Drafting an Argument Essay

An argument paper is one in which the author takes a specific stance on a topic and attempts to sway the reader. Argument papers are not always assigned as such and may include certain types of research assignments or topic specific prompts.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction should do several things for the reader:

Set context – this is where the author can begin to give general background information and set up a “map” of what the paper will discuss

State importance – the introduction should also explain why the topic is important, it should compel the audience to read further and create interest in the topic

State the thesis – the thesis is the author’s argument or stance and, in general, it doesn’t matter where in the introduction the thesis is placed as long as it is clear

THESIS

What it is not:

The thesis is not the title; the thesis should have much more depth.

The thesis is not a declaration of subject, i.e. “I’m going to talk about…”

The thesis is not a factual statement; it must be debatable.

The thesis is not always one sentence; it is often difficult to put more complex arguments into such a simple format and multiple sentence theses are fine.

What it is:

The thesis should be unified and concise. Even if the thesis is expressed in multiple sentences, it should be clear and focused.

The thesis should be as specific as possible. It is very difficult to argue a broad topic, a specific thesis provides a more stable base for the paper.
THE BODY

There is no given format for an argument paper and it is acceptable to organize the paper in the way that it makes the most sense to you. If you are having difficulty organizing your paper in a unified format, however, here is a common outline for an argument called the Toulmin Method:

- Claim, or thesis
- Data, or supporting evidence
- Warrant or bridge, connecting and explaining the data and claim
- Backing or foundation, more information and reasoning to support warrants
- Counterclaim, the opposition to the claim
- Rebuttal, disputes or negates the counterclaim

In cases where there are multiple data and warrants:

- Claim
- Data 1
- Warrant 1
- Data 2
- Warrant 2
- Counterclaim
- Rebuttal

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is very similar to the introduction in that it gives a general overview of what has been discussed. This section also ties up any loose ends not confronted in the body of the paper. Many times, the thesis is restated in the conclusion for reinforcement.