

Research Paper

Argument/Counterargument



Remember Thesis Building?

Gladiators played an important role in Roman society

by uniting citizens in their quest for a hero

and ensuring their devotion to the government.

1

Gladiators' role
in Roman
society

2

How the quest
for a hero unites
citizens

3

Ties to citizens'
devotion to
government of
Rome

4

Counter-
argument/
Refutation

And the Topic Sentence Outline?

- Each Roman Numeral is a body paragraph topic sentence that points back to your thesis:

I. Topic Sentence for Point #1

A. Assertion (Restrict Sentence 1)

1. Introduction of evidence
2. Evidence (Illustrate Sentence assertion 1)
3. Explanation of evidence (Analysis sentences assertion 1)
4. Transition

B. Second Assertion (Restrict Sentence 2)

1. Introduction of evidence
2. Evidence (Illustrate Sentence assertion 2)
3. Explanation of Evidence (Analysis sentences assertion 2)

C. Conclusion

II. Topic Sentence for Point #2

A. Assertion (Restrict Sentence 1)

1. Introduction of evidence
2. Evidence (Illustrate sentence assertion 1)

Now we're ready to Build an Argument!

Thanks,
YouTube! (1:25 – 3:23)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kfRKI5wlkg>

Strong Arguments vs Weak Arguments

What are the key differences?

Strong Arguments

Are focused on a single topic

Are built on logical claims

Provide relevant evidence to support the claims

Provide logical reasoning to explain the connection between the evidence and the claims.

Usually address the existence of counterclaims (other perspectives)

Weak Arguments

Are usually built on opinions which may be related to the topic

Usually are not supported by relevant facts or evidence

Connections between claims and evidence may be illogical or unorganized

May ignore existence of counterclaims (other perspectives)

Building an Argument

- When you write an academic essay, you make an argument, which is your thesis statement and support
- That “support” is the evidence presented in your body paragraphs
- Your topic sentence begins the process—what will your first BP say that proves your thesis? It must be broad enough to cover the whole paragraph—save the specifics for what comes next

Building an Argument , continued

- After your general topic sentence, follow by saying something about that topic sentence that you will prove with your 1st piece of evidence—this, you will recall, is your RESTRICT sentence
- Next comes the ILLUSTRATE sentence that proves that point, with proper context and integration provided
- A reminder here on the necessity of introducing your source—see the “Quote/Paraphrase/Summary” PPT on Weebly

Building an Argument , continued

- Following your evidence/quote/illustrate sentence, you next must ANALYZE it—tell why it is important and how it applies to the point you are making
- Now you need to make another point relating to the topic sentence, so transition to a second RESTRICT sentence
- Follow that with more integrated and contextual evidence—another ILLUSTRATE
- Which you will then ANALYZE fully
- Conclude this portion of your argument with a clincher, transitioning to your next point

In Outline Form, it looks like this:

I. Topic Sentence for Point #1

A. Assertion (Restrict Sentence 1)

1. Introduction of evidence
2. Evidence (Illustrate Sentence assertion 1)
3. Explanation of evidence (Analysis sentences assertion 1)
4. Transition

B. Second Assertion (Restrict Sentence 2)

1. Introduction of evidence
2. Evidence (Illustrate Sentence assertion 2)
3. Explanation of Evidence (Analysis sentences assertion 2)

C. Conclusion

II. Topic Sentence for Point #2

A. Assertion (Restrict Sentence 1)

1. Introduction of evidence
2. Evidence (Illustrate sentence assertion 1)
3. Explanation of evidence (Analysis sentences assertion 1)
4. Transition

Remember Weak Arguments?

One of the issues that causes a weak argument is
FAULTY EVIDENCE--but what makes it faulty?

- **Inaccurate** evidence: misreading, misquoting evidence—it doesn't say what you are claiming
- **Insufficient** evidence: what you have is not enough—provide more
- **Unrelated** evidence: what is provided does not relate to your point
- **Incomplete** evidence: you have “cherry picked” examples and excluded others, failing to provide a full picture
- **Old** evidence: information is outdated
- **Poorly sourced** evidence: what you have provided has not met scholarly standards for accuracy

Finally, Remember This:

“One of the bigger issues with evidence is not so much with the evidence itself, but with the way that you integrate it into the paper. A reader needs to understand clearly how and why the evidence you chose relates to the point you are making.”

In Other Words:

What you say ABOUT your evidence is as important as the evidence itself. If the reader fails to draw the same conclusions about the evidence because you did not point out those conclusions in your analysis, your evidence is FAULTY and your argument is WEAK.

What about the Counterargument?

- When you write an academic essay, you make an argument—this is your thesis statement and support
- When you counter-argue, you consider a possible argument against your thesis or some aspect of your reasoning, which you then refute—this is your counter argument and refutation

How to Include a Counterargument?

- Counterargument in an essay has two stages:
 1. You turn against your argument to challenge it, providing evidence that it is a legitimate counter
 2. Then you turn back to your argument to re-affirm it.

This is called refuting the counterargument

Turn Against



Turn Back

Refuting a Counterargument:

Example Thesis:

Gladiators played an important role in Roman society by uniting citizens in their quest for a hero and ensuring their devotion to the government.

How might someone argue against this?

- * The gladiators were pawns of the barbaric Roman government
- * The gladiator games were displays of Roman strength, meant to terrorize citizens into obedience

Brainstorm for possible opposing positions

- Ask these three questions when you are trying to write counterargument:
 - Who might disagree with my position? Why?
 - What reasons do people have for disagreeing with me? (weaknesses in argument, opposing viewpoints...)
 - What would support an opposing argument?

Creating The Counterargument (Turn Against)

- Introduce the **counter argument** (turn against) with signal phrases like:
 - *One might object here that...*
 - *It might seem that...*
 - *While it may be true that...*
 - *Admittedly,*
- Then you state the case against yourself as **briefly** but as clearly as you can, using evidence of this argument

Counter Argument Example:

Some would argue that gladiators did not play an important role in Roman society, but only showed the violent mentality of the mob. As author Kathleen Coleman states, "Both pagan philosophers and Christian fathers scorned the arena. But they objected most vociferously not to the brutality of the displays, but to the loss of self-control that the hype generated among the spectators" (49).

Creating The Refutation (Turn Back)

- Your return to your own argument must involve careful reasoning
- In reasoning about the proposed counter-argument, you may:
 - Show why it is mistaken
 - Acknowledge its validity, but suggest why it is less important
- Signal phrases you could use:
 - *but, yet, however, nevertheless or still*

Example Counter-Argument/Refutation:

Some would argue that gladiators did not play an important role in Roman society, but only showed the violent mentality of the mob. As author Kathleen Coleman states, "Both pagan philosophers and Christian fathers scorned the arena. But they objected most vociferously not to the brutality of the displays, but to the loss of self-control that the hype generated among the spectators"(49). However, examining the details of the gladiators and the games they participated in gives a bigger picture of how they contributed to Roman society.

Where to Put a Counterargument:

- You could put it:
 - as a section or paragraph just **after your introduction**
 - as a section or paragraph just **before the conclusion** of your essay
 - Just before the specific point against which it argues, so that what follows is a refutation of it

It is true that
counter arguments enrich
argumentative writing;

however,

adding a weak counter argument or
overdoing it weakens your argument.

What comes next???



Go back to your outline and complete your first argument and your counter argument!