

Argumentative Essay Structure

In order to most effectively argue your point, your essay should follow a certain structure.

1. Introduction Paragraph
 - a. Hook – start with an interesting sentence to grab your reader’s attention.
 - b. Provide context. What is the general topic you will be addressing?
 - c. Thesis statement.
2. Body Paragraph 1
 - a. Restate and support your thesis.
3. Body Paragraph 2
 - a. Support your thesis.
4. Body Paragraph 3
 - a. Support your thesis.
5. Rebuttal
 - a. Discuss the nuances in your thesis – ask yourself, “Is my thesis ALWAYS true? Where or when might it not apply?” It will strengthen, not weaken, your paper for you to admit that argumentative issues are not always black and white. *
 - b. Discuss respectfully the opposing viewpoint. Why do smart, moral people disagree with you on this? Do they have a good point?
 - c. Respond to the opposing viewpoint. Why are they wrong? Are they misinterpreting the data, or are their expectations unrealistic? Be respectful! Do not use aggressive language. Address the arguments. Avoid making assumptions about those who disagree with you. Here, you want to earn your opponent’s respect, and you want to show them that you understand why they hold an opposing opinion. This is the most effective way to convince someone to change their mind.
6. Conclusion
 - a. Discuss “So what?” Why is your thesis important?
 - b. Call to action – optional. If appropriate, ask your audience to do something or to adopt or change their position on the issue.

*If you find a significant dent in your argument here, you may need to adjust your thesis. For instance, I could change my initial thesis to “Inner-city middle schools should require students to wear uniforms” or “Any school that has a problem with violence should require students to wear uniforms.” Both of these are still strong and argumentative, but they are more specific to exactly the cases I am describing. A very significant real-life example is in the discussion of abortion rights – even very pro-life arguments usually concede that exceptions should be made in cases of rape or when the life of the mother is threatened and even very pro-choice arguments will generally concede that birth control is preferable to abortion.