

Department of English

Module: CPE

Level: Third Year Students (G 1&2)

Teacher: Zaidi Khadidja

Argumentative Essays

Objectives

Students are expected, by the end of the lecture, to:

- Understand the structure of argumentative essays.
- Practise writing argumentative essays.

An argumentative essay, by definition, is one of the types of essays where writers can agree or disagree about a given topic and provide solid reasons and evidence to support their stands and convince readers. However, writers should also tackle opponents’ points of view and, in most cases, refute them. This entails that they discuss any kind of problems with those views to point out that they are not good, convincing reasons. In doing so, writers give more chance for readers to listen to their own viewpoints (Oshima & Hogue 2006),

Organization of Argumentative Essays

To organize an argumentative essay, writers can depend on various patterns, such as the block pattern or the point-by-point pattern. Oshima and Hogue (2006) outlined both patterns as follows.

Block Pattern	Point-by-Point Pattern
I. Introduction Lead in Explanation of the issue Thesis statement	I. Introduction Lead in Explanation of the issue Thesis statement
II. Body Block 1	II. Body A. Statement of the other side’s first

A. Summary of other side’s arguments	argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument
B. Rebuttal to the first argument	
C. Rebuttal to the second argument	B. Statement of the other side’s second argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument
D. Rebuttal to the third argument	
Block 2	
E. Your first argument	C. Statement of the other side’s third argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument
F. Your second argument	
G. Your third argument	
III. Conclusion -may include a summary of your point of view	III. Conclusion -may include a summary of your point of view

Interestingly, writers should take into consideration the topic of the essay to choose which pattern suits best to discuss their views and opponents’ point of view as well.

Consider the following sample essays and try to find out the organization of each one.

Sample Argumentative Essay 1: The Block Pattern (Barbee, 2015)

The School Uniform Question

Individualism is a fundamental value in the United States. All Americans 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? Importantly, mandatory school uniforms are the students’ better choice for two reasons.

First, wearing school uniforms would help make students’ lives simpler; therefore, students have to wear the uniforms. Interestingly, students would no longer have to decide what to wear every morning because trying on outfit after outfit in an effort to choose can be very tiring. If this action was timed, it would

probably take a person at least twenty minutes to try on just two outfits. A person could use this time for more important things such as reviewing the contents of a new chapter or going over important revision questions. Moreover, uniforms would not only save time but also would eliminate the stress often associated with this chore. It is a well known fact that people do not only have one piece of clothing in their closets; they have many things to choose from; ranging from T-shirts to shoes. Therefore, imagine every morning having to decide on a specific combination of items to put together to wear what is different from the one that was worn the day before. It is a very stressful activity for any normal human being.

Second, school uniforms influence students to act responsibly in groups and as individuals; this constitutes another reason for wearing uniforms at school. Importantly, 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 would create 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 Hillsborough County, Florida, incidents of school violence dropped by fifty percent, attendance and test scores improved and student suspensions declined approximately thirty per cent after school uniforms were introduced. This evidence clearly proves that uniforms are better.

Opponents of mandatory uniforms say that students who wear school uniforms cannot express their individuality. This point has some merit on the surface. However, 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; therefore, students can express their individuality in the way they dress outside of the classroom.

In conclusion, there are mainly two reasons for implementing mandatory school uniforms for students. I believe that students learn better and act more responsibly when they wear uniforms. It is in my opinion that public schools should require uniforms in order to benefit both the students and society as a whole.

Sample Argumentative Essay 2: The Point-by-Point Pattern (Oshima & Hogue, 2006)

Separating the Sexes, Just for the Tough Years

The middle school years (grades 7 and 8) are known to be the tough years. These are the years when the uneven pace of girls' and boys' physical, emotional, and cognitive development is most noticeable. Girls are ahead of boys on all counts, and both suffer. Educators debate whether separating boys and girls during these difficult years might improve students' academic performance. Separate classes are now prohibited in public schools that receive federal funds, but a change in the federal law that prohibits them is under consideration. Although some parents and educators oppose same-sex classes, there is some evidence that separating girls and boys in middle schools yields positive results.

Opponents of single-sex education claim that test scores of students in all-girl or all-boy classes are no higher than those of students in mixed classes (Sudy, 2004). However, the research is inconclusive. Despite the fact that some research shows no improvement in test scores, other research shows exactly opposite results (Blum, 2002). More important, many psychologists believe that test scores are the wrong measuring sticks. They believe that self-confidence and self-esteem issues are more important than test scores. In same-sex classes, girls report increased confidence and improved attitudes toward math and science, for example (Study, 2004). These are results that cannot be calculated by a test but that will help adolescents become successful adults long after the difficult years of middle school are past. New York University Professor Carol Gillian is

certain that girls are more likely to be “creative thinkers and risk-takers as adults if educated apart from boys in middle school” (Gross, 2004). Boys, too, gain confidence when they do not have to compete with girls. Boys at this age become angry and fight back in middle school because they feel inferior when compared to girls, who literally ‘out-think’ them. With no girls in the classroom, they are more at ease with themselves and more receptive to learning (Gross, 2004).

Opponents also maintain that separate classes (or separate classes) send the message that males and females cannot work together. They say that when students go into the work force, they will have to work side-by-side with the opposite sex, and attending all-girl or all-boy schools denies them the opportunity to learn how to do so (North, 2004). However, such an argument completely ignores the fact that children constantly interact with members of the opposite sex outside school. From playing and squabbling with siblings to negotiating allowances, chores, and privileges with their opposite-sex parent, children learn and practise on a daily basis the skills they will need in their future workplaces.

The final argument advanced by opponents of same-sex education is that it is discriminatory and, therefore, unconstitutional. However, research supports exactly the opposite conclusion: that discrimination is widespread in mixed classes. Several studies have shown that boys dominate discussions and receive more attention than girls and that teachers call on boys more often than they call on girls, even when girls raise their hands (North, 2004). Clearly, this is discriminatory.

It should be evident that the arguments against same-sex classes are not valid. On the contrary, many people involved in middle-school education say that same-sex classes provide a better learning environment. Boys and girls pay less attention to each other and more attention to their school work (Marquez, 2004). As one teacher noted, “Girls are more relaxed and ask more questions;

boys are less disruptive and more focused” (North, 2004). Girls are less fearful of making mistakes and asking questions in math and science; boys are less inhibited about sharing their ideas in language and literature. Furthermore, schoolchildren are not disadvantaged by lack of contact with the opposite sex because they have many opportunities outside the school setting to interact with one another. Finally, discrimination occurs in mixed classes, so discrimination is not a valid argument. Therefore, in my opinion, the law prohibiting same-sex classes in public schools should be changed.

Practice1: *Complete the outline of the second model essay.*

Separating the Sexes, Just for the Tough Years

I. Introduction (explanation of the issue)

Thesis Statement _____

II. Body

A. Opposing argument 1

Opponents of single-sex education claim that test scores show that there is no advantage to all-girl or all-boy classes.

Rebuttal to argument 1

1. Research is inconclusive-show opposite results

2. Other results that cannot be calculated

a. Girls _____

b. Boys _____

B. Opposing argument 2

Rebuttal to argument 2

a. Settling squabbles with siblings

b. Negotiating with opposite-sex parent

C. Opposing argument 3

Rebuttal to argument 3

a. _____

b. Teachers call on boys more often

D. Own point of view

1. Same-sex classes provide a better learning environment

2. Reasons

a. Boys and girls

b. Girls _____

c. Boys _____

III. Conclusion

The Introductory Paragraph

The introduction of an argumentative essay, as shown in the second model essay, explains the issue (some general statements that lead to the thesis statement). However, the writer can choose other options and start the introduction “with some surprising statistics, for example, or with dramatic story. For instance, the writer of the model essay could have opened with a dramatization of typical boys’ and girls’ behaviour in a mixed middle school class” (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p.147).

Formulating the Thesis Statement

The thesis statement clearly states the opinion of the writer and usually indicates the other side’s point of view (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, 2007).

Police departments say that curfew laws to control teenage gangs are necessary, but I feel that such laws are unfair, unconstitutional, and counterproductive.

The writers view is put in the independent clause and opponents’ view is introduced in the dependent clause.

subordinate structure

Despite the claims that curfew laws are necessary to control juvenile gangs,
main (independent clause)

curfew laws are clearly unconstitutional.

The following examples illustrate how to present opponents viewpoints and link them to the writers' ones.

Some people feel that the United States should have a national health care plan like Canada's.

Many think that genetically engineered crops are a grave danger to the environment.

Some people feel that the United States should have a national health care plan like Canada's; **however**, others feel that government should stay out of the health care business.

Practice 2: *Write an argumentative essay about the following topic:*

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? *"The most important element in friendship is trust"*.

References

Oshima, A & Hogue, A (2006). *Writing Academic English* (4th ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson/ Longman.

Oshima, A & Hogue, A (2007). *Introduction to Academic Writing* (3rd ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

Nonperiodical Web Document

Barbee, M. (2015). Argumentative Essay Writing. Retrieved June, 4, 2019 from https://www.matthewbarbee.com/uploads/1/6/8/9/16895428/argumentative_essay_worksheets_5.pdf