

# FOCUS



## Argument Writing

# Focus



## **Argumentative Writing** with textual evidence

# Claims and Counterclaims in Argumentative Writing

Argumentative papers call the thesis a **CLAIM**.

A claim is always **DEBATABLE**.

They also must present the opposing viewpoint which is called a **COUNTERCLAIM**.



# Let's review argumentative writing.

## Many essays follow this pattern.



**Introduction** (An introduction can be more than one paragraph if the content requires.)

a hook or grabber to get the audience's attention

a claim **This is your FOCUS. To maintain FOCUS, always support your claim.**

a mention of a counterclaim

an overview of how the claim will be proven

These do not have to be in this order.

### Body

#### Paragraphs of Evidence and Elaboration

Topic sentence

Introduce Evidence

Elaborate on Evidence

Transition to next paragraph

#### The Counterclaim paragraph

Standards require that you “acknowledge” the opposing side, but you do not need to refute it. This brief paragraph can then be shortened to a sentence and included in one of the earlier paragraphs, or you can work on a true counterclaim which offers a rebuttal, or a reason why this claim is not as worthy. Do not go into much detail but name a counterclaim and briefly explain your reason why the counterclaim is faulty.

The body includes as many paragraphs as it takes to provide complete support taking into account the assignment and word / time limitations.

### Conclusion

Reinforce that your claim has been proven.

Give the essay a sense of completeness and closure

Leave an impression on the reader

**FOCUS – Argumentative writing with textual evidence**

# How to keep a paper FOCUSED

- ❑ The CLAIM is developed and maintained throughout.
- ❑ There is very little or no loosely related material.
- ❑ All evidence and supporting ideas are clear and convincing and support your claim.
- ❑ The opposing or alternate claim is clearly addressed.



# FOCUS—The Thesis

To maintain FOCUS in a paper, start with a clear thesis.

## Prompt:

Read the articles *Junk Food in Schools: A Harmless Pleasure* and *Junk Food in Schools: A Factor in Child Obesity*.

**Write an essay in which you argue for or against junk food being available in schools.**

Use details and evidence from the passage to support your response.



**Prompt:** Write an essay in which you argue for or against junk food being available in schools.

**Thesis A:** Junk food is being consumed by students in record numbers.

**Thesis B:** Junk food should be eliminated from schools because the obesity rate is too high and these foods lead to less productive learning.

**Thesis C:** Junk food is a quick solution to long days where lunch is only half an hour and students who need more calories are given options.

- Read each of these thesis statements and discuss what the rest of the paper will look like based on this one sentence.
- Which of these is the best thesis?
- Which is too narrow?
- Which is too broad?



# FOCUS—The Rest of the Paper

Next, draft a general outline of your paper to help you maintain focus.





# The Outline

## INTRODUCTION:

**Thesis:** Junk food should be eliminated from schools because the obesity rate is too high and these foods lead to less productive learning.

**Mention counterclaim:** People claim that students need to be responsible for their own eating habits and that students have healthy choices they can make.

## BODY:

**Point 1:** Obesity rates are very high for US children.

**Evidence from the text:** Childhood obesity has significantly risen in the United States within the last several decades.

**Point 2:** Sugar is bad for learning.

**Evidence from the text:** Too much sugar and salt may make an individual feel jumpy, then lethargic, as the sugar moves through their system.

**Counterclaim Paragraph:** Even though people might think a little bit of junk food in the day will not be too harmful, it is definitely not contributing to the well-being of students.

## CONCLUSION:

Wrap up the essay



# Write Each Body Paragraph

We'll do the first one together

**Topic Sentence(s):** Name one point supporting your thesis.

**Introduce and State Evidence:** Provide evidence (*reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and/or quotations*) from the text to support your claim.

**Elaborate on Evidence:** Show how the evidence proves the point you are trying to make in this paragraph. Give more detail.

**Concluding Sentence / Transition:** End your paragraph with a concluding sentence that wraps up this paragraph and moves into your next point.



## Sample Body 1 Paragraph:

In the United States, obesity rates are extremely high for children. According to the article *Junk Food in Schools: A Factor in Childhood Obesity*, “One of every three children is now considered overweight or obese.” One in three! That means that in a class of 21 students, seven of them will be overweight or obese. This number is just way too high. The proportion of overweight children eventually transfers to adults, and we don’t need a society in which one third of people are obese. Schools need to do their part to help students with healthy eating habits, beginning by taking the junk food option out of the cafeteria. Doing so can help society, and it can even help with students’ learning.

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### FIND & IDENTIFY:

- Topic Sentence(s)
- Evidence
- Elaboration
- Wrap Up (with Transition)

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**Now, finish each body paragraph and  
then write a conclusion.**

**Share your essay with a partner and  
check for FOCUS.**

