What is an Argument Essay?

An argument essay tries to change the reader’s opinion or position on a subject. An argumentative thesis will state the opinion or position that the reader should hold and also explain why that opinion or position is best.

Suggestions for Writing an Argument Essay

- Choose a subject that different people could have different opinions about.
  - Your purpose is to argue in favor of an opinion or position. You have to choose a subject on which people disagree, so that you can argue one side or the other.
- Research the subject and decide what your opinion will be
  - You need to know about the subject in order to wisely choose a position.
- Understand the opposite opinion
  - Assume that your reader disagrees with you. Try to understand why the reader disagrees.
  - What arguments will change the reader’s mind? What counter-arguments would the reader think of? How could you respond to those counter-arguments?
- State a thesis that others could disagree with
  - “The Godfather is the greatest movie ever made.” Some people might agree with this statement, but others could disagree. Thus, you need to argue why this opinion is correct.

Tools for Arguing

- Logos
  - Logical Argument—logos uses logic or reason to prove a point; examples include cause-effect, comparison, contrast, “if-then” statements, and many other techniques.
  - Example: “If chocolate and peanut butter are good alone, then they must be better together.”
- Pathos
  - Emotional Argument—pathos uses emotion to prove a point; examples include moving stories, shocking statistics, powerful examples, and so on.
  - Example: “More people die from drinking unsanitary water than from war.”
- Ethos
  - Authority Argument—ethos uses authority or credibility to prove a point; examples include using one’s experience, expertise, education, etc.
  - Example: “After serving in Iraq, I know how the war has affected the Iraqi people.”
- Examples
  - Good examples can show the reader that a point is correct.
  - Example: “The Iraqi people complain about American companies, such as Smith Security.”
- Quoting Facts, Statistics, and Authorities
  - If you have the facts, statistics, and authorities (expert opinions) to support your position, then you can use this information to tell readers why they should also hold your position.
  - Example: “According to virtually all scientists, the earth is warming.”
- Anticipating and Responding to Counter-Arguments
  - If readers disagree with your position, they will think of reasons NOT to accept your argument. But if you explain why those reasons are wrong, you will leave the reader with no reason to disagree with your position.
An effective argumentative essay will have

- An Introduction that
  - Tells the reader what the topic or subject is
  - Provides background information on the topic, *especially on the debate surrounding the topic*
  - Shows awareness of the different perspectives and opinions on the topic
  - States a clear thesis that the reader could possibly disagree with
  - States specific support for the thesis

- Body paragraphs that
  - Begin with Topic Sentences that relate to your thesis and/or its specific support
  - Use one or more “tools for arguing” to develop the specific support for the thesis
  - Show awareness of different or opposing opinions
  - Anticipates and Counter-argues opposing opinions and arguments
  - Cite and introduce ALL outside research, opinions, or quotes
  - Explain *why* ALL outside research is relevant to your thesis
  - Explain *why* ALL outside research supports your thesis

- A Conclusion that
  - Restates the thesis
  - Summarizes the main support for the thesis