

Writing an ARGUMENT (PERSUASIVE ESSAY)*

Tests for an Argument Topic

- **A good topic** – concerns a matter of opinion, that is, a conclusion drawn from evidence.
 - Can be disputed: others might take a different position.
 - Will be disputed: it is controversial.
 - Is something you care about and know about.
 - Is narrow enough to argue in the space and time available.
- **A bad topic** – does not offer scope for disagreement.
 - Cannot be disputed because it concerns a fact, such as the distance to Saturn or the functions of the human liver.
 - Will not be disputed because few if any disagree over it, for example, “child abuse is wrong.”

Conclusion of Essay will include a restatement of your thesis, a summary of your argument, and a last appeal to readers. The conclusion may be one or more paragraphs, depending on the complexity and the length of your argument.

Checklist for Revising an Argument (Persuasive Essay)

- Is your thesis an arguable assertion?
- Have you considered your readers’ needs for information and their probable beliefs and values?
- Does your thesis derive from induction, deduction, or both?
- Is your evidence accurate, relevant, representative, and adequate?
- Have you combined rational, emotional, and ethical appeals?
- Have you avoided logical fallacies? (see handout “Logical Fallacy Checklist”)
- Have you acknowledged the opposition?
- Have you organized your argument clearly and effectively?

* Adapted from Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron, *The Little, Brown Handbook*, 10th Ed., New York: Pearson Longman, 2007, 199, 213-214.