



# ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

# ARGUMENTATION

- The aim of writing argumentative essays is to convince or persuade the reader.
- One attempts to change the reader's mind and convince the reader to agree with the point of view or claim of the writer.
- So an argumentative essay needs to be highly persuasive and logical.

# Key Terms to Learn (p. 112)

Argumentation \_\_\_\_\_ 2

Refutation \_\_\_\_\_ 5

Proponent \_\_\_\_\_ 6

Opponent \_\_\_\_\_ 1

Counter Argument (CON) \_\_\_\_\_ 4

Pro Argument (PRO) \_\_\_\_\_ 3

1. a person who disagrees with something and speaks against it
2. the act or process of forming reasons, drawing conclusions, and applying them to a case in discussion
3. point or statement that supports one's ideas and/or thesis
4. point or statement in opposition to the argument being made in a written document or speech
5. the process of discrediting the arguments that oppose your thesis statement
6. someone who argues in favor of something; advocate

# WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF ARGUMENTATION?

- present an opinion on a controversial topic to the reader;
- explain, clarify and illustrate that opinion;
- persuade the reader that the opinion supported in the essay is valid by:
  - a. moving the reader to action,
  - b. convincing the reader that the opinion is correct, or
  - c. persuading the reader that the opinion is at least worth considering;
- support the opinion by means of giving *evidence*: facts, examples, physical description, support of authority, and statistics;
- present counterarguments to the thesis and refute them respectfully and critically.

# Sample Essay - Introduction

## ADVERTISING MANIPULATES VIEWERS

In the simplest form, advertising can be defined as a kind of message or message transmission that is designed to promote a product, service, or an idea.



definition

Today this basic marketing strategy has become a natural part of our daily life. Considering that the \$ 20 billion spent on advertisements in 1979 had drastically risen to \$120 billion in 1999 and that in the course of a lifetime, one will see about three years worth of advertisements on television and approximately 3,000 ads per day, a person may easily acknowledge the impact of advertising (DiChiara, 2008, para. 3).



facts

Nonetheless, as Giselle Touzard (2008) explains, advertising, which originally intended to be a source of information for people on the availability of products, “has developed into an industry that shapes people’s identity” (para. 2). Coming in various forms – in print, audio, or visual form – advertisements not only bombard audience with their messages, but they also sell the ideas of who we are and what we should do or be.



authority's  
opinion

Thus, advertisements are harmful for the society owing to their disruptive influence.



Thesis statement

# Sample Essay – Con Ref Paragraph

Some may argue that advertisements are beneficial. It is the contention of these supporters that advertisements are essential in keeping the market alive and rivalry hot. They believe that it is thanks to advertisements that companies working on the same line can display their products on the market equally and fairly.

→ An idea that is contrary to the thesis statement

However, this idea cannot go further than being an immature claim because this rivalry is unfair. It is only the companies who can “afford” broadcasting strong propaganda of their product that can actually survive in this competitive environment. In that sense, small companies are destined to be wiped out from the market.

→ Showing the weaknesses of this opposite argument

Proponents of advertisements may also assert that consumers become more “aware” and “conscious”. This position goes on to say that advertisements help the undecided customers come to a decision seeing all the available products on the media.

→ Another opposing claim

This point has merits on the surface and could be acceptable to an extent. It is true that advertisements inform the consumers on the availability and variety of goods. Yet, serious doubts can be raised against this view when one considers the shortcomings of the messages the viewers are exposed to.

→ Showing the weaknesses of this opposite argument

The target audience, that is the consumers, are forced to believe in illusions about the product rather than realities. When an advertiser focuses merely on the advantages of a product, it creates a false impression. Or when a commodity is equated with positive feelings such as happiness and self-confidence, this image builds up a false hope that once you buy it, you will be happy and self-confident. Eventually, when these illusions are not realized – as they have been lies of the advertiser all along -, the consumer is disappointed. The advertiser achieves the ultimate end and turns a gear in the consumer society, but it is a deception that is ethically unacceptable. The advertiser not only pushes the public deeper into consumption, but also disillusioned it with false messages.

The conclusion one needs to draw from these is that advertisements are detrimental.

# Sample Essay – Pro Paragraph

3 It is clear that advertisements manipulate viewers; first of all, they destroy societal balance as they draw on gender stereotypes.

4 Frequently advertisements make use of archetypes and myths for the sake of making the message striking and memorable. Thus, it is a common practice to represent women as decorative objects at home who are submissive to men. Studies have identified that in advertising women are less often used in work representations compared with men (as cited in Jacobson & Mazur, 2007, p. 217). In the advertisements of house appliances, especially, women are typically equated with housewives and mothers. Even when women are portrayed in professional environments, they are often in subordinate positions, receiving instructions. Hence, professional women are reduced to order-takers. Men, on the other hand, are commonly associated with power, leadership, and efficiency. It is especially in car advertisements that these features are paired with masculinity. Also, professional men are shown in powerful and influential positions, giving orders. It is mostly men who solve the problems, lead a company or pursue professional goals. This double standard in the illustration of genders not only reveals the mainstream view but also affirms it because when consumers buy the advertised products, one indirectly approves of the advertisements, and therefore contributes to keeping and reproducing certain representations. **Hence, advertisements destroy the possibility of a society where both genders are equal.**

→ Back to the thesis statement and original argument

→ Supporting techniques (example, explanation, authority's opinion)

# Sample Essay – Pro Paragraph 2

**Secondly, advertisements present unattainable body images both for men and women, and thus create an insecure society.**

Everywhere advertisements tell the audience what it means to be a desirable man or woman, just as directly as the advertisement that claims, “Image is everything”. For a man, the message is: You need to be athletic. It seems that whether a man is twenty or forty, whether he has brown or silver hair, an athletic body is indispensable for a strong, powerful, and confident man. The opposite is a caricature, just like the poor man, the anti-Mr. Muscle in the detergent advertisement. For a woman, too, the message is parallel: You need to be beautiful and skinny. Women are constantly exposed to gorgeous looking women who have the perfect hair or skin, and a body like that of a model. Although all these images are simple illusions, created by skillful makeup artists, photographers, or photo re-touchers who work on these meticulously, women unfortunately ignore this and delve into endless self-scrutiny. As Susan Brownmiller states, a woman is “forced to concentrate on the minutiae of her bodily parts, [and consequently she] is never free of self-consciousness. She is never quite satisfied, and never secure, for desperate, unending absorption in the drive for perfect appearance” (as cited in Jacobson & Mazur, 2007, p. 213). Due to this lack of self-satisfaction, today 25 per cent of women are dieting and another 50 per cent has recently started or quitted a diet (Jacobson & Mazur, 2007, p. 214). Some women take even more dangerous steps to be like the women they see in advertisements. They develop an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia. It is quite striking that today approximately one in five women have an eating disorder (p. 214).

**Hence, advertisements perpetuate disappointment as well as dissatisfaction in both genders.**



**Another argument which is parallel to the thesis statement**



**Examples, explanations, authority’s opinions, statistics to clarify the topic sentence**



# Sample Essay - Conclusion

All in all, attempts trying to justify the benignity of advertisements are destined to being feeble because advertisements cause apparent harms on public. These written, audio or visual messages reinstate stereotypes and consequently annihilate gender equality. They also portray impossible body images for men and women, which eventually manipulates the public and shakes self-esteem. Finally, advertisements exploit the future generations for their own end and cause irreversible impairment on their health and psychology.

→ Linker signalling the conclusion + summary of the main points

As Sarah Bernhardt (n.d, para. 3) remarks, “The monster of advertisement... is a sort of octopus with innumerable tentacles. It throws out to right and left, in front and behind its clammy arms, and gathers in, through its thousand little suckers, all the gossip and slander and praise afloat, to spit out again at the public.”

→ Authority's opinion

Therefore, we need to save ourselves from the evil tentacles of this monster and learn to make our own free choices, before it is too late.

→ warning

# HOW TO WRITE ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

## ● **STAGE 1: CHOOSING A TOPIC AND WRITING THE THESIS STATEMENT**

 **Decide on a controversial topic** (debatable and interesting)

 Write an argumentative thesis statement.

 Generate ideas (free writing or brainstorming)

# The Argumentative Thesis Statement

- The thesis statement should define the scope of the argument and make an assertion that is open to debate.

# Sample Argumentative Thesis Statements

- Something should be done on media bias.

This is **not** an effective argumentative thesis statement because it does not clearly state the writer's idea. The answers of questions like “what is that ‘something’ that should be done?” or “who should do it?” are not clear.

# Sample Argumentative Thesis Statements

- CNN is the best TV channel.

This is not an effective thesis statement.

This sentence is not debatable as it involves personal choice or preference.

# Sample Argumentative Thesis Statements

- There are 3 ways of media censorship.

This is **not** an argumentative thesis statement as the writer aims at listing the types of media censorship. Therefore, the writer's purpose of writing this essay is not to persuade the reader but to give information. Also, the ways of media censorship are not open to debate, thus, not suitable for argumentation.

# Sample Argumentative Thesis Statements

- **Newspapers should not identify people by color, race, or religious faith in any way.**

**This is an effective argumentative thesis statement. Firstly, the topic is open to discussion. There may be people who would oppose this argument claiming that this kind of restriction would damage the objectivity of the news. Therefore, the writer holds a clear stance. Above all, it is obvious that the writer's aim is not simply to inform the readers but to convince them to take his / her side in the debate.**

# THE EXPOSITORY THESIS STATEMENT VS. THE ARGUMENTATIVE THESIS STATEMENT

- Both expository and argumentative thesis statements express a certain opinion about a topic.
- **However, an expository thesis statement does not include a sharp opinion; rather, it discusses advantages, disadvantages, types, reasons, results, problems, solutions, processes, or categories of an issue often in the form of listing, enumeration, classification, or sequencing.**
- An argumentative thesis statement, on the other hand, **has a clear stance on a debatable topic, fiercely argues that the writer's opinion is correct and reflects this subjectivity both in its style and tone.**



# More Examples to Show the Difference

- There are three main reasons why the media manipulate the news.

This thesis statement is not argumentative.

Although the writer has the assumption that the media manipulate the news, the aim of this essay is not to convince the reader on this issue, but to simply list the three reasons for media manipulation. The reader, too, expects to learn the three reasons.

# More Examples to Show the Difference

- The media should not manipulate the news in any way.

**This thesis statement is acceptable as an argumentative thesis statement** because the writer clearly takes a stand in the debate about whether the media should manipulate the news or not. Here, the writer intends to influence the mind of readers rather than to merely inform them.

# More Examples to Show the Difference

- **It is essential to be media literate for three reasons.**

This thesis statement is an expository thesis statement although the sentence includes a strong word, “essential”. The use of this word does not make the thesis statement an argumentative one because the aim here is to inform the reader about the three reasons. The reader, here, expects to read a list of the reasons without being forced to take a side. The writer does not hold a stance in an ongoing discussion.

# More Examples to Show the Difference

- It is essential that media literacy be taught in schools.

**This is clearly an argumentative thesis statement. Firstly, the topic is debatable. Secondly, the writer is clear about where in the discussion he stands. Finally, the purpose of the writer is to affect the readers' ideas on this issue.**

# On the Whole

- On the whole, while writing argumentative thesis statements, be sure to **have a debatable topic, state your claim and stance as strongly as possible and make the reader understand that your aim is to persuade rather than only to inform.**

# Time to Practice! (p. 114)

1. ARG. Censorship is the best way of controlling the minds of the citizens.
2. ARG. Newspapers should not identify victims of sexual assault without their consent.
3. INF. Parents control their children's TV viewing habits in three ways.
4. ARG. In war journalism, it is never appropriate to show on the news how a country's soldiers suffer in combat.
5. ARG. The only way to receive high ratings for a TV series is to cast attractive actors or actresses.

# Time to Practice! (p. 161)

6. INF. There are common practices that advertisers use to sell products.
7. INF. Politicians use various strategies to influence the media during their election campaigns.
8. INF. There are two main ways of manipulation in print media; false balancing, which means focusing on only one side of an argument; and slighting of the content, which aims at giving so much emphasis to style and so little to the actual substance.

# Time to Practice!

Choose **two** of the topics, and write an argumentative thesis statement for each.

1. war journalism
2. advertisements / commercials
3. reality programs
4. radio programs
5. the government
6. newspapers



## STAGE 2: GENERATING IDEAS

- After formulating your argumentative thesis statement, you need to brainstorm a variety of supporting ideas, counter arguments and ways to refute these opposing views.

# When Supporting your Argument

One important concern in writing an argumentative essay is to strengthen your argument. To do this, you need to base your argument on sound evidence. In supporting your argument, the evidence that you include can be facts, examples, support from authority (testimony), and statistics.

- **Facts:** data that have been objectively proven and are generally accepted (such as historical facts, scientific data, statistics etc.)
- **Examples:** should be sufficient number of examples to prove the case.
- **Opinions of experts**

# TASK 6 (p. 115)

1. It is clear that TV triggers violence. According to a study by the American Psychological Association (2005), the average child living in a developed country will view 8000 murders and 100.000 other acts of violence before finishing elementary school. The average 27 hours a week kids spend watching TV - much of it violent - makes them more prone to aggressive and violent behavior as adolescents and adults (p. 10). TV executives have known this for a long time. One of the most comprehensive studies of the impact of violent TV was commissioned by CBS back in 1978. It found that teenage boys who watched more hours of violent TV than average before adolescence were committing such violent crimes as rape and assault at a rate 49 percent higher than boys who watched fewer than average hours of violent TV (as cited in APA, 2005, p. 3).

Supporting technique used: **Statistics / Research Findings**

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## Task 6 (p. 115)

2. Not letting their children watch television as a punishment is a futile effort of parents since almost every effect of punishment is negative. Dr. Bruno Bettelheim (2003, p. 8), famous psychologist and professor at the University of Chicago, writes, “Punishment is a traumatic experience not only in itself but also because it disappoints the child’s wish to believe in the benevolence of the parent, on which his sense of security rests.” ...

Supporting technique used: Authority’s opinion / testimony

# Counter Arguments

One way to strengthen your argument is to show that you have a deep understanding of the issue and also to show that you can anticipate and address the counterarguments or objections that your audience may have. In this way you show that you have thought the issue in detail.

# Generating Counter Arguments

- How strong is the opposition?
- What arguments might be used against my thesis statement?
- How can I refute these arguments?
- Will I have to agree with some of these points?
- Which of my arguments might the opposition try to discredit?
- How closely does my audience identify with the opposition?
- Can I see any weak links in the opposition's thinking?

# Pro-Con Chart

- After finding pro and counter ideas for your topic, it may be a good idea to put these on a pro-con chart.
- **TASK 7 on pp. 163-164**

# Pro-Con Chart

Pro Arguments	Counter Arguments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Parents interfere with what their children watch. Society already supports censorship.</li><li>▪ Some programs manipulate the low-educated/ illiterate.</li><li>▪ Censorship is good for the society as a whole (It serves the common good).</li><li>▪ Not all adults are mature enough to decide what is good for them.</li><li>▪ Society needs rules and regulations; otherwise, things get out of control.</li><li>▪ There are biased news, “indecent” programs under the name “work of art”.</li><li>▪ There is cultural degeneration.</li><li>▪ Turkish cultural norms require such interference because we are a conservative society.</li><li>▪ Children need protection (from violent scenes, pornography, suicidal incidents, and the like.)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ It does not distinguish between works of art and others.</li><li>▪ Who shall the censor be? Who’s the person to decide for us? What qualifications should this “superior being” have?</li><li>▪ There are solutions other than censorship (e.g. paying fines).</li><li>▪ This kind of censorship causes economic loss for TV channels.</li><li>▪ Banning films has the effect of drawing extra attention to them.</li><li>▪ RTÜK cuts and bans indiscriminately; takes subjective decisions.</li><li>▪ Censoring TV programs is not a solution; markets always exist. (e.g. pornography).</li><li>▪ Censorship limits and controls the way people feel and think (not consistent with the ideals of democracy).</li></ul>



# Counter Arguments

Sometimes it may be difficult to anticipate the counterarguments. Here are some strategies that you can make use of if you are having difficulty at this stage:

- Do some research. It may seem to you that no one could possibly disagree with your position, but you will be astonished to find that someone most probably already has.
- Talk with a friend or your instructor. Someone else may point out certain counterarguments that may never have occurred to you.
- Consider the thesis and your supporting arguments and think of how people may object to each of them.

# Refuting the Counter Arguments

## Refuting Counter Arguments by Claiming that they are:

1. **Incorrect:** demonstrating that your opponent's reasoning is wrong because it is based on incorrect or misleading information
2. **Irrelevant:** showing that your opponent's viewpoint is inappropriate and unrelated because it is not relevant to the key point
3. **Insufficient:** showing that your opponent's reasoning is weak because it is based on insufficient information or ignores significant information. Partially agree with the opponent's point of view but on the whole prove that it is weak

# Task 8

1. Opponents of RTÜK claim that censorship limits and also controls the way people feel and think. They argue that such an institution contradicts the ideals of democracy. This idea is flawed because organizations such as RTÜK do not aim to control what people watch, but rather aim to “regulate” what is being shown on the screen. This is because people need to be protected from the negative influence of certain programs. For example, children need protection unless they are continuously monitored by their parents who are cautious of the potential harms of TV viewing. Undoubtedly, no parent would want their children to be exposed to violent murder scenes on TV as “such programs may breed violence in children starting from very early ages” (Nell, 1999, p.12). Therefore, if parents, as in the case of working parents, do not have time and energy to protect their children from violent images on the screen, this should be done by an outside control organism, which is RTÜK in Turkey. Is this control of thought? Is this control of feelings? Definitely, it is not. Moreover, it is not only in Turkey that institutions such as RTÜK exist. Many democratic countries all over Europe have similar regulations as every society operates on some rules and regulations. Hence, it is not correct to link these regulations to the concept of democracy anyway. This is not an issue of democracy. It is an issue concerning the common good of the society, and RTÜK serves the common good of our society.

The refutation technique used: **incorrect**

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# Task 8

2. Those who think that RTÜK should not have the right to interfere with what we watch assert that censors of TV programs make subjective decisions and censor programs discriminately. They may be right to some extent; some decisions taken by RTÜK in past years have been harshly criticized in newspapers. However, this does not mean that they always take the wrong decisions. When RTÜK, for example, punishes a channel broadcasting programs that include violence, pornography or racism, it is right in taking such decisions as this type of interference helps control the possible chaos in the society. As such contents result in moral deterioration in the long run, the control mechanism which is applied by RTÜK through warnings and punishments are for the benefit of the society. Moreover, RTÜK's decisions on such programs can never be considered wrong since such content is unacceptable and unethical according to the universal moral codes. Therefore, such borders of morality are strictly set and any program exceeding these borders should be warned and punished as RTÜK does.

The refutation technique used: **insufficient**

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# Task 8

3. People who harshly criticize RTÜK believe that censoring TV programs is not a solution to abolish inappropriate media messages. For example, they assert that programs that are censored such as pornography or horror movies still exist. To exemplify their claim, these people show pirate CDs of porn or horror movies, or simply the movie industry as their evidence. However, this idea is a totally new discussion which is not the main focus because TV industry is independent from these markets. The fact that there are such movies in theaters or CDs circling around does not mean that TV should also broadcast these materials. Unlike CDs that can be bought by the individuals will, TV exposes its messages to all people. Therefore, the cases of TV viewers and CD buyers are two separate cases. TV is the most widely used tool to convey media messages and it is for the society's own benefit if it is kept purified from programs or films which might have unethical or harmful effects on the viewers in some way.

The refutation technique used: irrelevant

# Important Reminder!

- When writing an argumentative essay, arguments which have been suggested by opponents and proponents should be made clear. Otherwise, the reader may be confused.
- Check your book (pp. 119-120) to learn some useful expressions that you can use when introducing counter arguments and signalling refutation.

# Sample Essay (Con Ref Paragraph)

**Some may argue that advertisements are beneficial. It is the contention of these supporters that advertisements are essential in keeping the market alive and rivalry hot. They believe that it is thanks to advertisements that companies working on the same line can display their products on the market equally and fairly.**

**However, this idea cannot go further than being an immature claim because this rivalry is unfair.** It is only the companies who can “afford” broadcasting strong propaganda of their product that can actually survive in this competitive environment. In that sense, small companies are destined to be wiped out from the market.

**Proponents of advertisements may also assert that consumers become more “aware” and “conscious”. This position goes on to say that advertisements help the undecided customers come to a decision seeing all the available products on the media.**

**This point has merits on the surface and could be acceptable to an extent. It is true that advertisements inform the consumers on the availability and variety of goods. Yet, serious doubts can be raised against this view** when one considers the shortcomings of the messages the viewers are exposed to. The target audience, that is the consumers, are forced to believe in illusions about the product rather than realities. When an advertiser focuses merely on the advantages of a product, it creates a false impression. Or when a commodity is equated with positive feelings such as happiness and self-confidence, this image builds up a false hope that once you buy it, you will be happy and self-confident. Eventually, when these illusions are not realized – as they have been lies of the advertiser all along -, the consumer is disappointed. The advertiser achieves the ultimate end and turns a gear in the consumer society, but it is a deception that is ethically unacceptable. The advertiser not only pushes the public deeper into consumption, but also disillusion it with false messages. The conclusion one needs to draw from these is that advertisements are detrimental.

# STAGE 3: ORGANIZING IDEAS INTO AN OUTLINE

## Outline Models

### *Model A*

Thesis Statement  
Pro argument I  
Pro argument II  
Pro argument III  
Counter Argument  
& Refutation  
Conclusion

### *Model B*

Thesis Statement  
Counter Argument  
& Refutation  
Pro argument I  
Pro argument II  
Pro argument III  
Conclusion

### *Model C*

Thesis Statement  
Counter Argument I &  
Refutation  
Counter Argument II  
& Refutation  
Counter Argument III  
& Refutation  
Conclusion

### *Model D*

Thesis Statement  
Counter Argument I &  
Refutation  
Counter Argument II  
& Refutation  
Counter Argument III  
& Refutation  
Pro argument  
Conclusion



# Important Reminder!

- As you have seen above, the writers of argumentative essays need to generate many supporting and opposing ideas to construct their argument and this much of information might cause some organizational problems. Here are the most common mistakes:

# Common Errors

- 1. The refutation does not refute the counter argument. In other words, the refutation is irrelevant to the counter argument.**

**Thesis statement: The medium of university education should be Turkish.**

**I. CON: Supporters of English as the medium of university education believe that English is the language in which most academic studies are published. Therefore, they maintain, our education should be in English so as to be able to better understand and respond to these studies.**

**REF: But learning English is very difficult and not everyone can master it.**

# Common Errors

2. In the counter argument refutation paragraph, one of the pro arguments, which is dealt with in another paragraph as well, is repeated as the refutation of the counter argument. In other words, the ideas are repetitious.

**Thesis statement: The medium of university education should be Turkish.**

- I. **PRO: It will make Turkish more prestigious if we use it in the academic and scientific context.**
  - II. **The students will be more successful.**
  - III. **CON: Supporters of English medium universities believe that English is the language of the academic publication, so having education in English will contribute to the students' future accomplishments.**
- REF: By doing so we miss the opportunity to make Turkish accepted in the academic circles; Turkish needs to be used in academic and scientific context so as to gain more prestige and be a world language.**

# Common Errors

3. The counter argument presented is not contradictory to the thesis statement. In other words, the counter argument does not present a direct opposition to the stance of the thesis statement.

Thesis statement: The medium of university education should be Turkish.

- I. CON: Opponents of this idea believe that English is a world language and everybody should learn it.

# Final Tips for Writing an Argumentative Essay

- Find a debatable topic.
- Word your thesis carefully to provoke thought or action.
- Do research.
- Make a pro-con chart.
- Outline your arguments so that they are focused and organized.
- Anticipate objections and differing viewpoints and show why your argument is stronger even if the others have some merit.
- Support all your claims with convincing evidence and reasoned analysis.
- Avoid logical fallacies; they weaken any argument.