

Argumentative Text Analysis

Why Blacks Need Affirmative Action, Jesse Jackson

According to a recent publication of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, at the present rate of "progress" it will take forty-three years to end job discrimination hardly a reasonable timetable.

If our goal is educational and economic equity and parity and it is then we need affirmative action to catch up. We are behind as a result of discrimination and denial of opportunity. There is one white attorney for every 680 whites, but only one black attorney for every 4,000 blacks; one white physician for every 659 whites, but only one black physician for every 5,000 blacks; and one white dentist for every 1,900 whites, but only one black dentist for every 8,400 blacks. Less than 1 percent of all engineers or of all practicing chemists is black. Cruel and uncompassionate injustice created gaps like these. We need creative justice and compassion to help us close them.

Actually, in the U.S context, "reverse discrimination" is illogical and a contradiction in terms. Never in the history of mankind has a majority, with power, engaged in programs and written laws that discriminate against itself. The only thing whites are giving up because of affirmative action is unfair advantage something that was unnecessary in the first place.

1- From "The Prentice Hall Reader", 2nd edition, 1989. Pp 425-427.

2- Jesse Jackson is a black American politician who has been actively engaged in defending the rights of blacks and other minorities in the United States. He was a presidential candidate in the elections of 1984 and 1988.

Blacks are not making progress at the expense of whites, as news accounts make it seem. There are 49 percent more whites in medical school today and 64 percent more whites in law school than there were when affirmative action programs began some eight years ago.

In a recent column, William Raspberry raised an interesting question. Commenting on the Bakke case², he asked, "what if, instead of setting aside 16 of 100 slots, we added 16 slots to the 100?" that, he suggested, would allow blacks to make progress and would not interfere with what whites already have. He then went on to point out that this, in fact, is exactly what has happened in law and medical schools. In 1968, the year before affirmative action programs began to get under way, 9,571 whites and 282 members of minority group entered U.S. medical schools. In 1976, the figures were 14,213 and 1,400 respectively. Thus, under affirmative action, the number of "white places" actually rose by 49 percent: white access to medical training was not diminished, but substantially increased. The trend was even more marked in law schools. In 1969, the first year for which reliable figures are available, 2,933 minority-group members were enrolled; in 1976, the number was up to 8,484. But during the same period, law school enrollment for whites rose from 65,453 to 107,064- an increase of 64 percent. In short, it is a myth that blacks are making progress at white expense.

Allan Bakke did not really challenge preferential treatment in general, for he made no challenge to the preferential treatment accorded to the children of the rich, the alumni and the faculty, or to athletes or the very talented-only to minorities.

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- 1- What is Jackson's purpose in this essay? Do you think he achieves that purpose effectively?
 - 2- In an argument, the writer appeals either to our emotions or to our reason. What do you think Jackson does here? Support your answer.
 - 3- Jackson uses statistics in paragraph 2 and in paragraph 5. Is there a difference between the two kinds of statistics?
 - 4- Who is the audience Jackson is addressing? How does his tone sound to you? (cf. language, examples, sentence structures).

² Allan Bakke, a white male, was denied admission to a medical school in California in 1973 and 1974. In both years, other less qualified applicants were accepted through a special admissions program that reserved 16 places out of a total class of 100 for nonwhite applicants. Bakke claimed he was a victim of reverse discrimination and sued the university. The U.S. supreme court ruled in his favor in 1978 and he was admitted to medical school.

Argumentative Writing

0. Introduction:

The word 'arguing', in common parlance, connotes a dispute: raised, doors slammed, names called. As a writing strategy, however, arguing means quite different. It means presenting a carefully reasoned, well-supported argument that takes into account other points of view. Arguing here, then, connotes both inquiry and advocacy, presenting a position in a thoughtful and convincing way.

This handout will present the basic argumentative strategies used by writers. It will first focus on the structure of an argument making claims, offering support and evidence, and handling counterarguments. Then it will present the most common errors in arguing or abuses.

1. The Structure of an Argument:

1.1. Making a claim:

A claim is whatever view or thesis or conclusion you put forth about a given subject. Making a claim usually in your thesis statement is central to any argument.

1.1.1 Types of Claim

The type of claim you will be making will depend on the question you want to answer.

1.1.1.1- Claim of judgment what is my position on the issue?

Example: Smoking should be prohibited inside the faculty buildings.

1.1.1.2- Claim of policy what should be done to solve a given job?

Example: The university cafeteria should stay open all day long.

1.1.1.3 - Claim of value what is something worth?

Example: Title X is the best movie you can ever see.

1.1.1.4 – Claim of cause why is something the way it is?

Example: Most students in the U.S.A are due to weakening family structures.

1.1.1.5 – Claim of interpretation what does something mean?

Example: "Heart of Darkness" is a mystical journey into the inner self.

1.1.2 Claims vs. Facts and Opinions:

A claim is an arguable point; and for it to be arguable, it must have some probability of being true, not be generally accepted as true.

1.1.2.1 A point that is accepted as true by everyone is not a claim, it is a fact. And a fact is unarguable by definition:

1.1.2.1.1 John will be 17 next April.

1.1.2.1.2 There are almost 300 Kms from Fes to Casablanca.

1.1.2.1.3 Bananas are now grown in Morocco.

Any of the above statements can be objectively verifiable. They are facts, and as such do not qualify as thesis for an argumentative paper.

Now: facts are used in arguments as evidence to support a claim and not as claims themselves (see below).

1.1.2.2 Another statement that is not arguable is the opinion or expression of personal preference. It is based on personal grounds, it is purely subjective.

1.1.2.2.1 8 o'clock classes are a real torture.

1.1.2.2.2 Vanilla ice-cream is the best ice-cream on earth.

1.2. Supporting your claim:

As soon as you make a claim, a question you are likely to be asked is 'why do you make that claim?'

You should be ready to answer, to support your claim, to convince your interlocutor reader. There are several kinds of evidence you can use to construct your argument. Some of them are:

1.2.1 Facts: A fact is a statement accepted as true by everyone. It refers to a reality that can be measured or verified by objective means. Encyclopedias are among the best sources to find facts. But your own observation and experience can also provide you with facts. Facts are called 'hard evidence' and they carry a great deal of weight in an argument.

1.2.2 Statistics: In many kinds of arguments about economic, educational, or social issues, statistics may be essential. Make sure the sources you take your statistics from are reliable.

1.2.3 Authorities: to support your claim, you can also quote authorities in the field. This will establish your credentials as a writer and will add weight to your argument.

1.2.4 Anecdotes: brief stories, characterizing one particular occurrence that can very effectively provide evidence in an argument. Their specificity may be quite convincing if they seem to readers true to life. Anecdotes make a special contribution to argument through their correctness.

1.1.5 Scenarios: while an anecdote tells about something that actually happened, a scenario is a narrative that describes something that might happen. It makes an argument more vivid by raising and answering the question: 'what if?'

1.2.6 Textual evidence: with claims of value and claims of interpretation (see above), one of the best supports for your argument is parts of the actual text you are evaluating/interpreting : film criticism, literary analysis, etc.

Note: if you are quoting from a book for a literary analysis, make sure you know the techniques of quotations.

1.3. Handling Counterarguments:

If you want to win your readers' respect and attention, and maybe even their agreement, you have to anticipate their counterarguments: objections, alternatives, challenges, or questions. To anticipate counterarguments, try to imagine a reader's point of view on the subject, knowledge about the subject and familiarity with the issues.

There are three strategies in anticipating counterarguments: acknowledging, accommodating, and refuting counterarguments.

1.3.1. Acknowledging counterarguments:

This strategy lets your reads know that you are aware of their objections and questions. By listing these possible objections, and discussing each one of them, you appear to have explained the issue thoroughly; and readers will respond positively to your writing here.

1.3.2 Accommodating Counterarguments:

Careful arguments writers often acknowledge their readers' objections, questions, and alternative causes or solutions. Occasionally, however, they may go even further: they accept these counterarguments and even incorporate them in their own arguments. This is very disarming strategy to readers.

Your readers' objections and questions cannot -always or all of them- be accommodated. Sometimes, they must be refuted. When you refute a counterargument, you are asserting that it is wrong and you are arguing against it. Keep in mind, however, that refutation should not be delivered arrogantly or dismissively. You should not dismiss readers' counterarguments with a wave of the hand. Making concessions in an argument, if handled effectively, can strengthen your position rather than weaken it. The trick here is to adopt a restrained tone and keep in mind that you are advancing an argument, you are not having one.

2. Logical Fallacies:

Fallacies are errors or flaws in reasoning. Although essentially unsound, fallacious arguments seem superficially plausible and may have persuasive power. They are not always deliberate efforts to deceive readers; they may be accidental, resulting from misleading or evidence and/or counterarguments and/or language.

- 2.1. Begging the question: arguing that a claim is true by repeating the claim in different words (circular reasoning) 'boxing is dangerous, and because it is dangerous it ought to be outlawed'.
- 2.2. Confusing chronology with causality: assuming that because one thing preceded another, the former caused the latter.
- 2.3. Either/or reasoning: assuming there are only two sides to a question, and presenting yours as the only correct one.
- 2.4. Failing to accept the burden of proof: asserting a claim without presenting a reasoned argument to support it.
- 2.5. False analogy: assuming that because one thing resembles another, conclusions drawn from one also apply to the other
- 2.6. Overreliance on authority: assuming something is true simply because an expert says so and ignoring evidence to the contrary.
- 2.7. Hasty generalization: offering only weak or limited evidence to support a conclusion.
- 2.8. Oversimplifying: giving easy answers to complicated questions, often by appealing to emotions rather than logic.
- 2.9. Personal attack: demeaning the proponents of a claim instead of their argument
- 2.10. Sob story: manipulating readers' emotions in order to lead them to draw unjustified conclusions
- 2.11. Straw man: directing an argument against a claim that nobody actually holds or that everyone agrees is very weak (a straw man is easily knocked off).

Argumentative essay

I. What is an argumentative essay?

In an argumentative essay, the writer's purpose is to persuade the reader to agree with his or her opinion about a controversial topic. In an argumentative essay, sometimes called **persuasive essay**, the writer states his or her opinion, gives reasons to support it and tries to convince thereader that he or she is right.

The topic you choose for an argumentative essay should have two sides. In other words, your topic should have a pro argument and con argument

II. How to convince your reader? Counterargument and refutation

Your job as the writer of an argumentative essay is to convince your readers that your opinion about the topic (your **thesis statement**) is the most valid point of view. To do this, your essay needs to be balanced; it must include an opposing viewpoint or **counterargument** (the **counterargument** goes against your **thesis statement**). Even thoughyou are arguingone side of an issue (either for against), you must think about someone on the other side of the issue would argue. As soon as you give your opponent's point of view, you must offer a **refutation** of it (A **response** to the counterargument that disapproves it). This means that you refute the other point of view or show how it is wrong. If you give only your opinion, your essay will soundlike propaganda and your readers will not be convinced of your point of view.

Look at this example

Counter argument Opponents of mandatory uniforms say that students who wear school uniforms cannot express their individuality. This point has some merits on the surface. However, as stated previously, school is a place to learn, not to flaunt wealth and fashion. **Refutation**

Practice:

Activity I

- Imagine that you are having an argument with a friend about your topic. She disagrees with your opinion. What do you think will be the strongest argument against your point of view?How will respond to this counterargument? Your answer is your refutation
- Some people believe that children are too materialistic these days. For example, they may be too interested in wearing brand-name clothes and shoes. What is your opinion?

A Sample Argumentative Essay: The School Uniform Question

Individualism is a fundamental part of society in many countries. Most people believe in the right to express their own opinion without fear of punishment. This value, however, is coming under fire in an unlikely place-the public school classroom. The issue is school uniforms. Should public school students be allowed to make individual decisions about clothing, or should all students be required to wear a uniform? School uniforms are the better choice for three reasons.

First, wearing school uniforms would help make students' lives simpler. They would no longer have to decide what to wear every morning, sometimes trying on outfit after outfit in an effort to choose. Uniforms would not only save time but also would eliminate the stress often associated with this chore.

Second, school uniforms influence students to act responsibly in groups and as individuals. Uniforms give students the message that school is a special place for learning. In addition, uniforms create a feeling of unity among students. For example, when students do something as a group, such as attend meetings in the auditorium or eat lunch in the cafeteria, the fact that they all wear the same uniform gives them a sense of community. Even more important, statistics show the positive effects that school uniforms have on violence

and truancy. According to a recent survey in a large school district in Florida, incidents of school violence dropped by 50 percent, attendance and test scores improved, and student suspensions declined approximately 30 percent after school uniforms were introduced.

Finally, school uniforms would help make all the students feel equal. Students' standards of living differ greatly from family to family, and some people are well-off while others are not. People sometimes forget that school is a place to get an education, not to promote a "fashion show." Implementing mandatory school uniforms would make all the students look the same regardless of their financial status. School uniforms would promote pride and help to raise the self-esteem of students who cannot afford to wear expensive clothing.

Opponents of mandatory uniforms say that students who wear school uniforms cannot express their individuality. This point has some merit on the surface. However, as stated previously, school is a place to learn, not to flaunt wealth and fashion. Society must decide if individual expression through clothing is more valuable than improved educational performance. It is important to remember that school uniforms would be worn only during school hours. Students can express their individuality in the way that they dress outside of the classroom.

In conclusion, there are many well-documented benefits of implementing mandatory school uniforms for students. Studies show that students learn better and act more responsibly when they wear uniforms. Public schools should require uniforms in order to benefit both the students and society as a whole.

1. The topic of this essay is school uniforms. What is the hook in the first paragraph?
2. What is the thesis statement?
3. Paragraph 2, 3 and 4 each give a reason for requiring school uniforms. There reasons can be found in the topic sentences of each paragraph. What are the reasons?
 - Paragraph 2:.....
 - Paragraph 3:.....
 - Paragraph 4:.....
4. In paragraph 4, what supporting information does the writer give to show that uniforms make students equal?
5. Which paragraph presents a counterargument --an argument that is contrary to, or opposite of, the writer's opinion?.....what is the counterargument?
6. The writer gives a refutation of the counterargument by showing that it is invalid, what is the writer's refutation?
7. Write the sentence from the concluding paragraph that restates the thesis.
8. Reread the concluding. What is the writer's opinion about this issue?

III. Developing argumentative essays: outlining and adding supporting information

A. Outlining

The following outline, which is designed for an argumentative essay, is missing some supporting information. Use your imagination and knowledge to complete it then compare it with a partner.

Topic: Mandatory physical education in school

I. Introduction (paragraph 1)

Thesis statement: physical education should be required for all public school students in all grades

II. Body

A. Paragraph 2 (Pro argument 1). TS: physical education courses promote children's general health

1. Researchers have proved that exercise has maximum benefits if done regularly

2.

3. Students should learn the importance of physical fitness at an early age

B. Paragraph 3(Pro argument 2). TS: Physical education teaches children transferable life skills

1. Kids learn about team work while playing team sports

2. Kids learn about the benefits of healthy competition

3.

C. Paragraph 4 (Pro argument 3). TS:.....

1. Trained physical education teachers can teach more effectively than parents

2. Physical education teachers can usually point students toward new and interesting sports

3. School generally have the appropriate facilities and equipment

D. Paragraph 5 (Counter argument and refutation)

1. Counterargument: Some parents might disagree and claim that only academic subjects should be taught in school

2. Refutation: Then again, most parents do not have the time or resource to see to it that their children are getting enough exercise.

III. **Conclusion** Paragraph 6 (restated thesis):

Physical education has often downplayed as a minor part of daily life. If its benefits are taken into account and if school adopts a twelve-year fitness plan, the positive results will foster a new awareness of not only physical fitness but also communication skills .

B. *Adding supporting information*

- Use the above exercise or outline to write a tentative argumentative essay. Take the following suggestions into account:

❖ Language focus

In an argumentative essay, good writers are aware of how their arguments sound. Are they too strong? Not strong enough? Certain words can help control the tone of the argument.

- **Asserting a Point:** Strong modals such as must and had better help writers to assert their main points. When you use these words, readers know where you stand on an issue .e.g.

- *The facts clearly show that researchers must stop unethical animal testing*
- *People who value their health had better stop smoking now*

- **Acknowledging the Opposite Point :**Weaker modals such as may, might, could, can and would help writers make an opposing opinion sound weak. e.g.

- *Some citizens may be against mandatory military service, but those who do serve in the military often have a strong sense of pride and strong personal satisfaction*

❖ Avoid faulty logic

Logic can help prove your point and disprove your opponent's point and perhaps change the reader's mind about an issue. If you faulty logic, readers will not believe you or take your position seriously. To persuade readers, try to these errors in your writings

- **Sweeping Generalizations:** words such as all, always and never are too broad and cannot be supported

- *All Americans eat fast food*

- **Event related only by sequence:** when one event happens, it does not necessarily cause a second event to happen, even if it follows the other in time

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**Argumentative Essay
(Practice)**

Complete the following plan of an essay by providing the missing arguments, supports and counter-arguments. Then write a complete essay based on the plan.

Keeping Your Hands Clean and Dry

Introduction: Although some people don't like using automatic hand dryers in restrooms, it may actually be argued that motion-sensing hand dryers are a practical alternative to paper towels. More and more businesses are investing in automatic hand dryers for their restrooms today. For one reason, they are more sanitary than paper towels. Secondly, they are actually cheaper than using paper towels. Lastly, automatic hand dryers keep the restrooms cleaner. I believe that schools should consider investing in automatic motion-sensing hand dryers in all the restrooms as they would benefit from their sanitary, low price and cleanliness properties.

Pro-argument 1: The automatic hand dryer is very sanitary.

Evidence1: Instead of pulling on a lever that has been touched by a large number of students, users can just stick their hands under the air dryer.

Detail:

Evidence 2: Just think how the attendance rate would improve.

Detail:

Concluding sentence: This would keep kids' hands germ-free.

Pro-argument 2:

Support 1:

Detail 1: Students continuously pull on the lever, dispensing towels that they do not really need. It is annoying to find the dispenser empty.

Detail 2: Our custodian is called several times a day to bring in bundles of replacements, just because some kids are wasteful.

Support 2:

Detail: An automatic hand dryer costs approximately \$500, with very little additional cost over time. On the other hand, paper towels can cost \$25 a case, or about \$500 a year, since we use about 20 cases each year.

Concluding sentence:

Pro-argument 3: School bathrooms are a paper towel mess!

Support 1: There are always piles of paper towels on the floor.

Detail: Sometimes the extras fall from the dispenser unused.

Support 2:

Detail: But if they miss the target, the paper ball stays on the floor. Sometimes the towels are even tossed to the ceiling like spitballs.

Concluding sentence:

Counter-argument:

People stand in front of the hand dryers for just a few seconds, and they are disappointed that their hands do not feel dry.

Refutation: However, studies have shown that when people dry their hands for at least 30 seconds, automatic dryers actually dry much better than paper towels.

Support:

Concluding paragraph:

.....

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.....

Does Freedom of Speech Give People the Right to Use Hate Speech?

Introductory paragraph

Motivator: *"What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist"*
Salman Rushdie.

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Thesis statement: Given the fact that every individual is allowed to express thoughts and beliefs, banning the negative comments would, in fact, deny his or her basic rights i.e. freedom of speech.

Pro Argument 1: Freedom of speech reinforces all other human rights, thus allowing society to develop and progress at a constant rate.

S1:.....

Throughout the history, society evolved thanks to the individuals, great thinkers, brave leaders, who were not scared to express their beliefs.

S 2: Back in time, those beliefs that were contrary to the typical "mindset" would be considered as hate, a hatred towards their way of life, culture, and tradition.

The most reputable professors, experts, and campaigners only confirm that free speech has always been used to fight for change, for better times.

Pro Argument 2:.....

S1: We need to hear other people's views as well as offering them our own opinions.

.....

S2: We should feel comfortable exchanging ideas and thoughts with those who have opposing views.

.....

.....

Counter-argument:.....

..... However, if we start banning people from expressing their beliefs, then what comes next? eventually, the mankind would live in fear of saying anything. The reality is that the society has become oversensitive; everything one does not agree with is considered insulting and branded as hate.

Concluding paragraph:

.....

.....

.....

What our society needs today are not limitations of free speech, but making efforts to establish dialogues between people with conflicting beliefs. Listening and being heard will go a long way; that way we could build bridges instead of burning them.