

Resources



Strategies for Teaching Argumentative Writing

Integrating Reading and Writing

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Response 7 From the "The 2014 GED® Test – Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) Extended Response Resource Guide for Adult Educators" p. 18	Notes
<p>Between the two positions in this article, the one against Daylight Saving Time is better supported. Although both positions are well organized and supported with several examples, the evidence supporting the view against DST is more specific and thorough.</p> <p>The first position [makes some valid points] ones that are sure to catch any reader's attention. The writer brings up expenses, safety, and crime rates, all of which are supposedly improved through the use of DST.</p> <p>★ However, the evidence he uses to support this claim seems general and outdated. In paragraph four, he mentions that one study took place in the 1970s. He also uses phrases such as "many studies" and "other studies." While the points he makes are interesting, there are no specifics. One is left wondering just how outdated or reliable these studies are, and if they even apply to the average American. Had he used less generalized phrases, he may have sounded more convincing.</p> <p>The second position is much better supported, especially compared to the somewhat lacking arguments of the previous position. The writer's information is precise, and he seems to use more studies than the first author. While the first author used studies from the 1970s, this one mentions a study done in 2007. The specifics of each study also improve the quality and seeming validity of the arguments made. The writer gives the states in which the studies were conducted and the reasons why the researches believed they got those results. Also, like the first author, the issues of which he writes are ones that will catch the reader's attention: energy consumption, safety, and confusion. While they are similar to those points brought up by the first writer,</p>	<p>The Claim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it debatable? • Is the focus narrow enough for the writing required? • Does it establish the argument? • Is it valid? <p>The Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it support the claim? • Does it include facts or statistics? • Does it include examples? • Is it based on an expert's or the writer's personal opinion? <p>The Warrant ↪</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it explain the pieces of evidence? • Does it connect evidence to the claim? • Is it reasonable? • Does it make assumptions? • Is it logical? <p>[The Counterclaim]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the writer include information that disagrees with the original claim? • Is it reasonable? • What is the evidence that supports the counterclaim?

 this second position is far better supported through its organization and attention to detail.

The Rebuttal



- Does it explain why the counterclaim does not work?
- What is the evidence used to support the rebuttal?

Looking at Structure

Classic Model for an Argument

No one structure fits all written arguments. However, argumentative writing consists of the following elements. Below is a basic outline for an argumentative or persuasive essay.

I. Introductory Paragraph – Set up Your Claim

Your introductory paragraph sets the stage or the context for the position for which you are arguing. The introduction should include a thesis statement that provides your claim (what you are arguing for) and the reasons for your position on an issue.

Your thesis:

- states what your position on an issue is
- usually appears at the beginning or ending of the introduction in a short essay
- should be clearly stated and should contain emphatic language (should, ought, must)

II. Body of your Argument – Support Your Claim

A. Background Information – Lays the foundation for proving your argument

This section of your paper gives the reader the basic information he or she needs to understand your position.

This section will often include:

- A summary of works being discussed
- A definition of key terms
- An explanation of key theories

B. Reasons or Evidence to Support your Claim

All evidence you present in this section should support your position. This is the focus of your essay. Generally, you begin with a statement that you back up with specific details or examples. Make sure to connect the evidence to the claim. The reader should be able to see that there is a logical, persuasive connection between the claim, reasons, and data (evidence). Depending on how long your argument is, you will need to devote one to two well-developed paragraphs to each reason/claim or type of evidence.

Sample Format for Supporting Evidence Paragraph

- **Topic Sentence:** What is one item, fact, detail, or example you can tell your readers that will help them better understand your claim/paper topic? Your answer should be the topic sentence for this paragraph.
- **Introduce Evidence:** Introduce your evidence either in a few words (As Dr. Brown states . . .) or in a full sentence (To understand this issue, we first need to look at statistics).
- **State Evidence:** What supporting evidence (reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and/or quotations) can you include to prove/support/explain your topic sentence?

- Explain Evidence: How should we read or interpret the evidence you are providing us? How does this evidence prove the point you are trying to make in this paragraph? Can be opinion based and is often at least 1-3 sentences.
- Concluding/Transitional Sentence(s): End your paragraph with a concluding sentence that reasserts how the topic sentence of this paragraph helps up better understand and/or prove your paper's overall claim and how it transitions to the next idea.

III. Addressing the Opposite Side – Refute the Objections

Any well-written argument must anticipate and address positions in opposition to the one being argued. Pointing out what your opposition is likely to say in response to your argument establishes that you have thought critically about your topic. Addressing the opposite side actually makes your argument stronger! Generally, this takes the form of a paragraph that can be placed either after the introduction or before the conclusion. Often this is phrased as an opposing view and the refutation to the view.

Sample Format for Supporting Evidence Paragraph

- Introduce the Counterargument – this could be one or more arguments against your thesis
- State the Evidence – what evidence is provided in the text(s)
- Refute the Evidence – argue against the evidence and why the stance that you have selected is the better supported
- Concluding/Transitional Sentence(s) – end the paragraph with information that reasserts your position as a whole.

IV. Conclusion

The conclusion should bring the essay to a logical end. However, your conclusion should not simply restate your introductory paragraph. Your conclusion should explain what the importance of your issue is in a larger context. Your conclusion should also reiterate why your topic is worth caring about. Some arguments propose solutions or make prediction on the future of the topic.

Adapted from:

Odegaard Writing and Research Center. <http://www.depts.washington.edu/owrc>

Purdue OWL Writing Lab. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

The Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill. <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/>

The Writer's Workplace. Ed. Sandra Scarry and John Scarry. 6th ed. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008.

Sample Outline for an Argumentative Writing

Beginning (Introduction)	Hook – Explanation of Issue – Thesis/Position –
Argument 1	State argument – Explanation – Evidence/Analysis –
Argument 2	State argument – Explanation – Evidence/Analysis –
Argument 3 <i>(optional)</i>	State argument – Explanation – Evidence/Analysis –
Argument 4 <i>(optional)</i>	State argument – Explanation – Evidence/Analysis –
Refutation	State opposing argument – Explanation – Refutation –
Ending (Conclusion)	Restate thesis in a new way – Bring things to a solid close/Give your reader something to think about –

The 7 Cs of Argumentation

Adapted from *Inquire: A Guide to 21st Century Learning (2012 ed.)*— King, Erickson, Sebranek
Writer's Inc.: A Student Handbook for Writing & Learning (1996 ed.)—Sebranek, Meyer, Kemper

1. Consider the situation

- What is the topic?
- What is my purpose?
- Who is my audience?
- What action do I want my audience to take?

2. Clarify your thinking

- What are you trying to prove?
- Why do you feel the way you do?
- What kind of proof do you have?
- Who will be affected by this?

Teaching Writing Strategy: Students complete an organizer or outline, such as: a *Pro/Con* chart, a *Toulmin* outline, or a *Think in Threes* graphic organizer.

3. Construct a claim (thesis statement)

- A claim is the position statement or the key point of your argument
- Three types of claims: *claim of fact*—state something is true or not true; *claim of value*—state something has or doesn't have worth; *claim of policy*—assert something should or shouldn't be done
- Claims may contain one or more reasons you will prove
- A claim should be written as one coherent sentence

4. Collect evidence

- Facts
- Examples
- Definitions
- Comparison
- Statistics
- Experience
- Analysis
- Prediction
- Demonstration
- Expert opinions
- Anecdotes/Reflections/Observations
- Quotations

Teaching Writing Strategy: Students need to learn how to identify faulty logic. This is an appropriate place to discuss faulty thinking.

5. Consider key objections—Develop counter arguments

- Point out flaws/weaknesses in arguments on the other side
- List objections

- Recognize or concede another viewpoint when claim has true weaknesses. This adds believability to overall claim.

Teaching Writing Strategy: Students need to learn concession starters—transitional phrases that demonstrate they understand the value of other viewpoints. These include:

Sample Concession Starters/Transitional Phrases

Even though	To illustrate	Nevertheless
Perhaps	For instance	On the other hand
Admittedly	For that reason	As an example
While it is true that	Furthermore	In contrast
Certainly	In other words	For this purpose

6. Craft your argument

- Use logical appeals—facts, statistics, expert opinions, anecdotes, and examples
- Avoid appeals to fear or ignorance
- Use levels of evidence—a minimum of two pieces of evidence to support each reason

7. Confirm your claim

- Conclude with a coherent restatement of main arguments
- Use a call to action

Teaching Writing Strategy: Students need to assess their writing by asking questions as they revise and edit, such as using an outline chart of questions that assess the claim.

Avoid Fallacies of Thinking—Use Logic!

An argument is a chain of reasons, supported by evidence, that support a claim. Faulty logic means using evidence that is fuzzy, exaggerated, illogical, or false. Be careful to avoid faulty logic when defending claims.

Appeal to Ignorance—Claiming that since no one has ever proved a claim, it must be false. Shifts the burden of proof onto someone else. “Show me one study that proves...”

Appeal to Pity—Using excuses to ask for leniency. “Imagine what it must have been like...”

Bandwagon or Appealing to a Popular Position—Appeals to everyone’s sense of wanting to belong or be accepted. “Everyone believes it or does it so you should too.”

Broad Generalization—Takes in everything and everyone at once and allows for no exceptions. Using words like “all” and “everyone” are too general. “Is this claim true for all of the people being discussed, or just for some?”

Circular Thinking—Restating your claim in different words as evidence for your claim. “I hate this class because I’m never happy in this class.”

Either-Or Thinking—Offering evidence that reduces examples to two possible extremes. “Are there other possibilities that should be considered?”

Half-Truths—Telling only part or half of the truth. “Is this the full story—or is there another side to this that is not being told?”

Oversimplification—Simplifying complex topics into a “simple question.” “_____ is a simple question of _____.”

Slanted Language or Distracting the Reader—Selecting words that have strong positive or negative connotation in order to distract the reader from valid arguments. “Is this evidence dealing with the real issue?” “No one in his right mind would ever do anything that dumb.”

Testimonial—Make sure the expert opinion is an authority on the topic. “What are this person’s credentials?”

Exaggerating the Facts—“Is everything that is being said true and accurate?”

Using a False Cause—Making a direct link between two separate things without evidence to back it up. “Is it fair to assume that the cause of the problem is exactly what the writer says, or might there be completely different causes?”

If Only Thinking—Using evidence that cannot be tested. “How does the writer know this would have happened? Is there other evidence, or it is simply an ‘if only’ argument?”

Assessing the Claim

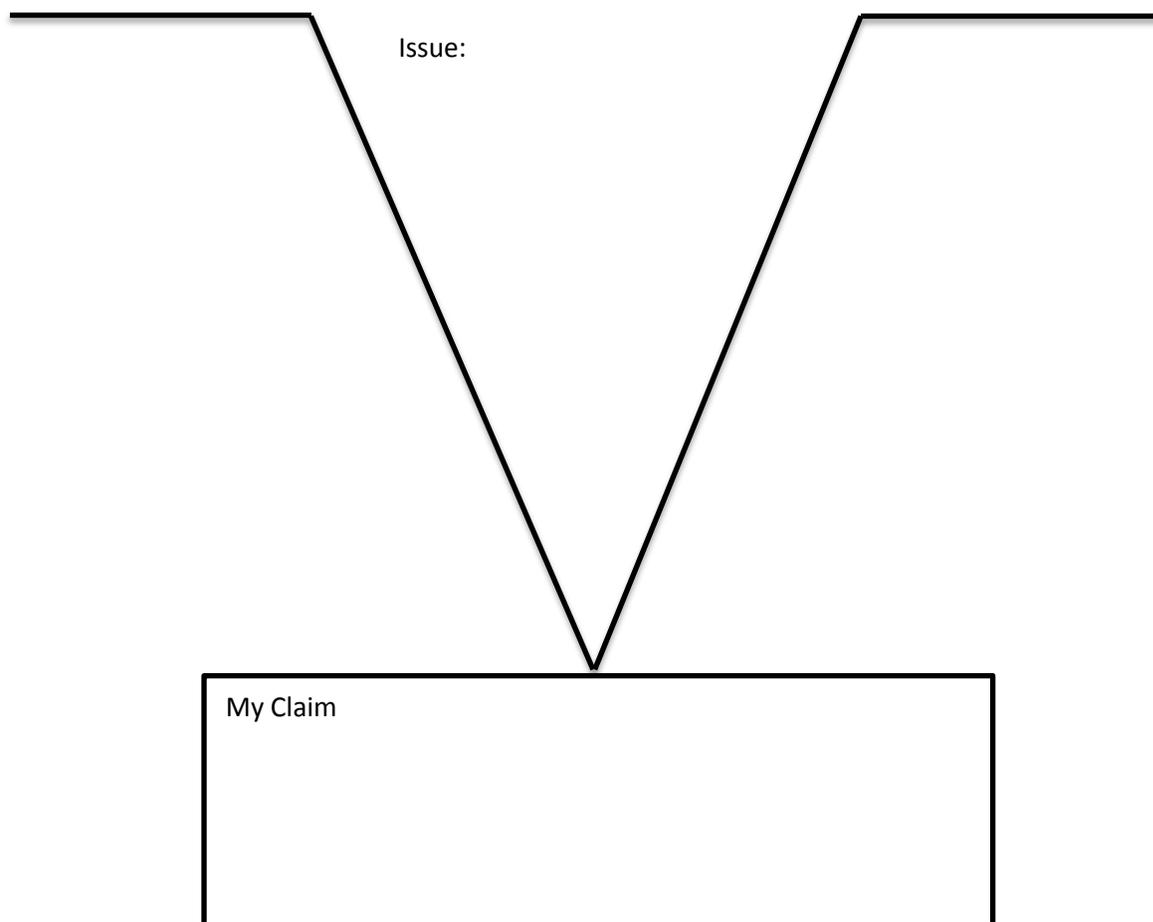
Response	Notes
	<p>The Claim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is it debatable?• Is the focus narrow enough for the writing required?• Does it establish the argument?• Is it valid? <p>The Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does it support the claim?• Does it include facts or statistics?• Does it include examples?• Is it based on an expert's or the writer's personal opinion? <p>The Warrant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does it explain the pieces of evidence?• Does it connect evidence to the claim?• Is it reasonable?• Does it make assumptions?• Is it logical? <p>The Counterclaim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the writer include information that disagrees with the original claim?• Is it reasonable?• What is the evidence that supports the counterclaim? <p>The Rebuttal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does it explain why the counterclaim does not work?• What is the evidence used to support the rebuttal?

Graphic Organizers for Argumentative Writing

Vee Charts as Prewrites

Position One

Position Two



Argumentative Writing Organizers: Pros and Cons

Question or Statement	
Pros <i>(Evidence that Supports)</i>	Cons <i>(Evidence that opposes)</i>

Decision for a claim:

Defend your decision:

Argumentative Essay Graphic Organizer (Toulmin Model)

Writing Prompt:		
Topic or Issue:	Purpose:	Audience:
My CLEAR POSITION (thesis/claim) on the position:		
“Reasons” or WHY I take this position	EXAMPLES and EVIDENCE	
1.	1.	
2.	2.	
3.	3.	
Most Significant Counterargument		
Rebuttals to Counterarguments		

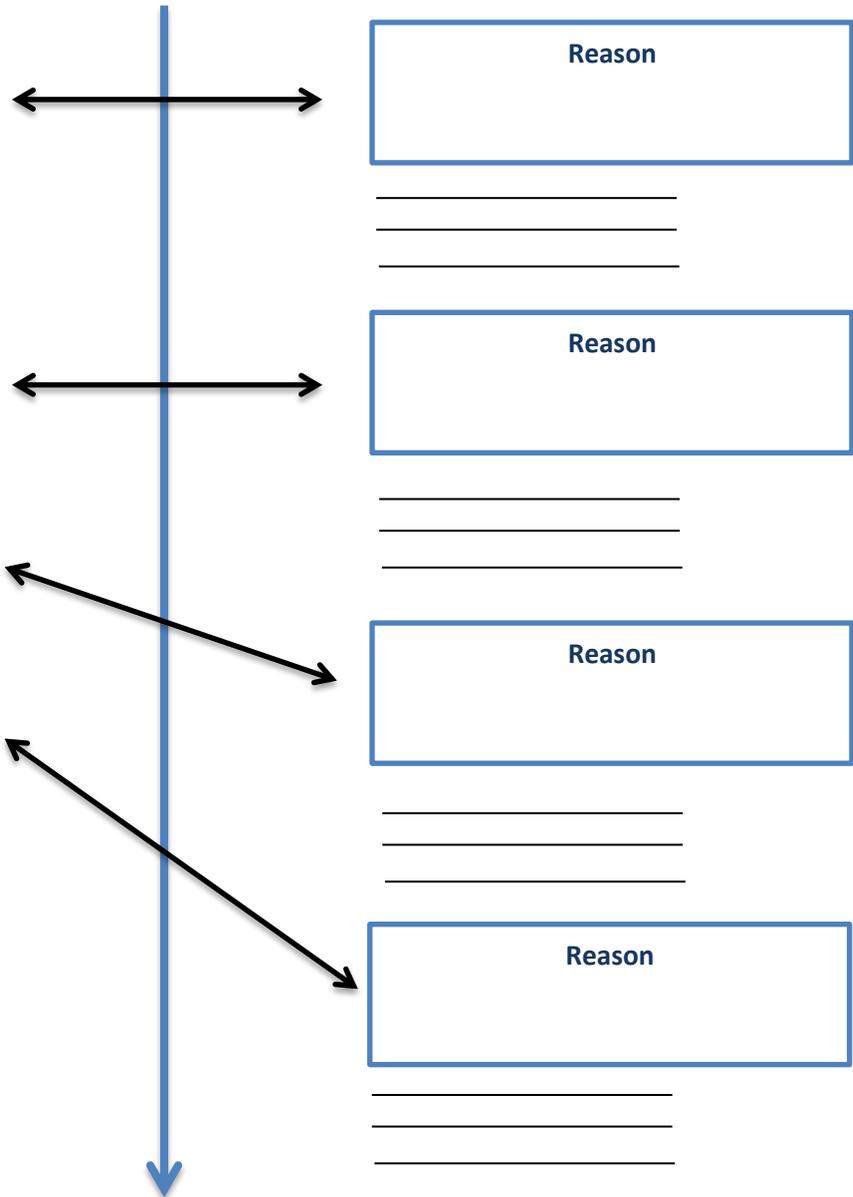
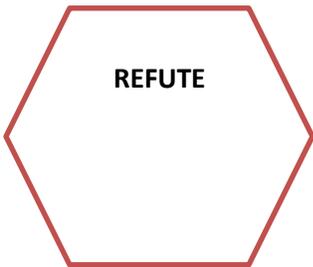
Prewriting Organizer: Toulmin Model for Argumentation

A Claim: is your point
 Is debatable
 Is demonstrated by reason and logic

Thesis/Claim Statement: _____

Warrants: *Just like a search warrant from the police, the argument warrant gives the writer authority to proceed with his/her argument.*

- ❖ is the assumption that makes your claim plausible
- ❖ questions the evidence
- ❖ shows a logical, persuasive connection between claim, reasons, data (evidence)
- ❖ gives authority to proceed with your argument
- ❖ can be stated, but usually is assumed



Conclusion

Constructed Response Organizer

Prompt/Question:	
Restatement of question in own words	
Sample answer	
Evidence Detailed body of evidence that supports answer be sure to include enough details to answer the question. Make sure that all details address the questions and are not off-topic.	Text 1
	Text 2
Counterargument(s)	Claim
	Rebuttal
Restated question Concluding thoughts	

Extended Response Answer Guidelines – RLA Test

Please use the guidelines below as you answer the Extended Response question on the Reasoning Through Language Arts test. Following these guidelines as closely as possible will ensure that you provide the best response.

1. **Please note that this task must be completed in no more than 45 minutes.** However, don't rush through your response. Be sure to read through the passage(s) and the prompt. Then think about the message you want to convey in your response. **Be sure to plan your response before you begin writing.** Draft your response and revise it as needed.

2. As you read, think carefully about the **argumentation** presented in the passage(s). "Argumentation" refers to the assumptions, claims, support, reasoning, and credibility on which a position is based. Pay close attention to **how the author(s) use these strategies to convey his or her positions.**

3. When you write your essay, be sure to:
 - **determine which position presented** in the passage(s) is **better supported** by evidence from the passage(s)
 - **explain why the position you chose is the better-supported one**
 - **remember, the better-supported position is not necessarily the position you agree with**
 - **defend your assertions with multiple pieces of evidence** from the passage(s)
 - **build your main points thoroughly**
 - **put your main points in logical order** and tie your details to your main points
 - **organize your response carefully** and consider your **audience, message, and purpose**
 - **use transitional words and phrases** to connect sentences, paragraphs, and ideas
 - **choose words carefully** to express your ideas clearly
 - **vary your sentence structure** to enhance the flow and clarity of your response
 - **reread and revise your response** to correct any errors in grammar, usage, or punctuation

Retrieved from the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/uploads/files/74e3cf83a8cae5b05e5627fd2754e87f.pdf>

Revising and Editing Checklist

Introduction

- Does your introduction begin with a sentence that grabs the reader's attention?
- Does your paper contain a thesis that is a clear summary of your main point or argument?
- Is your thesis arguable? Your thesis should not simply be the statement of a fact because a statement is NOT arguable.
- Does your thesis match your assignment? A thesis for a compare-contrast paper is constructed differently than a thesis for a personal narrative or a research paper.
- Is your thesis placed correctly? Normally the thesis should be the last sentence of your introductory paragraph, but it can also appear either as the first sentence or within the first paragraph.
- Does your thesis provide a clear outline for the entirety of your paper?
- Does your thesis answer a question? Keep in mind, a thesis should never be written as a question.

Body Paragraphs

- Does the topic sentence of each body paragraph summarize the entirety of the points that paragraph covers?
- Does each topic sentence correspond with your thesis statement?
- Does all of the information in your paragraph support your topic sentence?
- Is the final sentence in each body paragraph a sentence that either summarizes the paragraph or transitions to the next point?
- Do you acknowledge an opposing point of view and then explain why you think it isn't strong enough to change the point of view selected?

Conclusion

- Does the last paragraph remind readers of the main points of the essay, without going into too much detail repeating everything readers just read?
- Is the conclusion free of new information (such as another supporting point)?
- Does the last sentence leave readers with a strong final impression?

Entire Paper

General

- Is the writing in formal, third person?
- Does one idea flow smoothly into the next?
- Do the sentence structures and lengths vary?
- Does every sentence relate to the thesis?
- Does everything make sense?
- Is the essay convincing?
- Are the grammar, punctuation, and spelling correct?

Sentence Composition

- Have you removed unnecessary hedges that weaken your arguments such as *probably*, *might be*, *somewhat*, or *kind of*?
- Have you removed unnecessary words that do not add to the sentence such as *really* or *a lot*?
- Have you varied your vocabulary by utilizing a thesaurus and dictionary when necessary in order to avoid repetition or incorrect word choices?
- Are your sentences of varied lengths and complexities? A paper is stronger when it has a mixture of sentences versus all short sentences or all long sentences.
- Are all transitions from one idea to another smooth and clearly explained, so the reader does not need to make any leaps in logic?
- Has all slang and conversational language been removed?
- Have you removed any offensive language, such as gender-based or biased language?

Verbs

- Do your verb tenses match?
- Are your verb tenses consistent?
- Have you replaced unnecessary “be” verbs (be, been, is, are, were, was) with stronger verbs?
- Are you using “active” verbs?

Integration of Information

- Are all of your quotes and paraphrases correctly cited?
- Are all of your quotes introduced and explained properly?
- Is all of your information, such as quotes and data, pertinent to your topic? Does your information correspond with the topic sentence of your current paragraph?

Grammar and Mechanics

- Have you used parallel structure?
- Do your pronouns agree with the antecedents they are replacing?
- Is your paper free of fragments and run-on sentences?
- Is your paper properly punctuated?
- Is your paper free of spelling errors?
- Have you read through your paper (slowly) in order to catch errors that you would miss otherwise?