the following prompt: Write an argumentative text in which you argue for or against more high-rise housing development. Then draw on what you have learned about how to write a concluding statement to create a strong conclusion.

In most cities these days, there is a lack of affordable housing. Since most of the land at the heart of cities has already been taken, the only viable option is to build up instead of building horizontally. High-density housing includes tall apartment buildings with at least several apartments on each floor. Building high-rises will create more affordable housing, reduce traffic and residents' carbon footprints, and improve the quality of life for city residents.

When there is not enough housing for everyone who wants to live in a city, rental prices go up. When the housing supply increases, rental prices come down. So building high-density housing will make housing more affordable in our cities. This may also help alleviate the homeless crisis, which arises in large part from the lack of affordable housing.

Many people want to live near where they work rather than having to commute long distances. High-density housing will enable more housing to be built in the centers of cities, where many jobs are. With more housing available to urban dwellers, people will be able to get to work by walking, biking, and taking public transportation. This in turn will reduce people's carbon footprint, or the amount of greenhouse gasses that each individual produces.

Opponents fear that skyscrapers will bring more congestion and traffic to cities, but if people live close to where they work, they will be encouraged to leave their cars at home and opt for carbon-friendly forms of transportation. Also, high-density housing can and should include parking garages, so there will be more rather than fewer parking options.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I wrote a strong concluding statement that followed from and supported the argument.

2. _____ I included convincing supporting points and reasons.

3. _____ I supported each key point or reason with logical reasoning, examples, and evidence in the form of facts or statistics.

Writing Argumentative Text Apply

Writing Argumentative Text: Apply

Objective

In this section, you will apply skills learned throughout the unit.

Show What You Know

In this unit, you focused on the elements of an argumentative text and the techniques an author uses to present, develop, and support an argument. As you did, you pursued these learning goals:

- Anticipate an audience's knowledge level and concerns when writing an argument.

- Compare introductory sections/opening statements from two or more argumentative texts.

- Write an opening statement for an argumentative text.

- Organize clear relationships among reasoning, evidence, claims, and counterclaims.

- Determine criteria for strengths and limitations of evidence for claims and counterclaims, and develop that evidence fairly when writing an argument.

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization and punctuation, including observing hyphenation conventions.

- Resolve issues of complex or contested usage, consulting references.

- Manipulate phrases and clauses in sentences, paying attention to agreements between pronouns and their antecedents, the logical use of tenses, and a variety of sentence patterns.

- Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text and create cohesion.

- Clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts through word choice, transitions and syntax.

- Maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline when writing an argument.

- Compare two examples of argumentative text focusing on style.

- Identify the points to be included in the concluding statement or section that follow from, align with, and support the argument.

Now, you will have an opportunity to show what you have accomplished and apply what you have learned about argumentative writing to the text you selected at the beginning of the unit. If you haven't already done so, take time now to finish reading the text.

Then, spend a few minutes discussing the text and the author's approach with your Learning Coach, using the suggested talking points below as a guide. Notice that the activities are open-ended—there are no "correct" answers—but they will help you to focus on the text as you get ready to apply the learning goals you have mastered in this unit.

- Rate your overall enjoyment of the text from 1 (did not like) to 5 (liked a lot). Tell your Learning Coach what you enjoyed and did not enjoy about the text.

- Consider an argument the author makes about a particular topic and evaluate the credibility of their claim and supporting reasoning and evidence. Did they

convince you that their position was valid? If so, tell why; if not, tell what they might have done differently to change your mind.

- Briefly research the author of the text to find out more about their background and viewpoint. How might that information inform the particular position the author takes on the topic? How does it help you better understand their position?

- Comment on the reading experience—how closely did the author's writing meet your expectations? How did reading the text support your understanding of argumentative text and how to craft it?

Finally, access the text you have read, review your notes, and get ready to answer the questions that follow.

Writing Argumentative Text: Apply

Show What You Know

Assess your grasp of the learning goals from this unit by completing the activities that follow.

Question 1

Evaluate the introduction to the text you chose to read in this unit. How well does the author use the introduction to anticipate the knowledge level and potential concerns of the audience? How clearly does the author introduce a topic and state a relevant claim? Then, compare the introduction of this text to that of another argumentative text you have read. Which introduction more effectively supports the particular author's claim while engaging the audience?

Question 2

Describe how the author structures the reasoning, evidence, and counterclaims they used to develop a particular claim in an objective way. How does this organization help the author clarify the relationships between the reasoning and evidence as well as between the claim and counterclaim?

Question 3

Choose one paragraph of the text that contains examples of the author's use of varied phrases and clauses within sentences, and explain how these sentences reflect the author's voice and affect your understanding of the argument.

Question 4

Read the sentences from a student's argumentative text on the effect of sunscreen on coral reefs.

Many beachgoers are concerned about the dangers of ultraviolet (UV) radiation on human skin, and so they rely on the use of sunscreens with UV filters to protect themselves. However, these chemicals spill into the ocean water and can kill coral reefs. In fact, scientists estimate that ten percent of the world's coral reefs are threatened by sunscreen products. And the problem is worsening. Because the world's heaviest tourist areas are cities, beach towns and other communities near coral reefs, sunscreens that contain these UV filters should be banned in these areas.

Consulting a reference as needed, locate two examples of usage that others might contest. Then, decide whether you would keep the examples as is or revise them.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Some might contest the use of the coordinating conjunction *and* to begin the sentence "And the problem is worsening." This is often done to emphasize ideas, but because that's not necessary in this case, I would combine the sentences to read as follows: "In fact, scientists estimate that ten percent of the world's coral reefs are threatened by sunscreen products, and the problem is worsening." In the last sentence, some people might say that a comma should be added after the phrase "beach towns," since it is the second-to-last item in a list. Given that the use of this Oxford comma is typical in the U.S., I would add the comma after the word *towns.*

Question 5

Rewrite the paragraph below by manipulating phrases and clauses to add variety and clarify meaning.

In the early years of the twentieth century, as the modern art movement took hold in America, American pop artists pushed the boundaries of art even further away than before. This time, it went too far away. Pop art is not art at all. In fact, it amounts to nothing more than plagiarism. Andy Warhol copied

soup cans and Roy Lichtenstein copied comics, and he called them his own. A work of art should be an original creation.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In the early years of the twentieth century, as the modern art movement took hold in America, American pop artists pushed the boundaries of art further than ever before. These artists went too far. Pop art is not art at all: it amounts to nothing more than plagiarism. Andy Warhol copied soup cans, and Roy Lichtenstein copied comics. They called their works art; however, there was nothing original about them. Yet a work of art should be an original creation.

Question 6

Select the interactive to show what you know about developing counterclaims.

Question 7

Consider the style used by the author of the unit text, including the level of formality, the use of complex vocabulary and syntax, and so on. Then, compare the author's style to that of another argumentative text you have read, either as part of this unit or elsewhere. As part of your comparison, draw a conclusion about which author's style better aligned to their purpose and the content of their argument.

Question 8

Evaluate how the author of the unit text concluded their argument by commenting on how closely the ideas in their concluding statement or section align to and support the argument laid out in the text.

Self-Assess

How did you do? If you feel like you're ready, move on to Try This. If you need more practice, use this chart to review the sections mentioned.

Missed Activity

Activity Missed	Section to Review
1	Introducing an Argument
2	Organization
3	Sentence Construction
4	Writing Conventions
5	Sentence Construction
6	Development
7	Style
8	Conclusion

Writing Argumentative Text: Apply

Try This

Use the unit text to provide a written response to these activities.

Activity 1

Write a paragraph evaluating the author's use of transitions and syntax to link reasoning and evidence throughout the text. Note specific examples of word choice and explain how they help the author create a cohesive argument.

Activity 2

In an essay of 350 to 500 words, assess the validity of the claims and counterclaims made by the author of the unit text by analyzing the strengths and limitations of the evidence provided to support those claims and counterclaims. As part of your response, be sure to summarize the argument the author makes. Then, use your analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the text in conveying a clear view of both sides of the argument. Include specific quotations and evidence from the text to support your analysis.

Organize your essay clearly, and follow the conventions of English grammar, capitalization, hyphenation, and punctuation while maintaining a formal style and objective tone.

Self-Assess

Use the rubric to decide whether your writing fulfills the standards of ideas/purpose; analysis; organization; comprehension; and grammar, conventions, and spelling.

Writing Argumentative Text Apply Rubric

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 1

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 1

Think about a time you wanted to learn more about a hot topic to help you figure out how you feel. Surely you encountered plenty of arguments for and against it. Which ones did you find most convincing? What elements did the writers include that made the arguments so convincing?

Argumentative text is created to persuade readers to adopt a stance or take an action. It is perhaps the most challenging form of writing because it requires you to conduct research and inform readers while focusing on persuading them. When constructing an argumentative text, you need to gather pertinent information and organize that information in a way that supports your argument *and* convinces readers to adopt your stance.

In this portfolio, you will write an argumentative text in response to this prompt:

When you hear the word *endangered,* you most likely think of endangered species; however, animals and plants are not the only things endangered. Cultures, languages, traditions, and governments can be endangered too. Write an argumentative essay for or against making the effort to save something considered endangered.

Portfolio Introduction

Over the next three lessons, you will write an Argumentative Text Portfolio. You will have three days to address the learning goals and complete the portfolio.

Type of Writing Definition

Argumentative text is created to persuade readers to adopt a stance or take an action. Argumentative writing requires research to inform, as well as persuade, readers.

Portfolio Topic

Write an argumentative essay for or against making the effort to save something considered endangered (or an alternate topic as assigned by your teacher).

Planning Document

Download the following document to your computer. Use this document to plan your portfolio.

Argumentative Text Planner

Rubric

Use this rubric to ensure you are meeting all the goals of the portfolio.

Example Portfolio

Use this example of a completed portfolio as a guide for your writing. The portfolio topic this student chose was endangered languages should be preserved.

The Importance of Saving Endangered Languages

Argumentative Text Portfolio 1 Continued

Watch the video for some ideas on approaching this prompt.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Endangered Species Transcript

The lessons in this portfolio will support you as you plan and research, draft, revise, edit, and publish your work. They will help you focus your writing, organize information, and refine your presentation.

As you develop your argumentative text, you will see how another student, Saanvi Jai, has completed the process before you. Read Saanvi's argumentative text now and think about how she shares information in a way that supports her argument.

Pro Tip

Throughout this portfolio, you'll be studying Saanvi's approach to the argumentative writing process. You may want to download or print her argumentative text so that you can take notes or highlight portions that help you understand a specific element or technique.

The Importance of Saving Endangered Languages

The Importance of Saving Endangered Languages

by Saanvi Jai

Language is our heritage. It expresses who we are, and as such, it is crucial to understanding our culture as a people. Our stories and our traditions are transmitted through language. The words we speak reveal our values and beliefs, our humor and habits, our knowledge, and our world views. Loss of language means loss of identity, although hundreds of languages have gone extinct and hundreds more are endangered. To preserve the heritage of people who speak different languages and the cultural knowledge these languages impart, it is crucial that we recognize their value as living documents and make targeted efforts to ensure their survival.

Unfortunately, languages are threatened all over the world and continue to die at an alarming rate. According to the UNESCO Project "Atlas of World Languages in Danger," 230 languages went extinct between 1950 and 2010, and a third of the remaining languages have fewer than 1,000 speakers left. In North America alone, the problem is pervasive. Why does this happen?

In short, languages are threatened in large part because communities who speak in their native tongue, or the first language they were exposed to, are under pressure to assimilate into American culture, and that means speaking English. The government, schools, and the media all support that initiative. Likewise, government policies, educational programs, books, television shows, magazines, and movies are mainly in English. Jobs require English, and the better you can communicate in English, the better your chances for success. For young people especially, English means opportunity. As a result, many choose to adopt American ways and improve their English literacy. Over time, native languages die with the older generations, and the younger generations grow further and further from their traditions.

For one example, the Cherokee people, who were once prevalent in what is now the southwestern United States, are now the Cherokee Nation, based in Oklahoma. They

have their own language that is becoming extinct largely due to a government policy that took Cherokee children from their Cherokee-speaking homes and kept them from learning the language to assimilate Cherokee children more easily. Now, members of the Cherokee Nation are working to keep the language alive by using it as much as possible among native speakers and by teaching it to new people with both in-person and online classes. Still, the number of Cherokee speakers is far smaller than it should be, and the language is still not out of danger of becoming extinct.

Languages are living documents, and with the right initiatives, we can keep them alive. There have been instances in the world where a language has been revived on a large scale. Hebrew was virtually extinct from the 4th century BCE to the 1800s, for example, but now it is in widespread use in many Jewish communities. The Irish language, also known as Gaelic, fell out of use in Ireland and Wales, but national initiatives have increased the number of speakers considerably even though English is the primary language. Of course, critics say these wide-ranging plans require a tremendous amount of effort and a use of resources—resources that many scholars believe would be better spent on English literacy, citing its practical use in the workplace. Therein lies the heart of the opposition to saving dying languages. Languages, they say, are used to communicate, and when they're no longer needed for that purpose, they fall naturally out of use.

As it should be obvious, this failure to recognize the value of languages comes from people who judge the significance of language only in terms of economic value. In the United States, some argue English helps the country advance. Some scholars go so far as to claim that efforts to save endangered languages hinder national progress. They say that too many languages cause divisions within the group, and that a national language is essential for people to work together as a nation. Letting other languages die and focusing on English literacy, they claim, is crucial to achievement. In truth, this kind of thinking is a pressure tactic. It requires people to abandon their first language and conform. What critics don't want to talk about is the fact that this type of nationalistic thinking robs the world of valuable knowledge and robs entire groups of an important part of their identity. This dangerous and

backward perspective fails to recognize the value of a multilingual, multicultural country. More than that, it confuses historical culture with sentimentalism.

I believe in saving languages; allowing them to die feels like watching a ship carrying the cultural relics of a nation sink beneath the sea and disappear in the depths. However, I don't believe governments have to be involved in saving them. For one reason, I don't believe that governments should decide which languages are worth saving and which are not. All languages are worth saving if we value history and culture. Furthermore, I don't believe that we have to implement languages on a large scale in order to keep them alive. Instead, I advocate for the people whose languages are threatened with extinction to become active in preserving them. Who other than the people witnessing the disappearance of their native language are more invested in preventing their traditions from fading away and being replaced? A lot can be done on the community level. According to the Linguistic Society of America, Māori communities in New Zealand established nursery schools where elders taught and conducted classes in Māori. In California, some groups use language apprentices to keep their language alive—younger people in the communities learn the language under the tutelage of an elder.

Of importance, communities should not have to struggle alone to revive their languages. In fact, their goal is significant enough to warrant outside support. Cultural organizations can help. Linguists can help, too. Volunteers can teach the language, they can create dictionaries, and they can raise funds and implement programs for study and language practice. Making audiotapes and videotapes of speakers helps preserve knowledge of the languages. *National Geographic* explains that Daniel Bögre Udell, who speaks four languages, along with Frederico Andrade, who speaks five, have launched a hugely significant project that involves documenting and cataloging every language in existence today. They have already recorded languages that were previously unknown to the world and nearly extinct. The project, called Wikitongues, uses volunteers from over 40 countries, and the catalog will eventually be available to researchers through the Library of Congress.

These ambitious initiatives are practical and proven ways of reviving languages without federal assistance and without the goal of implementing the languages on a wide scale. The goal of preserving languages supports no political agenda; on the contrary, it simply preserves cultural history. "When humanity loses a language, we also lose the potential for greater diversity in art, music, literature and oral traditions," said Bögre Udell of Wikitongues. "Would Cervantes have written the same stories had he been forced to write in a language other than Spanish? Would the music of Beyoncé be the same in a language other than English?" he asks. Of course not. Language is a living object worthy of survival. All languages must be valued enough to be kept alive, or much will be lost in translation.

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Activity 1

Rate Saanvi's argument by giving it one, two, or three stars. (1 star = NOT convinced; 2 stars = I can see why the topic is important; 3 stars = Convinced!) Write one or two sentences that explain your rating.

Using the Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

There is so much to consider as you plan, write, revise, and edit an argumentative text. You might wonder, "How do I even get started?" The portfolio rubric, or checklist, will guide you through the process by helping you make sure your text has all the elements of solid argumentative writing.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

Activity 2

Note any questions you have about the rubric. If they are not answered as you go through the lessons, consult your Learning Coach for clarification.

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will gather information from texts and other research on a topic or issue to prepare for writing.

Key Words

- **claim** – the writer's main point, position, or stance; the idea the writer must support with evidence and reasoning

- **primary source** – an account or record reflecting a direct, firsthand experience

- **secondary source** – an article, report, etc. that is based on firsthand accounts

- **synthesize** – to combine information, facts, and ideas to build an analysis or interpretation

- **thesis statement** – a concise summary of the central idea of a text

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 1

When writing to an argumentative prompt, you may not have an established stance on the topic. In fact, this may be the first time you consider the topic presented in the prompt.

As part of this portfolio, you will argue for or against making the effort to save something endangered. First, you need to identify the "something" you will write about, and then you need to consider how you feel about trying to save it. In order to do that, you'll need to do some preliminary investigating. Then, you can dig deeper into the research you'll use to support your **claim**—the statement of your position on the chosen topic. You will eventually develop a main claim or **thesis statement** that includes your claim and summarizes the central idea of your argument.

Finding Sources
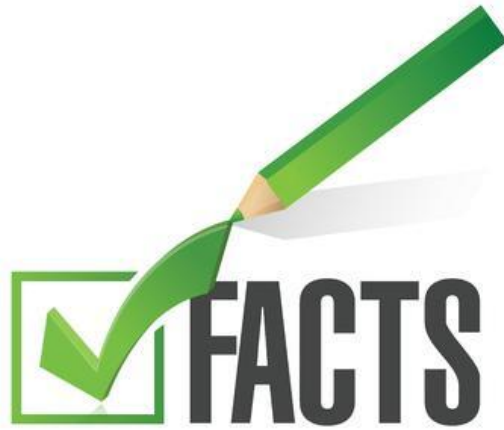
To write a convincing argument, you will need to build it on logical reasons and factual evidence. Facts, that is verifiable information, make a strong foundation for an argument.

When conducting research, it is important to use reliable sources of information as your evidence. A reliable source is one that can be trusted to have true and credible information. With online sources, look for government and educational sites or reputable publications. You should always verify information by finding at least two reputable sources that agree on a given fact.

In addition to finding credible, reliable sources, your research should include both **primary sources** and **secondary sources**. Primary sources are reliable because they are the original, firsthand accounts of an event. These records are created by people who actually participated in or witnessed the event. Primary sources might include eyewitness testimonies, letters, diaries, official reports, and speeches. Secondary sources are based on firsthand accounts of an event but are created by people who did not personally experience the event. Examples of secondary sources are textbooks, biographies, and encyclopedias.

Often, when researching a debatable topic, the sources you discover will be arguing a stance. That means, the author will have an intrinsic **bias.** Even so, the sources can still

present information that will be helpful in building your argument. In such cases, it is important to take the author's persuasive purpose into consideration and convey that purpose to your own audience. Evaluate the reliability and relevance of your sources to gain a deeper insight into the topic you are investigating.

When gathering information, draw from both primary and secondary sources, such as books, newspaper articles, interviews, correspondence, blog posts, or online articles. For an argumentative text, you might conduct your own research through interviews, surveys, or observations. Including a variety of sources shows that you have done extensive research and understand your topic.

Pro Tip

As you learn more about your topic, you will not only be working to build your argument but also to fully develop your own stance. Rather than just summarizing your research, you will synthesize the information you collect to expand your understanding of your topic. You will likely have an idea of how you feel about your chosen topic, but that may change because of your synthesis. You will likely have an idea of how you feel about your chosen topic, but that may change. If so, pause to organize your ideas, revise your claim, and redirect your research as needed.

Saanvi included information from a variety of sources in her article. To establish the "endangered" status of languages, Saanvi references the United Nations' publication UNESCO Project "Atlas of World Languages in Danger." She mentions a variety of other reputable primary and secondary sources as she develops her argument for saving languages. This variety of sources conveys to readers that Saanvi has established a well-informed position. She isn't arguing based on emotion, but on solid information and factual evidence-based on her synthesis of the sources.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 1

Choosing Information and Taking Notes

After finding sources, the next step is to choose the information needed to develop your argument. Remember to consider the audience as you select the information to include. Consider the background they need and what biases they might have as you build your catalog of sources.

Note that you'll need to cite information that supports your claim *and* information that supports counterclaims. To make an argument convincing, you'll need to address the opposition. It's your job as the writer to explain the limitations of the counterclaims in the context of your argument.

Source: Syda Productions. Shutterstock

Now, it's time to take notes. You might take notes on notecards or on a word-processing program. Whatever medium you choose, be sure to include the publication information. You will need the author, the title, the publisher, and the date of publication. You will also need to copy the web address (URL) if you used an online source. This will go in your Works Cited list.

After you record the publication information, jot down the most important ideas from the source. Be sure to use quotation marks around ideas directly picked up from the text.

Look at this notecard Saanvi created during her research:

UNESCO Project. "Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger." United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2011.

- "2,473 Endangered languages listed in UNESCO's Atlas"

- 230 languages went extinct between 1950 and publication date

- one third of remaining have fewer than 1,000 speakers

Question

What makes a source reliable?

Sample answer: A source is reliable if it can be trusted to contain true and credible information. A respected publisher, an expert in the field, or information that can be verified indicates reliability.

Check-In

Reread Saanvi's argumentative text, "The Importance of Saving Endangered Languages." Pay attention to the sources she references directly in the argument. Then, complete the activity.

The Importance of Saving Endangered Languages

by Saanvi Jai

Language is our heritage. It expresses who we are, and as such, it is crucial to understanding our culture as a people. Our stories and our traditions are transmitted through language. The words we speak reveal our values and beliefs, our humor and habits, our knowledge, and our world views. Loss of language means loss of identity, although hundreds of languages have gone extinct and hundreds more are endangered. To preserve the heritage of people who speak different languages and the cultural knowledge these languages impart, it is crucial that we recognize their value as living documents and make targeted efforts to ensure their survival.

Unfortunately, languages are threatened all over the world and continue to die at an alarming rate. According to the UNESCO Project "Atlas of World Languages in Danger," 230 languages went extinct between 1950 and 2010, and a third of the remaining languages have fewer than 1,000 speakers left. In North America alone, the problem is pervasive. Why does this happen?

In short, languages are threatened in large part because communities who speak in their native tongue, or the first language they were exposed to, are under pressure to assimilate into American culture, and that means speaking English. The government, schools, and the media all support that initiative. Likewise, government policies, educational programs, books, television shows, magazines, and movies are mainly in English. Jobs require English, and the better you can communicate in English, the better your chances for success. For young people especially, English means

opportunity. As a result, many choose to adopt American ways and improve their English literacy. Over time, native languages die with the older generations, and the younger generations grow further and further from their traditions.

For one example, the Cherokee people, who were once prevalent in what is now the southwestern United States, are now the Cherokee Nation, based in Oklahoma. They have their own language that is becoming extinct largely due to a government policy that took Cherokee children from their Cherokee-speaking homes and kept them from learning the language to assimilate Cherokee children more easily. Now, members of the Cherokee Nation are working to keep the language alive by using it as much as possible among native speakers and by teaching it to new people with both in-person and online classes. Still, the number of Cherokee speakers is far smaller than it should be, and the language is still not out of danger of becoming extinct.

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national language is essential for people to work together as a nation. Letting other languages die and focusing on English literacy, they claim, is crucial to achievement. In truth, this kind of thinking is a pressure tactic. It requires people to abandon their first language and conform. What critics don't want to talk about is the fact that this type of nationalistic thinking robs the world of valuable knowledge and robs entire groups of an important part of their identity. This dangerous and backward perspective fails to recognize the value of a multilingual, multicultural country. More than that, it confuses historical culture with sentimentalism.

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documenting and cataloging every language in existence today. They have already recorded languages that were previously unknown to the world and nearly extinct. The project, called Wikitongues, uses volunteers from over 40 countries, and the catalog will eventually be available to researchers through the Library of Congress. These ambitious initiatives are practical and proven ways of reviving languages without federal assistance and without the goal of implementing the languages on a wide scale. The goal of preserving languages supports no political agenda; on the contrary, it simply preserves cultural history. "When humanity loses a language, we also lose the potential for greater diversity in art, music, literature and oral traditions," said Bögre Udell of Wikitongues. "Would Cervantes have written the same stories had he been forced to write in a language other than Spanish? Would the music of Beyoncé be the same in a language other than English?" he asks. Of course not. Language is a living object worthy of survival. All languages must be valued enough to be kept alive, or much will be lost in translation.

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Pro Tip

Consider printing or pasting Saanvi's argument into a text document so you can consult the text directly as you complete the activity.

The Importance of Saving Endangered Languages

Activity

Identify three sources Saanvi uses and explain what makes the sources reliable.

Sample answer: Saanvi references information from the Linguistic Society of America, an authoritative group whose expertise is language. She also refers to *National Geographic,* a reputable magazine, and quotes Bögre Udell, one of the founders of Wikitongues, a major language cataloging project. Bögre Udell speaks four languages, and his project will be available through the Library of Congress, which gives it authority.

Need a little extra support?

Get Help Here

Practice

Activity

It's time to gather information from texts and other research to prepare for writing your argument in response to the following prompt:

When you hear the word *endangered,* you most likely think of endangered species; however, animals and plants are not the only things endangered. Cultures, languages, traditions, and governments can be endangered too. Write an argumentative essay for or against making the effort to save something considered endangered.

Record the ideas and information you gather on notecards, a page in your notebook, or on a computer.

Follow these steps:

1. First, determine the endangered "thing" you will write about. Conduct a preliminary investigation to learn about the topic and establish your stance.

2. Draft a claim based on your preliminary research. Be sure to make your stance clear in the claim. Keep in mind that you will likely revise the claim and expand it to a main claim or thesis statement after gathering information.

3. Identify several reliable and pertinent primary and secondary sources of information pertaining to your topic. Evaluate the sources by identifying the author or publisher, the publication date, and the purpose of the writing. Be sure to find information in support of and in opposition to your claim.

4. Gather information about your topic from these sources. Be sure that you identify accurate, relevant, and sufficient information, and then synthesize all of the sources you will use to write about your topic. Take notes on notecards, in your notebook, or on a computer. Be sure to include the title and publication information of the source. Use quotation marks when you pick up information directly.

Pro Tip

Are you having trouble finding information in support of counterclaims? If so, revisit your claim. Is it debatable? If not, you'll need to revise it. Using Saanvi's argument as an example, few people would argue that languages aren't important. However, they might argue that government money could be better spent on things other than preserving an endangered language.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I chose as a topic something that is considered endangered and established my stance through preliminary investigation.

2. _____ I drafted a claim based on my chosen topic and stance.

3. _____ I identified, evaluated, and synthesized several relevant and reliable sources for my argument.

4. _____ I gathered information in support of my claim and in support of opposing claims.

5. _____ I recorded accurate, relevant, and sufficient facts and ideas related to my claim and topic from a variety of print and digital sources.

Then, review the full Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric to prepare for the next steps.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will use a concept map or outline to organize claims/counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

Key Words

- **concept map** – a visual diagram a writer uses to organize ideas before writing a text
- **outline** – a plan a writer uses to organize ideas before writing a text

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 1

Now that you have chosen a topic, established a stance, and gathered the necessary information, you are ready to make a plan. You can use a variety of tools to help you organize your ideas and see the overall picture that your argument will create.

Concept Mapping and Outlining
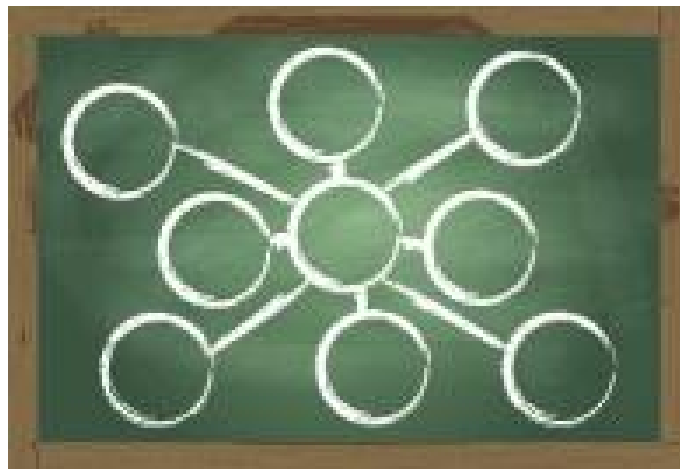
Source: kstudija. Shutterstock

A **concept map**, or concept web, is a visual diagram that a writer can create to organize ideas and evidence before writing. An **outline** is a written plan for an essay that functions like a roadmap of ideas. These tools will help you logically organize support for your central claim through reasons and evidence.

Concept mapping and outlining provide a preliminary guide for organization. When making your plan using one of these tools, you will notice "holes" in your argument that require more evidence. You will also notice if you have provided too much evidence for a particular reason or claim, which can bog down your argument.

Concept maps can help you arrange your facts and ideas in a visual picture that makes sense to you. Doing so can help you see how your argument develops, with reasons and evidence supporting the claim and building to a logical conclusion. This leads the reader to adopt your stance. When organizing the paragraphs of your essay, you can refer to a concept map to visualize how each element connects to your main claim or thesis.

Most argumentative essays are made up of multiple elements, such as a claim, counterclaim, reasons, and evidence. These are structured into an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. An outline can be used to plan out each of these elements and their organization. Use Roman numerals for the main elements and indented letters and numbers for information that goes under each category. Notice how each subset of evidence has at least two entries. Though your outline may not be perfectly balanced with evidence, avoid extremely uneven distribution of evidence. For example, you don't want to have one piece of evidence in one paragraph and five in another.

I. Introduction

    A. Provide background information

    B. Explain why the topic is important

    C. Present main claim or thesis and establish its significance

II. Body

    A. First Claim/Reason

        1. Evidence

        2. Evidence

    B. Second Claim/Reason

        1. Evidence

        2. Evidence

    C. Counterclaim/Refutation

        1. Evidence

        2. Evidence

III. Conclusion

    A. Wrap up the argument

    B. Restate main claim or thesis with new insights gained from the evidence presented in the body

    C. Call to action

Notice how the outline includes an entry for background information in the introduction and lists a single counterclaim in the last body paragraph. As you create your own outline, keep in mind that these elements are not fixed in these places. If it makes more sense to distinguish the claim from a counterclaim in the introduction, do so. If you want to address more than one counterclaim, do so. If the amount of background information needed is too much for the introductory paragraph, give it a paragraph of its own.

Remember, concept maps and outlines are tools you can use as part of the planning process. Either one can be customized to fit the needs of the text.

As you watch the video, pay attention to how Saanvi uses a concept map to organize her argumentative essay. Consider how you can follow a similar process as you plan for your argumentative essay. Before watching the video, click to view Saanvi's concept map, also known as a concept web.

Concept Web Answers

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Peer Model Video Transcript

Question 1

What should the writer of an argumentative essay hope to achieve?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: An argument should investigate a topic, establish a position, and collect, evaluate, and present reasons and evidence in support of a position. The writer should refute opposing positions.

Question 2

What are the main elements of an argument?

Reveal Answer

claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence

Question 3

Where in the concept map does Saanvi record her main claim? Why?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: She records it in the center circle. The other information and claims all connect directly to it. It is the focus of her argument.

As part of this portfolio, you will have your own argumentative text planner to help you plan your writing. Use it to organize your ideas in support of an argument about preserving something endangered.

Check-In

Read this part of the outline Saanvi made while planning her argumentative text on the importance of saving endangered languages. Notice how she plans to establish the significance of her main claim or thesis in her introduction in order to expand on and deepen her argument. Think about where Saanvi can clearly distinguish her claim from her counterclaim. You will also draft a thesis based on your claim. You will also draft a thesis based on your claim. Answer the questions below.

Title: The Importance of Saving Endangered Languages

Main Claim or Thesis statement: To preserve the heritage of people who speak different languages and the cultural knowledge these languages impart, it is crucial that we recognize their value as living documents and make targeted efforts to ensure their survival.

I. Introduction

    A. Why is language important?

        1. Heritage and culture

        2. Loss of language = loss of identity

    B. Claim: Endangered languages should be preserved (expand to thesis)

II. Body

    A. Background information about topic

        1. Stats about threatened/extinct languages

        2. UNESCO source

    B. Pressure to assimilate to American culture threatens languages

        1. Cherokee example

C. We can keep languages alive with right initiatives

    1. Hebrew

    2. Gaelic

D. Counterclaim—if they aren't used, not needed; too costly to save

    1. Refute previous counterclaim—languages more than economic value

Question 1

What do you notice about Saanvi's outline? How does this work like a roadmap for writing?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer:

Sample answer: The outline features notations instead of complete sentences. She jots down ideas, makes connections among them, and organizes evidence under each body paragraph. This outline guides her through her argument, helping her connect ideas from one point to the next and find a good place to distinguish her claim from her counterclaim.

Question 2

What information does Saanvi add to her main claim to develop a controlling thesis and establish its significance for her argument?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: She moves from a simple statement of her stance that "languages should be preserved" to explain the importance of languages (heritage and cultural knowledge they impart) and to explain how to address saving them (recognizing their value and making targeted efforts to help).

Need a little extra support?

Get Help Here

Practice

Activity

Now, it's your turn to plan an argumentative text. Access the concept web below or create an outline to organize your ideas and the information you've gathered.

Concept Web

Decide which tool you would like to use to organize your thoughts about the value of saving something that is endangered. You might use a concept web to get all your points down on paper and then create a more structured plan using an outline. Or you might just use one or the other. You can use the text planner to guide you. In either case, you will need to include the following elements:

- the claim and a draft of your main claim or thesis statement

- ideas for your introduction

- needed background information

- reasons and evidence separated into paragraphs

- counterclaims and refutations

Pro Tip

Using a concept web allows you to see all the elements of your argument at a glance. Once you complete the web, take the opportunity to fine-tune your organizational plan and structure your argument in the most effective way. Ask yourself these questions:

- How can I establish the significance of my claim in my introduction?

- Where can I make a clear distinction between my claim and the counterclaim?

- Where will the rebuttal of a counterargument have the most impact?

- Do I want to share the strongest reason first or save it for last?

Need a little extra support? Take a look at Saanvi's completed concept web and think about how it helped her plan her argumentative text.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I used a concept web or outline to organize information.

2. _____ I included a rough draft of a main claim or thesis statement in my concept map or outline.

3. _____ I included ideas for the introduction and background information in my concept map or outline.

4. _____ I included my main reasons and supporting evidence in my concept map or outline.

5. _____ I included counterclaims clearly differentiated from my claim and planned rebuttal in my concept map or outline.

Then, review the full Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric to prepare for what you will do next.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 2

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.

Key Words

- **bias** – an inclination toward a particular point of view

- **citation** – a reference to a source used to inform a piece of writing

- **style guide** – a manual containing rules for style and formatting specific to a field or area of study

- **text structure** – the arrangement of ideas in a text

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 2

Solve Problems

Now that you have your ideas down on paper and a general sense of how you will organize information, it's time to fine-tune your planning. In this lesson, you will consider your audience and use your critical-thinking skills to solve problems and choose the most logical organization for your argument.

Analyzing Audience

Source: Shutterstock

In argumentative writing more than any other, the audience matters most. Because an argument is written with the purpose of persuading an audience, analyzing the audience to understand their **biases** and needs is crucial. In this lesson, you are responding to this prompt:

When you hear the word *endangered,* you most likely think of endangered species; however, animals and plants are not the only things endangered. Cultures, languages, traditions, and governments can be endangered, too. Write an argumentative essay for or against making the effort to save something considered endangered.

As a student writer responding to a prompt for an argumentative essay, you know your primary audience is your Learning Coach and your peers. Your writing will be graded as part of this portfolio. If you choose to publish your essay on an open online forum, the audience will also include readers interested in your topic or visiting that site.

To analyze intended audience, ask yourself these questions:

- How much do your readers know about your topic?

- Are your readers for, against, or undecided about your stance?

Answering the first question will guide you to include the appropriate amount of background information. Answering the second will help you structure your argument in a way that is most convincing.

Question

Why is analyzing the audience so important to argumentative writing?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Because the purpose of argumentative writing is to persuade readers, it is important to tailor the writing to meet the needs of the audience. Doing so will make the writing more convincing.

Sometimes you won't know your audience's stance on the topic or their level of background knowledge. You can use your problem-solving skills to conduct research on the audience or to do a quick survey of your peers to determine the common feeling toward your topic.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 2

Choosing and Developing Text Structure

You have one more thing to plan before you start the actual drafting of your argument. You must decide on **text structure**—the way you will organize your argument. To begin, think about the strength of your reasons and decide whether you want to start with the strongest reason and work to the conclusion or build to the strongest as your conclusion. There are a variety of ways to structure an argument, and the choice often depends on the audience's general stance.

Argument Structure for Types of Audience

Organizational Pattern	Works best for . . .
Begin with the opposing argument and structure your argument as refutation of it, explaining why your stance is better.	Skeptical audience Undecided audience
Begin with your stance and argument and then address a main counterargument to end.	Supportive audience
Introduce and refute a counterclaim in each paragraph of your argument. In essence, build	Skeptical audience Undecided audience

your stance as a response to critics.

If you are unsure about your audience's stance, use your judgment to choose the best organization for the information you have gathered. Once you decide how you will structure the argument, you can revisit your text planner or outline to make notes or adjustments.

Now, you are ready to write. Don't waste your time trying to achieve perfection in the first round. The goal for now is to produce clear and coherent writing that readers can understand.

Thinking about how to frame ideas in a logical structure can help a writer organize their approach to producing clear and coherent writing. If you hit a wall, call upon your problem-solving skills. You can revisit your outline or planner, take a break from writing, reread what you have written thus far, or skip the difficult part and come back to it later. As you write, remember that the purpose is to persuade your audience, and one of the best ways to do so is to communicate clearly.

Question

Why is it important to begin with a counterargument or address multiple counterarguments when writing for a skeptical audience?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: If the audience is skeptical, those counterarguments are very likely beliefs held by readers. By addressing them to begin with and identifying multiple opposing points, a writer shows that they have taken the opposition into consideration and understand the topic deeply.

Revisit your argumentative text planner or outline as frequently as needed. Adjust it based on your decisions regarding structure before you begin your draft. Then, use it as a guide while you are drafting.

Style Guides for Writing and Editing
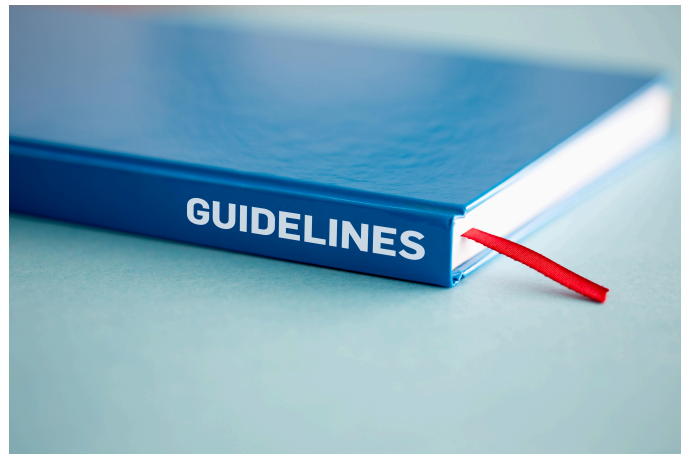
Source: garagestock / Shutterstock

When you write in a formal setting, such as for school or work, you must follow the rules and guidelines for that setting. These rules and guidelines can be found in a **style guide**. A style guide is a critical tool in academic writing. It covers aspects such as proper punctuation, **citation**, and formatting. You might be wondering why writers should follow the rules in a style guide. The reason is that it helps the reader and the wider audience. A common style and format create consistency across writers and their writing. Readers, in turn, know what to expect. They can follow along and find important parts of the work with ease.

Most academic or career fields require writers to use a style guide. However, there are several guides, and knowing which one to use can be tricky. You can find out by consulting an authority in the field, such as a teacher, publisher, or other professional.

Read the chart to learn about a few of the style guides writers use in various fields. This list does not include all style guides.

Style Guide by Field

Style Guide	Fields Used
Associated Press (AP)	news and media
American Psychological Association (APA)	publishing, media, and academia
American Medical Association (AMA)	nursing and medicine
American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME)	mechanical engineering
Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS)	publishing, media, and academia
Modern Language Association (MLA)	publishing, media, and academia

How to Use a Style Guide

Using a style guide as you write and edit will help you create consistent and clear work. To begin, choose the style guide appropriate to your work. For your argumentative text, you will likely use the Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) guide.

Once you have chosen the most appropriate style guide, spend time getting familiar with its rules and guidelines. The best way to do this is by acquiring a copy of the style

guide. Many guides can be found in print at local libraries or bookstores. Some have digital versions available online.

Additionally, there are many online and print resources created to help writers understand these guides. If you struggle to understand how to use the guide you have chosen, or if you cannot obtain a copy, you may consult such resources. While these sources don't include everything in each guide, some provide extensive summaries of what they contain.

One great resource for free information on APA, CMOS, and MLA style is the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue. To find others, simply do a safe search online for information about your chosen style guide.

Once you are familiar with the rules covered in the style guide, you will have a better understanding of how they apply to the writing and editing process. Style guides commonly contain standards for the following components:

- writing style

- citation format

- organization of content

- page layout and formatting

- publication requirements by field

- rules for abbreviations, punctuation, footnotes, and other technical aspects

The style guide is a useful tool during every step in the writing process. Soon, you will start your rough draft of your argumentative text. To prepare for this step, simply spend time reading your chosen guide. Try finding examples of published texts online that follow the same style guide you are using. These examples will show you how writers use the guidelines in their work.

When it is time to begin writing, you can follow these steps to ensure success:

1. First, plan out each section of your text as recommended by your style guide.

2. Next, use the style guide as a reference for style and formatting as you write.

3. Then, use the style guide to help you arrange sections, format pages, and create a citation reference.

4. Finally, edit your text using the rules in the guide for punctuation and other technical and functional aspects.

It might seem challenging at first, but in time, you will become comfortable using a style guide to write and edit your work. Style guides are not meant to be memorized, and they often change from edition to edition. Rather, they are meant to be a reference you check often as you work. With a style guide, you join a community of writers bound by the same guidelines, creating work that is clear, consistent, and easy to read.

Check-In

Read the notes Saanvi made as the final part of planning.

Task: write argumentative essay about saving something endangered

Purpose: to persuade my audience to accept my stance that languages are worth saving

Audience: Learning Coach, peers, and online readers

How much do they know about the topic? Probably will need a good bit of background information—not a common topic.

Are they for, against, undecided? Not sure, so I will write like they are undecided.

Structure: Start with background and establish the source of the problem; follow with counterarguments and rebuttals; end with a strong case for my own stance.

Question 1

What are two ways that Saanvi takes her audience into consideration as she determines the structure to use?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: She notes that the audience will likely need a good bit of background information, so she structures the argument to address this concern. She goes so far as to establish the source of the problem to prove the importance and her stance on the issue.

Question 2

Why does Saanvi choose to begin with a counterclaim and end with her own stance? Think about how she used problem-solving skills to choose this organization.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: She doesn't know how her audience feels about the topic, so she has a problem to solve. She decides to organize the argument as if the audience is undecided. Also, mentioning the counterclaim after establishing the source of the problem makes the writing flow.

Need a little extra support?

Get Help Here

Practice

Activity

Read through your text planner and make sure that your main claim or thesis statement, paragraph ideas, and supporting evidence fit the task, purpose, and audience for the argumentative text you will write. Add notes about your audience and the text structure you have chosen if you haven't already done so.

Concept Web

Using your completed planner or outline as well as your chosen style guide, write your first draft. Make sure you have access to the notes you took during research. You will need to reference these as you write.

Your focus today is to communicate the ideas you have gathered clearly in order to support your main claim and convince your audience. Keep in mind that this draft is a starting point. There will be time to refine your ideas as the portfolio continues.

If you encounter problems with organization or ideas, stop to consider the best possible solution. You might need to do a little more research or adjust your plan as the writing begins.

Pro Tip

As you write, periodically revisit your main claim or thesis statement. If the body of your text takes a different direction, consider whether you need to adjust the reasons and evidence or adjust the main claim or thesis. Keep in mind that the thesis you have written is a rough draft. It's normal to have to revise your thesis as you develop your ideas. Likewise, you may use the style guide more during the revision and editing stages. However, keep it as a reference while you plan and draft to make sure you have included all the necessary sections in your argumentative text.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I developed a writing plan that is appropriate to the task.

2. _____ I organized my text ideas to fit the purpose.

3. _____ I analyzed the audience to determine how to structure the text.

4. _____ I used my planner or outline as well as an appropriate style guide to guide my writing.

5. _____ I produced clear and coherent writing.

Then, review the full Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric to prepare for what you will do next.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

Key Words

- **cohesion** – the effective linking of ideas and sections within a text

- **commentary** – an expression of opinion or an explanation

- **rhetorical device** – a stylistic or literary technique or language used to convey a point or convince an audience

- **syntax** – the arrangement of words and phrases in sentences

- **transition** – a word or phrase that connects ideas

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 2

As you have learned, claims, reasons, and evidence are what make an argument. You have written your rough draft and presented your claim, reasons, and evidence. You have addressed counterclaims. Now, you need to make sure that your readers can easily understand the relationships among these elements of your argument.

Clarifying Relationships and Creating Cohesion

Source: billdayone. Shutterstock

To build a solid argument, you need to establish the relationships among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence clearly. Remember that your job as a writer is to explain your thinking in a way that readers can follow. How do you accomplish this?

Transitions, words or phrases that connect ideas, are one answer. Look at how Saanvi added transitions in the third paragraph of her essay to establish the relationships among ideas. Each pin identifies a transition. There are three pins.

In short, languages are threatened in large part because communities who speak in their native tongue, or the first language they were exposed to, are under pressure to assimilate into American culture, and that means speaking English. The government, schools, and the media all support that initiative. **(1)** Likewise, government policies, educational programs, books, television shows, magazines, and movies are mainly in English. Jobs require English, and the better you can communicate in English, the better your chances for success. For young people especially, English means opportunity. **(2)** As a result, many choose to adopt American ways and improve their English literacy. **(3)** Over time, native languages die with the older generations, and the younger generations grow further and further from their traditions.

Another way to clarify relationships is to vary **syntax** and use clauses to link ideas. Take a closer look at the first two sentences:

In short, languages are threatened in large part because communities who speak in their native tongue, or the first language they were exposed to, are under pressure to

assimilate into American culture, **and that means speaking English**. The government, schools, and the media all support **that initiative.**

The first sentence ends with the clause *and that means speaking English.* Saanvi refers back to *that initiative* in the next sentence, clarifying what exactly the government, schools, and the media support. This clause and description show the reader that the first sentence states her claim and the second supports it with evidence.

As you revisit your rough draft, look for ways to use transitions, clauses, and varied syntax to establish the relationships between claims, reasons, and evidence.

When you introduce a counterclaim, be sure to set it up as such using the same techniques. Read these sentences from Saanvi's rough draft and compare them to the revision:

Rough Draft: The Irish language, also known as Gaelic, fell out of use in Ireland and Wales, but national initiatives have increased the number of speakers considerably even though English is the primary language. These wide-ranging plans require a tremendous amount of effort and a use of resources—resources that many scholars believe would be better spent on English literacy, citing its practical use in the workplace.

Revision: The Irish language, also known as Gaelic, fell out of use in Ireland and Wales, but national initiatives have increased the number of speakers considerably even though English is the primary language. **Of course, critics say** these wide-ranging plans require a tremendous amount of effort and a use of resources—resources that many scholars believe would be better spent on English literacy, citing its practical use in the workplace.

By beginning the sentence with *Of course, critics say,* Saanvi makes it clear that she is stating an opposing stance, not providing further evidence for her own argument. Saanvi's use of the phrase "of course" is an example of **commentary**. Commentary is when writers offer explanations or opinions about the ideas and information they are presenting. Saanvi's commentary here conveys her opinion that "of course" the critics' argument is obvious. Without commentary, an argumentative text like Saanvi's would simply be a series of facts and details. As the writer of the argument, Saanvi not only presents the information but also interprets it through her commentary, with the aim of influencing the reader's understanding.

Notice also Saanvi's repetition of the word *resources.* Repetition of this sort is one kind of **rhetorical device** used in argumentative writing. In this case, it helps Saanvi stress the point that the critics of Irish-language teaching are concerned about the use of too many resources. Another useful rhetorical device is parallelism—the use of grammatically similar phrases or sentences to make points striking and persuasive. Writers use parallelism (also called parallel syntax and parallel construction) to show balance among ideas of equal importance. It is primarily a stylistic device, but it can make one's writing pleasing and memorable.

In addition to clarifying the relationships among the elements of an argument, transitional words, phrases, and clauses, along with varied syntax, rhetorical devices, and commentary should be used to link the major sections of the argument to create **cohesion**.

Watch this video to see how Saanvi improves her rough draft by practicing these techniques.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Question 1

How does Saanvi use words, phrases, clauses, and syntax to create cohesion and link the major parts of her argument? Provide one example.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Saanvi uses these techniques to prepare readers for each new upcoming idea. For example, she uses a question at the end of the second paragraph to prepare readers for her change in focus from presenting background information to her claim about the impact of the pressure to assimilate to American culture.

Question 2

How does Saanvi use transitional words and phrases to clarify relationships among ideas?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Saanvi shows the relationships among ideas by using such transitions as *for example* to show that the evidence that follows supports the reason or claim that precedes it.

As you start to revise your rough draft, look for ideas that are not clearly connected. Use words, phrases, clauses, and varied syntax, including parallelism, to clarify connections and create cohesion throughout the essay. Use commentary to shape your readers' understanding of the ideas and information you present.

Check-In

Think about how words, phrases, clauses, varied syntax, rhetorical devices, and commentary can clarify relationships among ideas and create cohesion. Read the excerpt from Saanvi's essay before and after she made some revisions. This excerpt follows her argument that communities, not governments, should hold responsibility for saving their languages.

Sanvi's Essay Before and After Revision

Before	After
Communities should not have to struggle alone to revive their languages. Their goal is significant enough to warrant outside support. Cultural organizations can help. Linguists can help. Volunteers can teach the language, create dictionaries, raise funds, and implement programs for study and language practice.	Of importance, communities should not have to struggle alone to revive their languages. In fact, their goal is significant enough to warrant outside support. Cultural organizations can help. Linguists can help too. Volunteers can teach the language, they can create dictionaries, and they can raise funds and implement programs for study and language practice.

Activity

Identify transitions and syntax that Saanvi changed and explain how these changes clarify ideas and create cohesion.

Sample answer: Saanvi began the paragraph with the phrase *Of importance* to emphasize that even though she believes communities should be responsible for saving languages, they should not have to do it alone. With the use of this phrase, she offers some commentary, letting readers know she thinks this idea is crucial. She adds the word *too* to clarify that linguists can work alongside cultural organizations. Finally, she improves the parallel construction of the final sentence. Into the string of verb phrases, she inserts "they can" to emphasize all that the volunteers do. By repeating "they can," she connects the volunteers to their actions more clearly.

Need a little extra support?

Get Help Here

Practice

Activity

Return to your rough draft and read each paragraph, noting where you need to clarify the relationships among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. Do so by using the following:

- transitions

- clauses

- varied syntax

- rhetorical devices (e.g., repetition and parallelism)

- commentary

Reread your rough draft, focusing on the connections among paragraphs. Does the end of one paragraph prepare the reader for what is to come in the next paragraph? Use words, phrases, clauses, varied syntax, rhetorical devices, and commentary to link the major sections of the text together and shape readers' understanding.

You might want to revisit your text planner or outline to clarify connections for yourself before choosing the best transitions to add to your writing.

Keep the overall flow of your text in mind as you revise the wording of your draft. When you provide evidence, make sure you use transitions and syntax to link it to your reasons or claims.

Pro Tip

Transitions are important and can clarify relationships, but not every sentence needs a transitional word or phrase. Often, varying the syntax or combining sentences using dependent clauses will be more effective in clarifying ideas and creating cohesion.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I used transitional words and phrases to clarify relationships among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

2. _____ I used words, phrases, clauses, varied syntax, rhetorical devices, and commentary to link major sections of the text and shape readers' understanding.

3. _____ I used a variety of techniques to create cohesion throughout my argument.

Then, review the full Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric to prepare for what you will do next.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will vary syntax for effect.

Key Words

- **syntax** – the arrangement of words and phrases in sentences

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 2

Communicate Clearly

Source: MJTH. Shutterstock

Have you ever heard of the saying, "It's not so much *what* you say but *how* you say it"? **Syntax** is just that—how you arrange words and phrases to create well-formed sentences. To keep readers interested and communicate your ideas clearly, you'll need to vary syntax in your argument. Read on to learn how.

Varying Sentence Length

One of the most common methods of varying sentences is by using sentences of different lengths. By presenting ideas using a combination of short and long sentences, you hold a reader's attention and avoid sounding monotonous. Read Saanvi's introduction from her rough draft:

Language is our heritage. It expresses who we are. It is crucial to understanding our culture as a people. Our stories and our traditions are transmitted through language. The words we speak reveal our values and beliefs. They share our humor and habits. They convey our knowledge and our world views. Loss of language means loss of identity. Hundreds of languages have gone extinct and hundreds more are endangered. To preserve the heritage of people who speak different languages and the cultural knowledge these languages impart, it is crucial that we recognize their value as living documents and make targeted efforts to ensure their survival.

What do you notice about the syntax? Saanvi has used several short sentences in the introduction. The ideas are all connected, but the way she writes makes them feel choppy and repetitive. Saanvi noticed the same issue and made revisions to vary sentence length. Now, read her revision:

Language is our heritage. It expresses who we are, and as such, it is crucial to understanding our culture as a people. Our stories and our traditions are transmitted through language. The words we speak reveal our values and beliefs, our humor and habits, our knowledge, and our world views. Loss of language means loss of identity, although hundreds of languages have gone extinct and hundreds more are endangered. To preserve the heritage of people who speak different languages and

the cultural knowledge these languages impart, it is crucial that we recognize their value as living documents and make targeted efforts to ensure their survival.

What's different about the revision? In this version, Saanvi uses a variety of sentence lengths. She creates varied syntax across sentences by combining the original sentences in different ways. She has communicated ideas clearly through this varied structure.

Question 1

How does Saanvi's revision affect the way you react to her introduction?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Her revision makes the introduction much more interesting and easier to read. It also helps connect ideas and make the writing flow together.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 2

Varying Sentence Structure

Often varying sentence length results in varying sentence structure, but not always. If your structure is repetitive, your writing will sound repetitive—and uninteresting. Look at this excerpt from Saanvi's rough draft:

> The Cherokee people are now the Cherokee Nation. They are based in Oklahoma. They have their own language. It is becoming extinct. A government policy took Cherokee children from their Cherokee-speaking homes.

This version features simple sentences of similar lengths and sounds very choppy. Again, the same order of subject-verb-object makes for monotonous reading. Notice how Saanvi uses compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences in her revision:

> For one example, the Cherokee people, who were once prevalent in what is now the southwestern United States, are now the Cherokee Nation, based in Oklahoma. They have their own language that is becoming extinct largely due to a government policy that took Cherokee children from their Cherokee-speaking homes and kept them from learning the language to assimilate Cherokee children more easily.

Using a variety of sentence structures allows the writer to communicate their ideas clearly and make specific connections among those ideas. The variety of sentence

structure also makes the writing engaging by changing the sentence beginnings and order of elements to avoid repetition.

Question

What can you achieve by varying sentence structure?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: You can eliminate choppy, short sentences and repetitive beginnings by varying sentence structure. It makes writing engaging and flow naturally.

As you revise your argumentative text, look for opportunities to vary sentence length and structure in order to communicate your ideas clearly.

Check-In

Read the paragraph from Saanvi's argumentative essay and then answer the question.

Unfortunately, languages are threatened all over the world and continue to die at an alarming rate. According to the UNESCO Project "Atlas of World Languages in Danger," 230 languages went extinct between 1950 and 2010, and a third of the remaining languages have fewer than 1,000 speakers left. In North America alone, the problem is pervasive. Why does this happen?

Question

How does Saanvi vary sentence structure and length to communicate ideas clearly in this revised paragraph?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Saanvi uses two long sentences followed by two short sentences to vary length and make the writing sound interesting. She also uses transitional words and phrases to begin sentences instead of always using a subject-verb-object structure. She includes simple and compound sentences to vary structure.

Need a little extra support?

Get Help Here

Practice

Activity

Return to your argumentative text. By this point, you should have incorporated transitional words and phrases and used clauses and syntax to connect ideas and clarify relationships. Now, read through your draft and look for repetitive sentence structures and lengths. Once you identify an issue, consider the best way to revise it. You might do the following:

- combine simple sentences to avoid repetition

- break up too many long sentences

- vary structure by adding clauses to sentences

- rearrange the order of words and phrases within sentences

Remember that not every sentence should start with a subject. Introduce sentences with clauses or transitional words and phrases, or reverse the order of elements by putting an object first.

Focus on the goal of clearly communicating your ideas and building a cohesive argument as you implement your revisions.

Pro Tip

Repetition and parallel structures are not always bad things to be avoided. Sometimes you will want to use repetition in your argument to make a point. By repeating a key word or phrase, you can emphasize its importance and create a strong rhythm with your words.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I varied sentence length.

2. _____ I varied sentence structure.

3. _____ I rearranged words and phrases within sentences to achieve varied syntax.

Then, review the full Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric to prepare for what you will do next.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 3

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will strengthen writing by revising and editing.

Key Words

- **edit** – change writing to correct mistakes in language, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

- **revise** – review a piece of writing and make changes that improve its organization, clarity, and interest level

- **text structure** – the arrangement of ideas in a text

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 3

Now that you have completed your rough draft and done some preliminary revisions to vary syntax and clarify relationships, you will begin revising in earnest. You will review and **revise** the overall **text structure** to make sure ideas flow logically to create a strong argument. Then, you'll **edit** your work. That is, you will correct any errors in usage, grammar, punctuation, or spelling.

Keep in mind that the writing process is recursive, not linear. So, you might plan, draft, do a few revisions, go back to drafting, revise again, and so on. That said, it is important to set aside time after the entire draft is down on paper to look at the big picture in order to prepare for publishing.

Source: Elnur. Shutterstock

Revising

When revising, you will review and improve the content, structure, and style of your writing. Revising ensures that your argumentative text is true to your task, purpose, and audience.

It is important to wait a while after drafting before you jump into revising. Every time you go through your essay, you become more familiar with the text and entrenched in your own thought processes. This break from writing allows you the distance needed to put yourself in a reader's position.

Also, be sure to give yourself enough time for a proper revision. A thorough revision is going to take more than a few minutes.

You use this checklist to guide your revision:

- Start BIG. Read the paper in its entirety and take time to reflect. Would you be convinced of your argument? Did anything strike you as missing or off topic?

- Reread the beginning and review your introduction. Determine whether it provides a strong preview of your argument. Do you need to add or alter information to prepare your audience for the reasons and evidence that follow?

- Reread your main claim or thesis with a critical eye. Do you fully support your thesis in the body of your essay? Do you need to adjust it based on the information you gathered?

- With your main claim or thesis and introduction in mind, review your overall organization. Highlight the main idea of each paragraph and determine if the ideas build on each another. Should one reason or claim be moved before or after another to strengthen the argument?

- As you evaluate and revise organization, also evaluate the content. Are all your claims or reasons relevant to the thesis? Did you address counterclaims? Is your evidence relevant?

- Reflect on your claims and reasons. Do you provide enough evidence to support your ideas? Do you provide *too much* evidence? At this point, you might need to add or delete information to strengthen your argument.

- Reread your conclusion. Check that it restates your claim in an innovative way and leaves readers with a new insight, a call to action, or a question to ponder.

Question

Why is it important to take time between drafting and revising—and even during the revision process?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The time away provides the writer with enough distance from the text to see it as a reader will. As a result, the writer can see gaps in logic and possible confusion caused by lacking information, for example.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 3

Source: Lamai Prasitsuwan. Shutterstock

Editing

The goal of editing is to make sure your paper is error-free. You will be checking usage, grammar, spelling, punctuation, formality, and capitalization. An error-free essay allows your readers to focus on your argument and not on mistakes in the writing.

Again, it is important to step away from your writing for at least an hour before endeavoring to edit. After a break, you should reread your essay more than once to look

for the following errors:

- commonly confused and misspelled words

- overused or repeated words in the same sentence or paragraph

- run-on sentences and sentence fragments

- missing citations for your sources

- incorrect capitalization of proper nouns, such as names of people, places, and companies

- grammatical mistakes

- errors in punctuation, such as placement of commas, quotation marks, and hyphens

You can use reference materials such as an online dictionary, thesaurus, or grammar website to figure out how to correct common errors. Digital tools such as spelling and grammar checkers can help you identify errors, but they may not pick up on issues such as misspelled names, incorrect verb tenses, or sentences with words in the wrong order. Consider using this checklist as you edit:

Language

- Are a variety of words, phrases, and clauses used to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between ideas?

- Are words chosen well? Are the words clear and precise? Do words such as *should, must,* and *need* help make the claim strong and persuasive?

- Is formal language used throughout? Did you avoid slang words and colloquial language? Is the writing appropriate for a professional audience?

Grammar

- Are sentences complete? Does the writing avoid sentence fragments or run-on sentences?

- Does the writing use correct verb tenses and verb forms?

- Do subjects and verbs agree in number and form?

- Do pronouns clearly refer back to and agree with an antecedent?

Punctuation and Capitalization

- Are the names of people and places capitalized correctly?

- Are introductory clauses followed by a comma?

- Are semicolons used to link closely related independent clauses?

Spelling

- Are the names of people and places capitalized correctly?

- Are homophones (words that sound like other words, but have different meanings and spellings) used and spelled correctly?

- Have you given your text a final read-through in addition to using a spell checker?

Sources

- Are sources cited correctly?

Question

Why shouldn't you rely on digital spelling and grammar checkers when you edit?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Digital spelling and grammar checkers may find many errors but may not find all of them. Errors such as the correct spelling of proper nouns may not be caught by a spelling checker. Errors in verb usage may not be caught by a grammar checker.

Check-In

Use what you have learned about revising and editing to complete the chart in the interactive below.

Need a little extra support?

Get Help Here

Practice

Activity

Now it's time to revise and edit your argumentative text. Use the checklists for revising and editing to complete your work. You can make annotations on your paper or on the guidelines as you complete the process.

Revising Checklist: Argumentative Text

After you have made revisions and edits to your argumentative text, read it through carefully one last time to make sure you didn't introduce any new errors.

Pro Tip

Consider printing out the guidelines to keep you focused as you revise and edit your work. You might add to the guidelines to remind yourself of specific issues to address as you revise and edit your essay.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I followed the Revising Checklist to revise my argument.
2. _____ I strengthened my writing by revising content, organization, and logic.
3. _____ I followed the Editing Checklist to edit my argument.
4. _____ I strengthened my writing by editing to correct errors in language, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Then, review the full Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric to prepare for what you will do next.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will spell correctly.

Key Words

- **homophone** – a word that is similar to another word in pronunciation but different in spelling and meaning

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 3

Source: Rawpixel.com. Shutterstock

So far you have written and revised your draft of an argumentative essay. You have learned how to edit your work, looking for errors in usage, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. In this lesson, you will learn more about how to identify and correct common spelling errors.

Errors in a written text distract readers from the writer's ideas. Misspelled words make readers pause, interrupting their focus on the argument. As your writing skills advance,

so does your vocabulary. Also, your assignments will often involve specialized vocabulary. These changes can add up to more opportunities for spelling mistakes. As noted in the editing guidelines from the previous lesson, digital spell checking is important to use but should not be your only edit for correct spelling. This lesson will cover some of the major types of spelling errors that people tend to make. Remembering these spelling rules and patterns can help you spell correctly.

Spelling Patterns and Exceptions

In the past, you may have learned certain common English spelling patterns, such as the saying "*i* before *e* except after *c*," change a *y* to an *i* when adding an ending, and double the consonant on single syllable words when adding an ending. These rules are meant to help you spell words correctly, but those rules do not apply 100% of the time. For example, *believe* is spelled with *i* before *e* and *perceive* is spelled with *e* before *i* because the letters appear after a *c*. This rule does not apply with words such as *weird* and *neighbor*. Both of these words have the *ei* combination without appearing after *c*. For this reason, it is important to double-check *ie/ei* words and to learn exceptions to certain spelling rules in English. Keep a running list of these exceptions to help you as you edit and revise.

Homophones

Aside from reviewing for common spelling patterns and exceptions, another spelling issue to pay attention to is **homophones**, or words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings. With homophones, it is important to make sure you are using the word with the correct meaning for the sentence. The homophone may have the incorrect meaning but be spelled correctly, so a spell checker may not catch this kind of error.

Below are some common homophones and sample sentences:

Homophones in Sentences

Homophones	Sample Sentences
it's – a contraction made of the words *it* and *is* *its* – a possessive form of *it*	*It's* nineteen degrees Fahrenheit outside. The dog lost *its* bone in the snow.
their – a possessive form of *they* *there* – a word that describes the position of something *they're* – a contraction made of the words *they* and *are*	The employees hung up *their* coats after going outside. The manager pointed toward the coat racks and said, "Put your coats over *there*." Rumor has it that *they're* going to get lunch for the whole staff.
waste – objects or other materials that are thrown away *waist* – the middle area of the body	Limiting the amount of *waste* we make will help the environment. He put a tape measure around the client's *waist* to get an accurate measurement for the alterations.
peak – highest point *peek* – to look *pique* – to increase interest	The climbers reached the *peak* of the mountain in time to see the sunset. They took a *peek* over the edge of the mountain to see how far they had climbed. They took pictures to *pique* their friends' interest in making this climb.

As you can see, the words sound the same, but their meanings are very different. Using the incorrect version of a homophone can change the meaning of the sentence. For

example, in addition to the words above, words like *complimentary* and *complementary* sound the same, but have very different meanings. *Complimentary* drinks are different from *complementary* drinks. *Complimentary* drinks are free drinks, but *complementary drinks* are drinks that complete the meal perfectly.

Be sure to read through your argumentative essay carefully to make sure that you did not misuse any easily confused words.

Question 1

What are some homophones that you used in your argumentative essay? How can you make sure that these words are correctly spelled?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: I use *its/it's* in my writing a lot. I can make sure that these words are spelled correctly by making sure that I am using *its* when using *it* as a possessive and *it's* when I want to use a contraction with *it* and *is*.

Proper Nouns

Proper nouns, such as the names of people, places, and companies, can be easily misspelled without being flagged by a spell check. As you are reviewing your argumentative essay, check the names of your sources against the source or check the names of places you reference by looking back at your sources or by searching the names online. Whichever proper nouns you use, verify that they are spelled correctly by checking a reference, such as the original source or a reputable online dictionary or encyclopedia.

If you have a proper noun that a spell checker marks as misspelled, then often there is an option to add the proper noun to the dictionary or to remember the word so it will not be flagged as a misspelling later.

Question 2

List two proper nouns used in your argumentative essay. How did you verify that these nouns were spelled correctly?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: I am writing about endangered cultures, so I want to make sure that I spell each culture's name correctly. I also reference an important scholar with an unusual name, so I checked her webpage and the source again to verify that I spelled her name correctly in my argumentative essay.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 3

Editing to Check for Spelling Errors

Reading through an essay to check for spelling mistakes and for unintentional word replacements is an important step when you edit. In addition to using a dictionary, you can search online for grammar resources that can help as well, especially when deciding which homophone to use.

Here are some additional tips to consider as you check for correct spelling:

- Keep a list of words you find challenging to spell. You might also include common homophones, newly acquired vocabulary, and domain-specific vocabulary on that list. Use your list as a checklist. When you encounter one of the words in your essay, compare it to the list to make sure that you spelled the word correctly in your essay.

- Make a list of proper nouns—names, places, companies, cultures—that you will repeatedly reference. Check against a reputable source and then check your list against all instances in your essay.

- Read your text backwards. Doing so makes you read each word, making it more likely you will identify errors.

- Hold a ruler or piece of paper under each line as you read. This focuses your reading on a single line of text, improving your chances of identifying spelling errors.

- If you have been editing on a computer screen, print out your essay and read it with a red pen in hand. If you have been working on a paper copy, read it on a computer screen or upload it to an electronic device to read it on screen.

Question

Which of the suggestions do you think will work best for you? Why?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: I think changing from onscreen to print will help, along with holding the ruler under each line of text to focus my reading.

Check-In

Use what you've learned about common spelling errors and how to spell correctly to answer the questions.

Question 1

Why is it important to verify the spellings of proper nouns, such as the names of people and languages?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer:

Sample answer: Verifying these names is especially important because spell checks will likely not catch these errors. Also, proper nouns such as these often follow different spelling patterns than common English words. It is good to have a reminder of accents, too, which are uncommon in English.

Question 2

Read the following paragraph from a draft of Saanvi's essay:

For one example, the Cherokee people, who were once prevelent in what is now the southwestern United States, are now the Cherokee Nation, based in Okahoma. They have there own langauge that is becoming extinct largely due to a government policy that took Cherokee children from their Cherokee-speaking homes and kept them from learning the langauge to assimilate Cherokee children more easily. Now, members of the Cherokee Nation are working to keep the langauge alive by using it's as much as possible among native speakers and by teaching its to new people with both in-person and online classes.

What spelling errors did you notice? Identify the errors and revise the paragraph to correct them.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: I noticed that there are proper nouns misspelled and homophones that were misused, including their/there and it/its/it's. *Prevalent* and *language* were also misspelled.

Here is the corrected paragraph: For one example, the Cherokee people, who were once prevalent in what is now the southwestern United States, are now the Cherokee Nation, based in Oklahoma. They have their own language that is becoming extinct largely due to a government policy that took Cherokee children from their Cherokee-speaking homes and kept them from learning the language to assimilate Cherokee children more easily. Now, members of the Cherokee Nation are working to keep the language alive by using it as much as possible among native speakers and by teaching it to new people with both in-person and online classes.

Need a little extra support?

Get Help Here

Practice

Activity

Reread the draft of your argumentative essay, marking and correcting any misspelled words. Notice if you repeat particular errors in spelling and pay special attention to correct these mistakes. Look up any relevant spelling, grammar, or usage rules. Highlight words you are not completely sure about their spelling or usage. Use a print or digital resource to check for correct spelling. Be sure your focus on correct spelling includes the following:

- exceptions to typical spelling patterns

- homophones

- proper nouns

- words you frequently have difficulty spelling

Pro Tip

After you have checked your essay thoroughly for spelling errors, consider enlisting the help of a friend or an adult for a final read. Having another person's input is vital to publishing a paper that is error free.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I verified correct usage and spelling of exceptions to spelling patterns.

2. _____ I spelled correctly in my argumentative essay.

3. _____ I verified correct usage and spelling of homophones.

4. _____ I verified correct usage and spelling of proper nouns.

Now, review the full Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric to prepare for what you will do next.
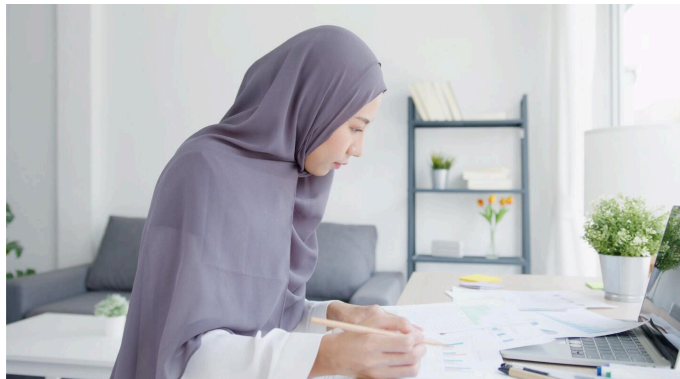
Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

Objective

Objective

In this section, you will use technology, including the internet, to produce, publish, and update in response to feedback, including new arguments or information.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 3

Source: Tirachard Kumtanom. Shutterstock

You've researched, planned, drafted, revised, and edited your argumentative essay. You are almost ready to publish! Throughout this process, you have used technology to produce text by gathering information from print and digital sources, drafting with word processing apps, and using spell checkers and online dictionaries to help polish your writing.

In this lesson, you will learn more about using technology, including how to use it to publish your writing and update your writing in response to feedback.

Question 1

Name one way you have used technology so far in this portfolio assignment and explain how you used it.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: I used technology to compile my source notes into a word processing app. I made sure to copy and paste the source information and URLs to help me create my Works Cited page. By using technology in this way, I could easily keep track of my research and where my information came from.

Using Technology to Publish Text

You have many options for using technology to publish your argumentative essay. You can publish your essay as plain text, or you can use a combination of multimedia and text. Some technology options for text-based publishing include word processing apps, templates for written papers, or creating a text post that includes hyperlinks to other sources or texts. If you want to use multimedia, consider using a slideshow app or audio recording software. Or, you could use a free blog hosting website to create a blog post with your essay or use video recording and editing platforms to transform your essay into a video presentation.

Using Technology to Update in Response to Feedback

Technology has made it easier to solicit feedback and edit your work to respond to that feedback. You can make a copy of your work or share the original. You can also ask reviewers to comment using the features of the platform or software you are using. For example, word processing apps often have a comment tool to add comments at point of use or a comment section to add thoughts at the bottom of the webpage or video page.

To get some feedback on your work, share your argumentative essay with your Learning Coach, a friend, or adult. Give them a guide to focus their feedback, such as the following:

Reviewer Guide:

- Annotate the main claim or thesis statement and restate it in your own words.

- Highlight any parts of the text that you needed to reread to understand.

- Note the main idea of each paragraph and briefly describe its organization.

- Rate my argument: 1 Not convinced; 2 I see why it's important; 3. Convinced! Tell why in a couple of sentences.

In addition to these suggestions, you might ask the person reading your essay to critically examine particular points you have found challenging. For example, "Should the third paragraph move to the end of the body?" or "Do I need more evidence to support the main idea in paragraph 2?"

After you receive feedback, it is time to make some decisions. You don't have to incorporate all the feedback you receive. In fact, you may directly disagree with some of it. However, you should think carefully about the feedback you receive.

Once you have decided what to do about the feedback, use technology to update your argumentative essay. If you are using a word processing app, consider accepting tracked changes or resolving comments as you incorporate the feedback. For videos or other multimedia, try editing your multimedia and re-uploading it so that the most up-to-date version of your writing product is posted.

Question 2

What can you hope to achieve by updating your work in response to feedback?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: By presenting your argument to reviewers, you will gain insight on the issues you need to address and the victories in your writing. Asking for

feedback also gives you a chance to update your work before your final submission and it allows you to make your writing the best that it can be.

Check-In

Think about how a writer might use technology, including the internet, to produce, publish, and update their writing. Then complete the activities.

Activity 1

Think about how you used technology to revise and edit your writing. Explain what technology you used, including the internet.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: I used technology to select and move sentences within my essay. I also used copy and paste tools to enter source information into my Works Cited page. Finally, I used spell checkers and grammar checkers to catch spelling and grammar errors in my writing. I also used the internet to double-check the spelling of proper nouns.

Activity 2

Read the Reviewer Guide Saanvi asked his Learning Coach to complete.

Reviewer Guide

- Annotate the main claim or thesis statement and restate it in your own words.

- Highlight any parts of the text that you needed to reread to understand.

- Note the main idea of each paragraph and briefly describe its organization.

- Rate my argument: 1 Not convinced; 2 I see why it's important; 3. Convinced! Tell why in a couple of sentences.

Consider the questions Saanvi included to focus readers' feedback. How might Saanvi use the feedback she receives and technology to update her argumentative essay?

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer: Saanvi could use the feedback to see if her argument is convincing, if she needs to revise her word choice, or if she needs to explain certain aspects of her essay in more detail. Saanvi could use this feedback and technology to update her essay in her word processing app. She might respond to comments in her word processing app or use chat messages to ask follow-up questions. Through this process and by using technology, she will be able to make her argument clearer and more convincing before she turns in the final version.

Need a little extra support?

Get Help Here

Practice

Activity

Now it is time to prepare your final manuscript for publication. Consider whether you want to use certain technologies to publish your writing, such as a slideshow or video. Also, make sure to consider any feedback you receive and use it to update your argumentative essay.

Once you have used technology to produce, publish, and update your argumentative essay, then you're done! Congratulations! You have finished this argumentative writing portfolio.

Pro Tip

If you struggle to understand a reviewer's comments, don't hesitate to contact the reviewer and ask for clarification or possible ideas for fixing a problem. Consider replying to a comment, messaging them on a chat app, or suggesting a meeting over video conference or in-person.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I used technology, including the internet, to gather information and prepare for writing my argumentative essay.

2. _____ I used technology to produce my argumentative text.

3. _____ I used technology to publish my argumentative text.

4. _____ I considered reviewers' suggestions and updated my writing in response to feedback.

5. _____ I revisited the Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric to make sure I have met all requirements.

6. _____ I submitted my essay to my Learning Coach.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio 3

Reflect

Read over your finished argumentative text with the Argumentative Text Rubric in hand. Think not only about how well your writing reflects the criteria on the rubric, but also on the process you undertook to complete the writing.

Writing Argumentative Text Portfolio Rubric

Then, choose three of the questions below and use them to reflect on the experience of writing an argumentative text. Write your answers in your notebook.

1. How did focusing on purpose, audience, and task help you write a convincing argumentative essay?

2. What was the biggest hurdle you had to overcome as you wrote your text? What did you do to get past this challenge?

3. What did the experience of crafting an argumentative text teach you about yourself as a writer? What are your strengths? What do you still need to work on?

4. Think back to an argumentative text you remember writing previously. Compare that piece of writing to the text you just wrote. What does the comparison show about how you've grown as a writer?

Now, consider the self-selected argumentative text you have been reading over the course of this unit. Suppose you had the opportunity to have a discussion with the author of this text—writer to writer. List three questions you would ask the writer about their process. How might their observations strengthen your own writing abilities?