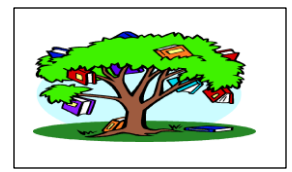


Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



The Argumentative Essay

This type of essay, also called a *persuasive* or *illustration* essay, is one of the most useful in the real world. It is your job to make a controversial claim about a particular issue and then support that claim with persuasive evidence. This evidence may take the form of personal experience, concrete examples, expert testimony, or really anything to get readers on your side.

Purpose: to convince readers of a claim and possibly persuade them to take action

Perspective: third-person (*he, she, it, one, they...*)

Organization: in order of importance (least to most), with each point leading logically into the next

Typical Structure:

1. **Introduction:**
 - a. Attention-getter focusing the reader on a particular issue?
 - b. Background information providing context for the issue
 - c. Relevance of the issue to readers
 - d. *Thesis:* A strong, arguable claim with a hint of the supporting points to come
2. **Body (each paragraph):**
 - a. *Topic sentence:* Major point supporting the thesis statement
 - b. Evidence for this point using *logos* (logic), *ethos* (authority), or *pathos* (emotion)
 - c. Example(s) illustrating this point?
 - d. Transition to the next major point
3. **Conclusion:**
 - a. Concise summary of the main claim and supporting evidence
 - b. Overall significance of this claim
 - c. Prediction or advice for readers?

Notes:

- Your thesis should make a claim that many people would disagree with. It is your job to convince these people that your argument is in fact valid.
- Know your *audience*. Do they probably disagree with you, agree with you already, or have no opinion one way or the other? You may need to provide several examples to *illustrate* your point.
- Experts can be quoted in support of your argument to give it greater credibility.
- Opposing arguments may be acknowledged, but they should be downplayed and discredited if possible. Their inclusion should only strengthen your argument, not make you seem uncertain or wishy-washy.