In memory of Steve Novak
beloved colleague, passionate teacher
Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Constructing Arguments ................................................................. 1
Argument in College Writing ........................................................................... 1
Argument & Audience .................................................................................... 2
  Engaging an Audience .............................................................................. 2
  Developing an Audience Analysis ......................................................... 3
Finding Arguments ....................................................................................... 4
Using Prewriting ........................................................................................... 4
  Journaling ................................................................................................. 4
  Freewriting ............................................................................................... 5
  Brainstorming ......................................................................................... 6
  Mapping .................................................................................................... 7
  Listing ..................................................................................................... 7
  Other Prewriting Techniques .................................................................... 8
Introductions & Conclusions ........................................................................ 10
  Introductions ......................................................................................... 10
  Conclusions ........................................................................................... 13
Argumentative Thesis .................................................................................... 13
Drafting & Integrating .................................................................................. 16
  Summarizing .......................................................................................... 16
  Paraphrasing .......................................................................................... 17
  Quoting ................................................................................................. 20
  Signal Phrases ....................................................................................... 20
Revising & Editing a Research Paper .............................................................. 21

Chapter 2 Rhetorical Analysis Arguments ................................................... 23
Ethos ............................................................................................................. 25
  Constructing Your Argument with Ethos .............................................. 25
Pathos .......................................................................................................... 27
  Constructing Your Argument with Pathos ............................................ 27
Logos ............................................................................................................ 29
  Constructing Your Argument with Logos ............................................ 29
Fallacies to Watch Out For ......................................................................... 30
  Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger) ............... 31
Rhetorical Analysis ...................................................................................... 34
  Sample Rhetorical Analysis of an Article ............................................. 35
  Sample Rhetorical Analysis of an Advertisement ............................... 41

Chapter 3 Definition Arguments ................................................................. 49
Constructing Your Argument ........................................................................ 50
Fallacies to Watch Out For .......................................................................... 52
  Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger) ............... 53
Sample Definition Arguments .................................................................... 54

Chapter 4 Causal Arguments ....................................................................... 60
Constructing Your Argument ........................................................................ 62
Fallacies to Watch Out For .......................................................................... 63
  Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger) ............... 64
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Evaluation Arguments</td>
<td>72-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructing Your Argument</td>
<td>73-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fallacies to Watch Out For</td>
<td>74-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger)</td>
<td>75-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample Evaluation Argument</td>
<td>76-88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rebuttal Arguments</td>
<td>82-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructing Your Argument</td>
<td>85-95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fallacies to Watch Out For</td>
<td>86-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger)</td>
<td>87-98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample Rebuttal Arguments</td>
<td>88-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Proposal Arguments</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructing Your Argument</td>
<td>95-101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fallacies to Watch Out For</td>
<td>97-101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger)</td>
<td>98-101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample Proposal Arguments</td>
<td>99-101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
Constructing Arguments

Argument in College Writing

In 1848, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton drafted “The Declaration of Sentiments,” she was thinking about how to convince New York State policy makers to change the laws to allow women to vote. Stanton, seen in the image on the right, was making an argument.

Some consider all writing a form of argument—or at least persuasion. After all, even if you’re writing a letter or an informative essay, you’re implicitly trying to persuade your audience to care about what you’re saying. But, formal argument in academic writing is something specific.

You may have been assigned persuasive essays in the past but didn’t have to use a formal argumentative structure. Some instructors differentiate persuasive writing and argumentative writing. Persuasive writing serves as a broader term for any kind of persuasion, and argumentative writing generally serves as a more specific term for a type of writing that follows certain argumentative structures. It relies heavily on logic and specific rhetorical strategies.
Argument & Audience

When it comes to making a convincing argument, audience awareness is extremely important.

In argument, perhaps more than any other genre, you have to be completely aware of and writing for your target audience. After all, the reason you’re writing at all is to convince your audience of something.

Different audiences require different approaches to convince an audience. The most important thing for you to begin to understand now is that argumentative writing is all about your audience, which means you’ll need to spend some time getting to know your audience.

This doesn’t mean you have to hang out with the people for whom you are writing. That may not be possible. It does mean you need to do some thinking and possibly some researching about who your audience is, what that audience knows about your topic or issue, and what biases or opinions that audience may already have. A good place to start is the web. Search for your topic or issue and then your audience. What can you find out?

Let’s look at an example. Let’s say you have decided to write about reducing the costs of textbooks at your college. You first have to decide who you need to convince. Since most of your fellow college students would agree with you on an issue like this, if you’re going to make a difference, you would need to target a different audience—perhaps college administrators. A good first step would be to head to the web to see what college administrators think about this issue. Then, as a second step, if you could interview a college administrator on your campus, you would have even more information.

Engaging an Audience

A successful argument doesn’t just show an understanding of the audience—it engages the audience. Anyone good at persuasion—an instructor, a comedian, a politician, or a
car salesperson—knows how to engage with their audience and earn their trust. Maybe they’re friendly without being fawning, or disarming without being pushy, or funny without being offensive. These are the skills you want to hone in the arguments you write. If you write an argument in an engaging manner by using interesting stories or anecdotes, use relatable questions or examples, or an unique writing style that gets the attention of your reader, then your audience is more likely to agree with your argument. If you write an argument that shows a clear understanding and sympathy for the opposing side, your audience is more likely to agree with your argument. If you write an argument that is infused with good-natured humor, your audience is more likely to agree with your argument. You need to consider what language will work for your audience, what kind of evidence will be persuasive, and how you can present that evidence in the most convincing manner possible.

Will your audience listen to you if you offend them? Probably not.

You won’t always be able to convince your audience to agree with your argument, but ideally, through engaging writing, you will be able to get them to listen to you and consider your points.

Developing an Audience Analysis

Whether your writing has a specific audience or allows you to choose your audience, try to take some notes and make some decisions about your audience.

Remember, you must think about what you know and what you need to know about your audience and ask yourself the following questions:

1. What are the demographics of my audience (things like age, gender, profession, education level, socioeconomic status)?
2. What does my audience already know about my issue?
3. What kind of language should I use to best suit this audience?
4. What kind of evidence will I need in order to be persuasive to my audience?
5. What adjustments will I need to make in my writing to be persuasive to my audience?
6. How can I balance how I feel about this issue with what my audience will need to read about this issue?
7. What risks am I willing to take with my audience? Am I willing to “push some buttons,” or do I want to present an even, formal tone?

Finding Arguments
Finding your way into an issue is no easy task. Once you have developed your topic idea, you have to decide how you’re going to approach your issue with your given audience at the time you are writing. You have to think critically about making good decisions as a writer, balancing your own needs with the needs of your audience. Essentially, writing an effective argument is about seeing outside of your own experiences and imagining how others might view your issue. This is definitely a form of critical thinking and gives you good practice at becoming the kind of writer who can be successful in any given writing situation.

Using Prewriting
Prewriting is a great way to get your thoughts going and to help you better see what your thinking is. When we use prewriting, we have a lot of options, but the idea is to get ourselves writing without any pressure.

Prewriting can be messy, “listy”, and totally creative. Prewriting is about what works for you to help you get some ideas down and your thoughts flowing.

Some options for prewriting include the following:

Journaling
Many people write in personal journals (or online blogs). Writers not only record events in journals, but also reflect and record thoughts, observations, questions, and feelings.
Journals are safe spaces to record your experience of the world. Use a journal to write about an experience you had, different reactions you have observed to the same situation, a current item in the news, an ethical problem at work, an incident with one of your children, a memorable childhood experience of your own, etc. Try to probe the why or how of the situation.

Journals can help you develop ideas for writing. When you review your journal entries, you may find that you keep coming back to a particular topic, or that you have written a lot about one topic in a specific entry, or that you’re really passionate about an issue. Those are the topics, then, about which you obviously have something to say. Those are the topics you might develop further in a piece of writing.

Here’s one sample journal entry. You’ll find ideas that the writer might develop further in a piece of writing:

The hot issue here has been rising gas prices. People in our town are mostly commuters who work in the state capitol and have to drive about 30 miles each way to and from work. One local gas station has been working with the gas company to establish a gas cooperative where folks who joined would pay a bit less per gallon. I don’t know whether I like this idea – it’s like joining one of those stores where you have to pay to shop there. You’ve got to buy a lot to recoup your membership fee. I wonder if this is a ploy of the gas company????

Others were talking about starting a petition to the local commuter bus service to add more routes and times as the current service isn’t enough to address workers’ schedules and needs. Still others are talking about initiating a light rail system but this is an alternative that will take a lot of years and won’t address the situation immediately. I remember the gas crunch a number of years ago and remember that we simply started to carpool.

In the Washington DC area with its huge traffic problems and large number of commuters carpooling is so accepted that there are designated parking and pickup places along the highway and it’s apparently accepted for strangers to pull over let those waiting know where they’re headed and offer rides. I’m not certain I’d go that far.

Freewriting
Freewriting is just what it says—writing freely, whatever comes into your mind, without caring about spelling, punctuation, etc. It’s a way to free up your thoughts, help you know where your interests lie, and get your fingers moving on the keyboard (and this physical act can be a way to get your thoughts flowing).

Try a series of timed freewritings. Set a timer for five minutes. The object is to keep your fingers moving constantly and write down whatever thoughts come into your head during that time. If you can’t think of anything to say, keep writing I don’t know or this is silly until your thoughts move on. Stop when the timer rings. Shake out your
hands, wait awhile, and then do more timed freewritings. After you have a set of five or so freewritings, review them to see if you’ve come back to certain topics, or whether you recorded some ideas that might be the basis for a piece of writing.

Here’s a sample freewriting that could yield a number of topics for writing:

I don’t think this is useful or helpful in any way. This is stupid, stupid, stupid. I’m looking out of my window and it’s the end of may and I can see that white cotton stuff flying around in the air, from the trees. One of my aunts was always allergic to that stuff when it started flying around in the spring. Don’t know offhand what type of tree that comes from. That aunt is now 94 years old and is in a nursing home for a while after she had a bad episode. She seems to have one now every spring. It’s like that old tree cotton triggers something in her body. Allergies. Spring. Trying to get the flowers to grow but one of the neighbors who is also in his 90s keeps feeding the squirrels and they come and dig up everyone’s flowerbed to store their peanuts. Plant the flowers and within thirty minutes there’s a peanut there. Wonder if anyone has grown peanut bushes yet? Don’t know . . . know . . .

Possible topics from this freewrite:
- Allergy causes
- Allergies on the rise in the U.S.
- Consequences of humanizing wild animals
- Growing your own food

Brainstorming
Brainstorming is like freewriting around a specific topic. It helps you bring your subconscious thoughts into consciousness, identifying as many ideas as possible that are related to a particular topic.

To brainstorm, let your thoughts about a specific topic flow, and list those thoughts.

Example
Squirrels
How to get them out of the garden
How to get rid of them ethically (without killing)
Squirrel traps
Repellents for squirrels
Types of squirrels
Brown vs. black vs. red squirrels
Flying squirrels
What they eat
Different types of play
Training squirrels
Hunting squirrels
Squirrels and cats
How they nest
Build nests in the same place each year
So, what happens once you’ve brainstormed a topic? Look over the list. Are there items that group together? Are there items that catch your interest as a thinker, researcher, and writer—items you want to know more about? Are there items that seem unrelated or not useful? Use your list as a starting place; it creates ideas for you, as a writer, to work with.

**Mapping**

Mapping or diagramming helps you immediately group and see relationships among ideas. Mapping and diagramming may help you create information on a topic, and/or organize information from a list or freewriting entries, as a map provides a visual for the types of information you’ve generated about a topic. For example:

![Diagram of squirrels and related topics]

Free web tools for mapping and diagramming:
- MindMeister
- Bubbl.us
- Coggle
- Lucid Chart

**Listing**

Making a list can help you develop ideas for writing once you have a particular focus. If you want to take a stand on a subject, you might list the top ten reasons why you’re taking that particular stand. Or, once you have a focused topic, you might list the different aspects of that topic.

**Example**

Ways to live a greener life:
- Use natural cleaning products without propellants
- Walk or bicycle to places nearby
- Use recycled products
- Take public transportation
- Recycle cans and bottles
- Use non-life-threatening traps instead of chemical squirrel repellents

As you review and work with your initial list, you'll find yourself revising it by adding or deleting items. Doing an initial list is a quick and useful way to develop ideas for writing.

**Other Prewriting Techniques**

The following prewriting strategies represent other techniques you may use to help generate ideas. The important thing to remember about prewriting is to find a strategy that works best for you. In order to do that, you might try the strategies listed here to see which one best fits the way you work.

**Asking Defining Questions**

If you have a broad topic you want to write about, but don’t quite know how to narrow it, ask defining questions to help you develop your main idea for writing.

**Example**

I want to write about school taxes.
- Why do only property owners (and not renters) in New York State pay school taxes?
- What percent of overall school funding comes from school taxes?
- Do other states fund schools in the same way?
- Does the state lottery system, initially designed to fund schools, actually support schools?
- Is there a limit to paying school taxes when one gets older and no longer has children in school?

Once you have your questions, you can work with the list to group related questions, and then decide whether your writing can logically deal with a number of the questions together or only one. Use questioning to help develop a focus for your writing.
Noting Pros and Cons

Once you know your topic for writing, develop ideas by pretending you’re preparing for a debate. List all of the pros and cons you can think of related to your topic. When you have your lists of pros and cons, you can then decide whether to include one or both sides in your writing.

Example

Smoking Outside of Buildings

Pros:
Conforms with state legislation for no smoking in the interiors of public places
Inconveniences smokers, perhaps an inducement to quit?

Cons:
Creates a wall of smoke that people need to walk through
Businesses must purchase and maintain a place for smokers to discard matches and cigarettes
Inconveniences smokers

The idea is to make some notes, review them, and see what you think. You may know a broad issue you want to work with, and prewriting can help you narrow it down. If you don’t have an issue yet, you can do things like list issues you are interested in and have heard about and then go from there.

Of course, talking to people helps, too! The key is to get your mind going, and some good prewriting strategies can help!
Introductions & Conclusions
The introduction and conclusion of an essay serve an important purpose: They provide a kind of framing for the body of an essay. That framing helps your audience better understand your writing. The introduction prepares your reader for the ideas that are to come in the body of your essay. The conclusion provides important reminders about key points from the body of your essay and provides you with an important opportunity to leave a lasting impression on your audience.

The following pages will help you develop a strong frame for your essay. You’ll want to write effective introductions and conclusions. After all, they are the first and last impressions your audience will have of your essay.

Introductions

There is no doubt about it: the introduction is important for any kind of writing. Not only does a good introduction capture your reader’s attention and make him or her want to read on, it’s how you put the topic of your paper into context for the reader.

But just because the introduction comes at the beginning, it doesn’t have to be written first. Many writers compose their introductions last, once they are sure of the main points of their essay and have had time to construct a thought provoking beginning, and a clear, cogent thesis statement.

Introductions Purpose
The introduction has work to do, besides grabbing the reader’s attention. Below are some things to consider about the purposes or the tasks for your introduction and some examples of how you might approach those tasks.

The introduction needs to alert the reader to what the central issue of the paper is.

Example
Few people realize how much the overuse of antibiotics for livestock is responsible for the
growth of antimicrobial—resistant bacteria, which are now found in great abundance in our waterways.

The introduction is where you provide any important background information the reader should have before getting to the thesis.

Example
One hundred years ago there were only 8000 cars in the United States and only 144 miles of paved roads. In 2005, the Department of Transportation recorded 247,421,120 registered passenger vehicles in the United States, and over 5.7 million miles of paved highway. The automobile has changed our way of life dramatically in the last century.

The introduction tells why you have written the paper and what the reader should understand about your topic and your perspective.

Example
Although history books have not presented it accurately, in fact, the Underground Railroad was a bi-racial movement whereby black and white abolitionists coordinated secret escape routes for those who were enslaved.

The introduction tells the reader what to expect and what to look for in your essay.

Example
In 246 BCE, Ctesibius of Alexandria invented a musical instrument that would develop into what we know as the organ. Called a hydraulis, it functioned via wind pressure regulated by means of water pressure. The hydraulis became the instrument played at circuses, banquets, and games throughout Mediterranean countries.

The thesis statement (typically at the end of the introduction) should clearly state the claim, question, or point of view the writer is putting forth in the paper.

Example
While IQ tests have been used for decades to measure various aspects of intelligence, these tests are not a predictor for success, as many highly intelligent people have a low emotional intelligence, the important human mental ability to reason about emotions and to use emotions to enhance thought.

Introduction Strategies
Although there is no one “right” way to write your introduction, there are some common introductory strategies that work well. The strategies below are ones you should consider, especially when you are feeling stuck and having a hard time getting started.
Consider opening with an anecdote, a pithy quotation, an image, question, or startling fact to provoke your reader’s interest. Just make sure that the opening helps put your topic in some useful context for the reader.

**Anecdote**

One day, while riding in the car, my five-year old son asked me why my name was different from his daddy’s. I welcomed the opportunity to explain some of my feminist ideas, especially my strong belief that women did not need to take their husband’s name upon marriage. I carefully explained my reasons for keeping my own surname. My son listened intently and was silent for a moment after I finished.

Then he nodded and said, “I think it’s good you kept your own name Mom!”

“You do?” I asked, pleased that he understood my reasons.

“Youp, because you don’t look like a Bob.”

**Question**

The study of anthropology and history reveal that cultures vary in their ideas of moral behavior. Are there any absolutes when it comes to right and wrong?

Overall, your focus in an introduction should be on orienting your reader. Keep in mind journalism’s five Ws: who, what, when, where, why, and add in how. If you answer these questions about your topic in the introduction, then your reader is going to be with you.

Of course, these are just some examples of how you might get your introduction started, but there should be more to your introduction. Once you have your readers’ attention, you want to provide context for your topic and begin to transition to your thesis, and don’t forget to include that thesis (usually at or near the end of your introduction).
Conclusions

A satisfying conclusion allows your reader to finish your paper with a clear understanding of the points you made and possibly even a new perspective on the topic.

Any one paper might have a number of conclusions, but as the writer you must consider who the reader is and the conclusion you want them to reach. For example, is your reader relatively new to your topic? If so, you may want to **restate your main points for emphasis** as a way of starting the conclusion. (Don't literally use the same sentence(s) as in your introduction, but come up with a comparable way of restating your thesis.) You'll want to smoothly conclude by showing the judgment you have reached is, in fact, reasonable.

Just restating your thesis isn’t enough. Ideally, you have just taken your reader through a strong, clear argument in which you have provided evidence for your perspective. You want to conclude by **pointing out the importance or worthiness** of your topic and argument. You could describe how the world would be different, or people’s lives changed if they ascribed to your perspective, plan or idea.

You might also **point out the limitations** of the present understanding of your topic, suggest or **recommend future action, study or research** that needs to be done.

If you have written a persuasive paper, hopefully, your readers will be convinced by what you have had to say!

**Argumentative Thesis**

**TIP:** Be careful not to introduce any new ideas in your conclusion; your job is to wrap up in some satisfying way, so the reader walks away with a clear understanding of what you have had to say.
Not all essays will require an explicitly stated thesis, but most argumentative essays will. Instead of implying your thesis or main idea, in an argumentative essay, you’ll most likely be required to write out your thesis statement for your audience. A thesis statement is a one- to two-sentence statement that presents the main idea and makes an assertion about your issue. You may have a longer thesis for much longer essays, but one to two sentences is a good general guideline. And, remember, in an argumentative essay, the assertion you present in your thesis is going to be particularly important.

When you make your assertion in your thesis, it should be clear and direct. You want your audience to have no doubt about your point. Of course, how assertive you are in your thesis and the content you choose to include depends upon the type of argumentative essay you are writing. Still, there are some basic guidelines to keep in mind when it comes to an argumentative thesis statement.

- Your thesis statement should be one to two sentences.
- Your thesis statement should clearly present the main idea of your essay and make some kind of assertion (even if that assertion is about bringing two sides together).
- Your thesis should not make an “announcement” about what your essay will cover. Instead, it should just present your assertion. For example, a thesis like this makes an announcement:

  In this paper, I will persuade you to vote for candidates who support education reform.

Instead you might write:

  Because our education system is in need of reform, we should vote for candidates who are willing to make the necessary changes.
• While there is no such thing as a “required” place for your thesis statement, most academic essays will present the thesis statement early on, usually near the end of the introduction. There is a reason for this. Audience members are more likely to understand and absorb each point as readers if you have told them, in advance, what they should be getting out of your essay. Still, you should check with your professor if you would like to present your thesis somewhere else, such as at the end of your essay.

• Your thesis statement is the most important sentence in your essay. It’s your chance to make sure your audience really understands your point. Be sure your assertion and your writing style are clear.
Drafting & Integrating

You have done a lot of work so far, and, now, it’s time to put all of that work together and begin drafting your research paper. Using your outline as a guide, you’ll begin to develop your ideas and integrate your source information.

When you develop your essay, you’ll be using your source materials to offer specific support for the points you’re making. You’re able to develop support using three different integration strategies:

1. Summarizing main ideas.
2. Paraphrasing supporting materials.
3. Quoting specific text.

Your authority as a scholar will be enhanced when you demonstrate your ability to use and integrate outside sources in a fair and attentive manner. By doing so, you help to demonstrate that you have carefully read and considered the material on your topic. Your reader sees not only your ideas alone, but also your points contextualized by the conversations of others. In this way, you establish yourself as one of the members of the community of scholars engaged with the same idea.

And, as you draft, remember that your writing doesn’t have to be perfect. It is important to work to get your ideas down and your source material integrated, which will be discussed in this step of the research writing process. However, you still have other steps of the process, revision and editing, which you’ll use to polish your work.

Summarizing
One way to integrate your source information is through summary. Summaries are generally used to restate the main ideas of a text in your own words. They are usually substantially shorter than the original text because they don’t include supporting material. Instead, they include overarching ideas of an article, a page, or a paragraph.

For example, in the first chapter of his 1854 book, Walden; or, Life in the Woods, Henry David Thoreau wrote the following:

Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the fictitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its
finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market. He has no time to be anything but a machine. How can he remember well his ignorance—which his growth requires—who has so often to use his knowledge? We should feed and clothe him gratuitously sometimes, and recruit him with our cordials, before we judge of him. The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly.

What is the main idea in the passage above? The following is one way the passage might be summarized.

In his 1854 text, Walden; or, Life in the Woods, Henry David Thoreau suggests that the human fixation on work and labor desensitizes man to the world around him, to the needs of his own intellectual growth, and to the complexity and frailty of his fellow humans.

NOTE: The summary accomplishes two goals: It contextualizes the information (who said it, when, and where). It lists the main ideas of the passage without using quotations or citing specific supporting points of the passage.

You should use summaries of your source materials when you need to capture main ideas to support a point you are making.

Paraphrasing
When you want to use specific materials from an argument to support a point you are making in your paper but want to avoid too many quotes, you should paraphrase.

What is a paraphrase?
Paraphrases are generally as long, and sometimes longer, than the original text. In a paraphrase, you use your own words to explain the specific points another writer has made. If the original text refers to an idea or term discussed earlier in the text, your paraphrase may also need to explain or define that idea. You may also need to interpret specific terms made by the writer in the original text.

Be careful not to add information or commentary that isn’t part of the original passage in the midst of your paraphrase. You don’t want to add to or take away from the meaning of the passage you are paraphrasing. Save your comments and analysis until after you have finished your paraphrased and cited it appropriately.

What does paraphrasing look like?
Paraphrases should begin by making it clear that the information to come is from your source. If you are using APA format, a year citation should follow your mention of the author.
For example, using the Thoreau passage as an example, you might begin a paraphrase like this:

Even though Thoreau (1854) praised the virtues of the intellectual life, he did not consider....

Paraphrases may sometimes include brief quotations, but most of the paraphrase should be in your own words.

What might a paraphrase of this passage from Thoreau look like?

Passage

“Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market.”

Paraphrase

In his text, Walden; or, Life in the Woods, Henry David Thoreau (1854) points to the incongruity of free men becoming enslaved and limited by constant labor and worry. Using the metaphor of a fruit to represent the pleasures of a thoughtful life, Thoreau suggests that men have become so traumatized by constant labor that their hands—as representative of their minds—have become unable to pick the fruits available to a less burdened life even when that fruit becomes available to them (p. 110).

Note that the passage above is almost exactly the same length as the original. It’s also important to note that the paraphrased passage has a different structure and significant changes in wording. The main ideas are the same, but the student has paraphrased effectively by putting the information into their own words.

What are the benefits of paraphrasing?

The paraphrase accomplishes three goals:

1. Like the summary, it contextualizes the information (who said it, when, and where).
2. It restates all the supporting points used by Thoreau to develop the idea that man is hurt by focusing too much on labor.
3. The writer uses their own words for most of the paraphrase, allowing the writer to maintain a strong voice while sharing important information from the source.

Paraphrasing is likely the most common way you will integrate your source information. Quoting should be minimal in most research papers. Paraphrasing allows you to integrate sources without losing your voice as a writer to those sources. Paraphrasing can be tricky, however. You really have to make changes to the wording.
Changing a few words here and there doesn't count as a paraphrase, and, if you don't quote those words, can get you into trouble with plagiarism.

Paraphrasing Structure
When you paraphrase, you have to do more than change the words from the original passage. You have to also change the sentence structure. Sometimes, students will struggle with paraphrasing because they have an urge to simply use the same basic sentence or sentences and replace the original words with synonyms. This is not a method that works for effective paraphrasing.

Let’s see what that looks like. Here’s an original quote from an article about a new video game based on Thoreau’s famous work, Walden.

Original Quote
“The digital Walden Pond will showcase a first-person point-of-view where you can wander through the lush New England foliage, stop to examine a bush and pick some fruit, cast a fishing rod, return to a spartan cabin modeled after Thoreau’s and just roam around the woods, grappling with life’s unknowable questions.”

Incorrect Paraphrasing
According to Hayden (2012), the Walden Pond game will offer a first-person view in which the player can meander within the New England trees and wilderness, pause to study foliage or grab some food, go fishing, return home to a small cabin based on Thoreau’s cabin, and just venture around in the woods, pondering important questions of life (para. 3).

Explanation
Here, you can see that the “paraphrase” follows the exact same structure as the original passage. Even though the wording has been changed, this would be considered a form of plagiarism by some because the sentence structure has been copied, taking this beyond just sharing the ideas of the passage. Let’s take a look at a better paraphrase of the passage.

Correct Paraphrasing
According to Hayden (2012), the upcoming video game Walden Pond is a first-person game that simulates the life and experiences of Thoreau when he lived at Walden Pond. Based upon Thoreau’s famous work, Walden, the game allows players to experience life in the New England woods, providing opportunities for players to fish, gather food, live in a cabin, and contemplate life, all within a digital world (para. 3).

Explanation
In this paraphrase, the student has captured the main idea of the passage but changed the sentence structure and the wording. The student has added some context, which is often helpful in a paraphrase, by providing some background for the game.
Quoting
Quotations are another way to integrate source information into your paragraphs, but you should use them sparingly.

How do you know when you should use quotations in your essay? Essentially, quotations should function to support, comment on, or give an example of a point you are making in your own words. And, of course, you should keep in mind that quotes should be kept to a minimum. A good “rule” to remember is that you only want to use a quote when it’s absolutely necessary, when your source puts something in a way that just needs to be put that way or when you need a quote from an expert to support a point you have already made.

You should also remember that you don’t want to use quotations to make your point for you. Readers should be able to skip the quotations in your paper and still understand all your main points. This means, after each quote, you have to provide analysis for that quote. The idea is to help your audience gather the meaning from the quote you want them to gather. It’s your job as a writer to make the quote meaningful for your audience.

Signal Phrases
Many beginning writers make the mistake of quoting too much and end up losing their voices to their source material, so you want to be careful to keep your quotations to a minimum. As mentioned, paraphrasing and summarizing are good ways to integrate your research, allowing you to keep more of your voice in your writing. However, when you do need to share a quotation from a source, you'll want to do it smoothly and effectively.

In addition to thinking about the types of quotations you'll use, you should remember that it's not enough to put a good quotation into your paper. You’ll want to anticipate questions your audience might have about two things:
1. Your source's credibility
2. Your source's relevance (Why is this quotation here?)

When you incorporate a quotation, at least the first time you use a source, you should provide some kind of signal phrase (set-up for your quote) that addresses the quote's credibility. You should address issues of relevance either before or after the quotation.

The important thing is to make sure you don't leave your audience wondering why a quotation has been used and / or if the source for the quotation is trustworthy.
Revising & Editing a Research Paper

Revising isn’t the first step in the process of writing a research paper, but it is perhaps the most important. Many students skip the revision process, mistaking editing for revision. While editing is also very important, revision is an integral part of any good writing process. During revision, you should try to see your work from different perspectives and different angles. When you revise, it’s particularly important to keep your target audience in mind. You may need to make changes to content and organization. You may have to go back to the research stage of your process to find more information. You may need to cut out information that doesn’t relate to your thesis or focus. Revision is about making big changes to your writing to improve flow, development, and focus.

It’s best to allow some time between drafting and revision. If you can take a break from your writing and come back to it a few days or even a week later, you’re more likely to be able to see where you need to revise.

You shouldn’t begin editing until you feel confident in your revisions. Once you feel your content is where you need it to be, it’s time to begin a thorough editing process. Editing is about making changes to your sentences and surface features in your research paper. When you edit, you should check for things like grammatical errors, punctuation errors, spelling, and issues related to documentation.

Too often, students think that they can edit well with one pass or count on a grammar checker to “fix” everything, but to be a good editor, you should read over your essay many times yourself, each time focusing on a different issue. Grammar checkers are helpful tools, but they miss a lot.

A good editing practice also involves spending extra time on the issues you may have had trouble with in the past. For example, if you know you have trouble with commas, you might review the guidelines on the comma. Then, with those guidelines fresh in
your mind, edit your essay, just paying attention to your use of commas. You might
then make another pass, just looking to make sure your in-text citations are correct.

Another helpful strategy is to read your essay in reverse, starting with your last
sentence and going from there. This takes away the flow as you read your essay, will
slow you down, and can give you an opportunity to see each sentence on its own.

Source
The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Excelsior College. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-4.0
International License.
The modes of persuasion you are about to learn about on the following pages go back thousands of years to Aristotle, a Greek rhetorician. In his teachings, we learn about three basic modes of rhetoric—or ways to persuade, communicate, or manipulate people. These modes, Ethos, Pathos, and Logos, appeal to human nature and continue to be used today in writing and images of all kinds, including argumentative essays, politics, and advertisements.

These modes are particularly important to argumentative writing because you'll be constantly looking for the right angle to take in order to be persuasive with your audience. These modes work together to create a well-rounded, well-developed argument that your audience will find credible.

By thinking about the basic ways in which human beings can be persuaded and practicing your skills, you can learn to build strong arguments and develop flexible argumentative strategies. Use the following rhetorical modes, Ethos, Pathos, and Logos to improve your ability to communicate, manipulate, and persuade!
Why study rhetoric?

Why not learn some techniques that will increase the chance that your audience will think/feel/believe the way you want them to after hearing/reading/experiencing whatever it is that you’re throwing at them?

And . . . what about when you’re on the receiving end, hearing/reading/experiencing things that have been carefully crafted so that you’ll buy into them? A scary list of rhetorically effective people: politicians, advertisers, super-villains. (You want rhetoric? Just listen to the slimy words of the Emperor in Return of the Jedi or the words Voldemort beams into everyone’s brain in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part Two.)

Studying rhetoric has the uncanny effect of opening your eyes to when people are trying to be all rhetorical on you, wielding their communication skills like an evil weapon.
Ethos

Appealing to ethos is all about using credibility, either your own as a writer or of your sources, in order to be persuasive. Essentially, ethos is about believability. Will your audience find you believable? What can you do to ensure that they do?

You can establish ethos—or credibility—in two basic ways: you can use or build your own credibility on a topic, or you can use credible sources, which, in turn, builds your credibility as a writer.

Credibility is extremely important in building an argument, so, even if you don’t have a lot of built-in credibility or experience with a topic, it’s important for you to work on your credibility by integrating the credibility of others into your argument.

Aristotle argued that ethos was the most powerful of the modes of persuasion, and while you may disagree, you can’t discount its power. After all, think about the way advertisers use ethos to get us to purchase products. Taylor Swift sells us perfume, and Peyton Manning sells us pizza. But, it’s really their fame and name they are selling.
Constructing Your Argument with Ethos

With the power of ethos in mind, here are some strategies you can use to help build your ethos in your arguments.

- If you have specific experience or education related to your issues, mention it in some way.
- If you don’t have specific experience or education related to your issue, make sure you find sources from authors who do. When you integrate that source information, it’s best if you can address the credibility of your sources. When you have credible sources, you want to let your audience know about them.
- Use a tone of voice that is appropriate to your writing situation and will make you sound reasonable and credible as a writer. Controversial issues can often bring out some extreme emotions in us when we write, but we have to be careful to avoid sounding extreme in our writing, especially in academic arguments. You may not convince everyone to agree with you, but you at least need your audience to listen to what you have to say.
- Provide good balance when it comes to pathos and logos, which will be explored in the following pages.
- Avoid flaws in logic—or logical fallacies—which are explored later in this chapter.
- Carefully proofread your work, and ask a few other people to so as well, to maintain your credibility as a writer.

Not all professors will be in favor of this, as it will depend upon the level of formality of the assignment, but, in general, this is an effective strategy.
Pathos

Appealing to pathos is about appealing to your audience’s emotions. Because people can be easily moved by their emotions, pathos is a powerful mode of persuasion. When you think about appealing to pathos, you should consider all of the potential emotions people experience. While we often see or hear arguments that appeal to sympathy or anger, appealing to pathos is not limited to these specific emotions. You can also use emotions such as humor, joy or even frustration, to note a few, in order to convince your audience.

It’s important, however, to be careful when appealing to pathos, as arguments with an overly-strong focus on emotion are not considered as credible in an academic setting. This means you could, and should, use pathos, but you have to do so carefully. An overly-emotional argument can cause you to lose your credibility as a writer.

You have probably seen many arguments based on an appeal to pathos. In fact, a large number of the commercials you see on television or the internet actually focus primarily on pathos. For example, many car commercials tap into our desire to feel special or important. They suggest that, if you drive a nice car, you will automatically be respected.

Constructing Your Argument with Pathos
With the power of pathos in mind, here are some strategies you can use to carefully build pathos in your arguments.
• Refer to emotionally compelling stories that relate to your topic. For example, if you’re calling for change in animal abuse laws, you would want to appeal to your audience’s sense of sympathy, possibly by providing examples of animal cruelty. If your argument is focused on environmental issues related to water conservation, you might provide examples of how water shortages affect metropolitan areas in order to appeal to your audience’s fear of a similar occurrence. Fear and sympathy aren’t the only ways to emotionally connect to your audience. Sometimes humor or sweet, happy stories are the best way to emotionally connect to your audience.

• In an effort to appeal to pathos, use examples to illustrate your position. Try citing stark, startling statistics that will invoke a specific emotion in your audience. Just be sure the examples you share are credible and can be verified.

• In academic arguments, be sure to balance appeals to pathos with appeals to logos (which will be explored next) in order to maintain your ethos or credibility as a writer.

• When presenting evidence based on emotion, maintain an even tone of voice. If you sound too emotional, you might lose your audience’s respect.
Logos is about appealing to your audience’s logical side. You have to think about what makes sense to your audience and use that as you build your argument. As writers, we appeal to logos by presenting a line of reasoning in our arguments that is logical and clear. We use evidence, such as statistics and factual information, when we appeal to logos.

In order to develop strong appeals to logos, we have to avoid faulty logic. Faulty logic can be anything from assuming one event caused another to making blanket statements based on little evidence. Logical fallacies should always be avoided. Fallacies will be explored in more detail at the end of each chapter.

Appeals to logos are an important part of academic writing, but you will see them in commercials as well. Although they more commonly use pathos and ethos, advertisers will sometimes use logos to sell products. For example, commercials based on saving consumers money, such as car commercials that focus on miles-per-gallon, are appealing to the consumers’ sense of logos.
As you work to build logos in your arguments, here are some strategies to keep in mind.

- **Both experience and source material can provide you with evidence to appeal to logos.** Find credible sources, facts, statistics, even visuals to support your argument. While outside sources will provide you with excellent evidence in an argumentative essay, in some situations, you can share personal experiences and observations. Just make sure they are appropriate to the situation and you present them in a clear and logical manner.

- **Remember to think about your audience as you appeal to logos.** Just because something makes sense in your mind, doesn't mean it will make the same kind of sense to your audience. You need to try to see things from your audience's perspective. Having others read your writing, especially those who might disagree with your position, is helpful.

- **Be sure to maintain clear lines of reasoning throughout your argument.** One error in logic can negatively impact your entire position. When you present faulty logic, you lose credibility.

- **When presenting an argument based on logos, it is important to avoid emotional overtones and maintain an even tone of voice.** Remember, it's not just a matter of the type of evidence you are presenting; how you present this evidence is important as well.
Fallacies to Watch Out For

Fallacies are rhetorical modes gone wrong. In other words, fallacies are illogical arguments that try to persuade you. Even though fallacies are illogical, it is quite common to discover that you’ve been persuaded or influenced by a fallacious argument. Just because an argument contains a fallacy doesn’t mean it isn’t an effective tool of persuasion.

Ideally, by learning more about fallacies you will both be a more critical consumer of rhetoric (by being able to identify when you’re being presented with a fallacious argument) and be a more savvy writer of rhetoric.

Sometimes there are certain rhetorical strengths that underlie a fallacy that you can use to help you write stronger, more convincing arguments. Other times, understanding a fallacy can help you make stronger revisions of your arguments, weeding out any potential illogical or fallacious writing.

Non Sequitur
This fallacy offers reasons or conclusions that have no logical connection to the argument at hand.

Examples

  The reason I flunked your course is because the U.S. government is now putting out purple five-dollar bills! Purple!

  I don’t have to release my tax returns because the majority of the American people elected me president.

Faulty Emotional Appeal
This type of fallacy plays upon people’s emotions, usually fear. This fallacy often presents a scary future if a certain decision is made today. Rather than provide evidence
to show that a conclusion follows from a set of premises, which may provide a legitimate cause for fear, such arguments rely on rhetoric, threats or outright lies.

**Examples**

Elizabeth Smith doesn’t understand foreign policy. If you elect Elizabeth Smith as president, we will be attacked by terrorists.

If you don’t agree that witchcraft is a major problem just shut up, close your eyes for a moment and picture in your mind all those poor moms crying bitter tears for their innocent tiny children whose cozy little beds and happy tricycles lie all cold and abandoned, just because of those wicked old witches! Let's string’em all up!

**False Authority**

The false authority fallacy results when the person making an argument doesn’t actually have the qualifications to be credible but is perceived as credible because they are respected or admired. Despite the fact that this form of argument is fallacious, it is obviously quite effective. Advertisers spend millions of dollars to get celebrities and athletes to sell us their products because of the persuasive potential these stars carry in their persona, not in their ability to argue a point. Voters might be persuaded to support a candidate because of a famous musician’s endorsement without questioning the political beliefs of either the musician or the politician to see if they match up with their own.

**Examples**

Super model, Heidi Klum, verifies that drinking water makes you grow taller.

Professor X, a scientist of genetic mutations, assures us that global warming is a hoax.
Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger)

Non Sequitur
Of course you always want your supporting arguments to support your claim. If you find yourself making an argument that doesn’t clearly support your claim, then you likely just need to clarify your argument, or add more evidence to your argument to make it actually support your claim. Evidence is key here. You need to have a strong showing of logos (or facts) to make a convincing argument.

Faulty Emotional Appeal
Any good piece of rhetoric will appeal to the emotions of the reader. However, if your argument is based solely on an emotional claim, rather than a factual claim, then you have a problem. In addition, if your emotional rhetoric (pathos) is written to obscure or subvert the facts (logos) of an argument then you not only have a poorly written argument, but you’ve lost your credibility (ethos) as a writer.

False Authority
Advertisements are particularly likely to slip into using False Authority to make a claim. Oftentimes they will use an actor to act as a doctor or expert to sell a product. As a writer, to maintain your ethos, you need to make sure that if you’re citing a person as an authority on a topic, that they really are an authority. On the other hand, if you want to cite a source who may not be an authority or expert on your topic you can still do so without committing a fallacy. Be transparent with your reader about the dubious authority of the source. You’ll actually build your credibility (ethos) by acknowledging that a source has some flaws. You’ll actually build your credibility (ethos) by acknowledging that a source has some flaws.
Rhetorical Analysis
A rhetorical analysis refers to the process of analyzing a text, image, or artifact. The text, image, or artifact may be in written form or in some different sort of communication. The goal of a rhetorical analysis is to take into consideration either the specific content of the text, image, or artifact (textual analysis) or its broader context of it (contextual analysis), or both.

If doing a textual analysis, you need to look only at the clues offered to you from the text, image, or artifact. What shape does it take? What specific words are used? What claims or arguments are made?

When doing a contextual analysis you need to dig deeper. Who made this text, image, or artifact? Where and when did this text, image, or artifact first appear? What do other people think about this text, image, or artifact?

Most rhetorical analysis explores both the specific text or content, as well as the broader context of the text, image, or artifact. In other words, a rhetorical analysis explains not only what everything means in the text (content), but also why the author wrote about it (the purpose), who the author is (background), how the piece was organized (structure), where and/or when it was published (forum), and the intended message conveyed to the audience (topic).

A rhetorical analysis can be one of the more challenging assignments in any writing class. Students often confuse a rhetorical analysis with a review because both assignments work to analyze a text. However, in a rhetorical analysis you’re not supposed to agree/disagree with the topic presented. In a review, of course, you get to critique how “good” or “bad” the content of the text is. In a rhetorical analysis the purpose is to engage in critical thinking and communicate the intended message and use of rhetorical modes (ethos, pathos, and logos) in the text, image, or artifact.

Rhetoric is a term that is widely used in many forms, and by itself can mean a great many things. Some use the term in association with political rhetoric, to name the voice and stance, as well as the language that becomes the nature of politics. However, rhetoric is much more than that. It can be thought of as the way in which you phrase what you are saying, and the forces that impact what you are saying. At its very core rhetoric is the ability to effectively communicate an intended message, whether it is via argumentation, persuasion, or another form of communication.

Seeing rhetorical analysis in action is one of the best ways to understand it. Review the Sample Rhetorical Analysis of an Article and Sample Rhetorical Analysis of Advertisement below.
Sample Rhetorical Analysis of an Article

Any article can be analyzed for its use of rhetoric. Read the following sample rhetorical analysis of an article. If you like, you can read the original article the student analyzes by searching “Why I Won’t Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn’t, Either.”

Bethany Jensen
Professor York
English 124
17 November 2014

Rhetorical Analysis of Cory Doctorow’s
“Why I Won’t Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn’t, Either)”

Cory Doctorow’s article on *BoingBoing* is an older review of the iPad, one of Apple’s most famous products. At the time of this article, however, the iPad was simply the latest Apple product to hit the market and was not yet so popular. Doctorow’s entire career has been entrenched in and around technology. He got his start as a CD-ROM programmer and is now a successful blogger and author. He is currently the co-editor of the *BoingBoing* blog on which this article was posted. One of his main points in this article comes from Doctorow’s passionate advocacy of free digital media sharing. He argues that the iPad is just another way for established technology companies to control our technological freedom and creativity. In “Why I Won’t Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn’t, Either)” published on *Boing Boing* in April of 2010, Cory Doctorow successfully uses his experience with technology, facts about the company Apple, and appeals to consumer needs to convince potential iPad buyers that Apple and its products, specifically the iPad, limit the digital rights of those who use them.
by controlling and mainstreaming the content that can be used and created on the device.

The purpose of the article is to convince consumers that the iPad is not a worthwhile thing to buy because it has very limited uses outside of the set content, as well as technological problems and the potential to quickly become obsolete. Cory Doctorow wrote this article stating his negative opinion of the iPad in the wake of enormous media hype over the iPad’s release.

Apple has proclaimed the iPad as a technological revolution, but Doctorow disagrees. He made this statement in response to Apple’s policies, exemplified by the iPad; “of course I believe in a market where competition can take place without bending my knee to a company that has erected a drawbridge between me and my customers!” He is out to convince his audience they deserve the right to be responsible for their own media sharing and content.

One example of Doctorow’s position is his comparison of Apple’s iStore to Wal-Mart. This is an appeal to the consumer’s logic—or an appeal to logos. Doctorow wants the reader to take his comparison and consider how an all-powerful corporation like the iStore will affect them. An iPad will only allow for apps and programs purchased through the iStore to be run on it; therefore, a customer must not only purchase an iPad but also any programs he or she wishes to use. Customers cannot create their own programs or modify the hardware in any way.

Doctorow has a very clear opinion of this. He says, “as an adult, I want to be able to choose whose stuff I buy and whom I
trust to evaluate that stuff. I don’t want my universe of apps constrained to the stuff that the Cupertino Politburo decides to allow for its platform.” By referencing the constricting forces of communist Russia, the author appeals to his readers’ emotions and a basic human fear of being controlled. This is an appeal to pathos, and it stirs up a natural rebellion against being told what to do. Big corporations want consumers to believe that if they give up their creativity, their lives will be better. In that way, it is like Wal-Mart. “Save money, live better,” just do not think outside of the box.

Doctorow appeals to logos again by quoting technology guru William Gibson’s comparison of iPad consumers to a mutant creature. The author also builds his character, an appeal to ethos, here by quoting a renowned expert, one who actually coined the term “virtual reality.” By referring to the specialist’s opinion, Doctorow is acknowledging his need for additional counsel. Doctorow reinforces his ethos by building on the solid foundation of an established technological leader.

Doctorow makes another appeal to logos in the form of showing potential iPad buyers what they could have instead of the dictated usage and expensive content that come with the iPad. He argues that consumers do not have to settle for limit digital rights, we have other options. He declares, “the reason people have stopped paying for a lot of ‘content’ isn’t just that they can get it for free, though: it’s that they can get lots of competing stuff for free, too.” This is an example of how Doctorow uses reason and logic to make his point. He essentially says, “you could have this one thing...or you could have all of these things.” Why pay for an
expensive iPad and monitored apps, when you can get equal or better products and programs for free?

The article “Why I won’t buy and iPad (and Think You Shouldn’t, Either)” does have a few flaws. One example of a weakness is Doctorow’s obvious bias against big corporations and digital rights management. He is a software creator, and so he has something personal to gain from free digital media sharing. He displays this bias by giving a rather one-sided argument. He says, “it [Apple] uses DRM to control what can run on your devices, which means that Apple’s customers can’t take their ‘iContent’ with them to competing devices, and Apple developers can’t sell on their own terms.” The problem is that not everyone can develop software, and, therefore, not everyone cares. The iPad could be a great piece of equipment with excellent applications for people who are not looking to develop and sell their own software. Just because the iPad does not work for Doctorow, does not mean it will not work for anyone else.

In addition to having an agenda, Doctorow does not mention any of the iPad’s positive qualities and abilities. His only positive mention of the iPad states “clearly there’s a lot of thoughtfulness and smarts that went into the design.” In reality, the iPad has a lot of cool features, and it can do some incredible things; for example, nearly every big company has an app that represents it, and the internet browsing on the iPad is top notch. Doctorow could have built his up his ethos by being a bit more fair-minded about the benefits of owning the iPad.

Overall, Doctorow makes a good argument about why there are potentially many better things to drop a great deal of
money on instead of the iPad. He gives some valuable information and facts that consumers should take into consideration before going out to purchase the new device. He clearly uses rhetorical tools to help make his case, and, overall, he is effective as a writer, even if, ultimately, he was ineffective in convincing the world not to buy an iPad.
Work Cited

Sample Rhetorical Analysis of an Advertisement
Advertising executives and marketing experts probably hope we remain oblivious to the underlying messages that ads contain and that we perceive their work purely from entertainment and consumerist perspectives rather than for the purpose of critical assessment.

But to critically examine the techniques and appeals advertisers use to lure us into supporting certain products, services, claims, or even individuals is an opportunity to hone our analytical skills—skills that enable us to be informed readers of texts and knowledgeable consumers of persuasion.

Whenever you analyze an ad, it may be useful to ask yourself some questions:

- Who appears in the ad? A celebrity or someone well known? An unfamiliar figure? What are the expressions of the people featured in the ad?
- What is the setting of the ad, and what does it suggest about the message?
- Who is the audience for the ad, and how do you know?
- How are language and conversation used in the ad? What, if anything, do the people featured in the ad say? In print advertisements, are there conversation bubbles? For commercials, consider any conversations that might take place.
- In what ways does the ad attempt to manipulate the consumer into buying the particular product it sells? On what emotions and desires does the ad play? In other words, how is pathos used?
- Consider issues such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. In what ways, if any, are they present in the ad? What does their presence in or absence from the ad suggest about the message?
Now that you have had the chance to learn about writing a rhetorical analysis argument about an advertisement, it’s time to see what one might look like. Below, you’ll see a sample rhetorical analysis of an advertisement, written following MLA formatting guidelines.

Robert Schnekenburger  
Professor Carl Seaver  
English 226  
26 May 2017  

Plastic, the Ocean and You

“What Goes in the Ocean Goes in You” (Surfrider Foundation)
The issue of pollution in the world’s oceans is a contentious topic of debate. To what extent are humans polluting the oceans and what are realistic solutions to the problem? Plastic is one of many pollutants including mercury, dioxins, and others. Surfrider Foundation’s “What Goes in the Ocean Goes in You” is an advertisement campaign that targets the issue of the massive amount of plastic entering the world’s oceans today. It brings attention to the problem by portraying sushi, a popular food normally made with a seaweed wrapper, wrapped in grungy-looking plastic and states ominously, “What Goes in the Ocean Goes in You” in large bold font against a plain white background. It then states a statistic that over 12,000 tons of plastic are ingested by fish off the west coast and provides a source for that statistic. The final line of the advertisement issues a call to action, showing people a way to get involved in the fight against pollution in our oceans. The Surfrider Foundation’s “What Goes in the Ocean Goes in You” advertisement elicits a response from its audience by effectively using the rhetorical appeals of logos, ethos, and pathos.

The Surfrider Foundation is a not-for-profit grassroots organization with over 60,000 members worldwide including notable advisory board members such as Jeff Bridges, Woody Harrelson, and Eddie Vedder. Their current CEO, Dr. Chad Nelson holds a doctorate in environmental science from the University of Southern California at Los Angeles and prior to October 2014, was the foundation’s Environmental Director for sixteen years. The foundation's mission is the protection and enjoyment of the world’s oceans and beaches through an influential network of activists.

This advertisement effectively targets its audience through the use of logos, by stating that 12,000 tons of plastic are ingested...
by fish off the west coast of the United States every year. This statistic comes from a 2011 paper titled “Plastic Ingestion by Mesopelagic Fishes in the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre” by Peter Davison and Rebecca G. Asch, graduate students at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography at University of California, San Diego. Using a credibly sourced statistic in this manner is a textbook example of the rhetorical appeal of logos. The use of hard evidence draws people’s attention to the advertisement, highlighting the devastating effects of plastic pollutants in the ocean. The plastic wrap on the sushi as well as the words “What Goes in the Ocean Goes in You”, acts as a visual representation of the statistic cited in the ad. This is shown through the idea that humans are the source of pollution, and through biomagnification, the idea that animals higher up on the food chain have a higher concentration of toxins in them, the pollutants will eventually work their way up the food chain to humans.

The advertisement shows pathos in its use of imagery and a foreboding message. Sushi wrapped in plastic and the text reading “What Goes in the Ocean Goes in You” brings the subject closer to the lives of the audience and will likely instill fear. This will shock most readers, leading them to question if they are ingesting plastic and other toxins when they eat seafood. By centering the advertisement on the effects to the readers as opposed to the effects on the wildlife, the Surfrider Foundation more effectively draws attention to the issue. Readers will more likely take note of the message when they are the ones affected, which will help raise awareness about the problem of marine pollution and garner support for efforts to combat it. With the knowledge that they may fall victim to the pollution of the oceans, readers will be much less
likely to litter when they realize that it affects their personal lives, their families, and the future of their children. The chopsticks in the advertisement are a subtle, but effective use of pathos, suggesting that the viewer or one of their dining companions is about to eat the horrid dish, like something out of a nightmare.

There are many different forms of ethos in the advertisement. One example is the way is that it provides a shocking statistic and cites the source for the statistic. This show of credibility separates the advertisement from many of its environmentally focused counterparts. Rather than just showing a heartbreaking image of marine life affected by pollution, they show the reader a fact they might not have known, which affects not only their lives, but also the lives of their family and friends. The fact that pollution that enters the ocean will eventually make its way into the food supply is not an issue to be taken lightly. Other uses of ethos in the advertisement are having the professional looking logo of the Surfrider Foundation and providing the address of an official website. The logo has artistic flair, yet looks serious and professional, stating the foundation’s name in a bold font. By having a .org website address in their call to action, they look more professional than if they had used a .net or .com address. This helps the foundation establish credibility with their audience.

Advertisements like the one by the Surfrider Foundation are important because they illustrate why marine pollution is a problem that more people should be discussing so a viable solution can be found. Plastic is an essential component of the modern global economy and is not going away anytime soon, but the way in which we handle plastic waste should not be so careless. The Environmental Protection Agency issues a warning to consumers...
when fish from U.S. waters are contaminated, but this helps very little as most of our country’s fish supply comes from foreign waters, according to Chelsea Rochman, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California (qtd. in Barclay). The long-term effects of consumption of these toxic substances via seafood have not been studied in detail, so there is no telling what will happen to generations to come. Another disturbing fact that Rochman brings up is that plastic acts as a sponge for other toxins and when it enters the digestive system of a fish, the chemicals transfer into the bloodstream and tissue (qtd. in Barclay). These toxins include mercury and dioxins. The adverse health effects of dioxins include severe skin lesions known as chloracne, liver problems, impaired endocrine system, impaired immune system, and possible carcinogenic effects (World Health Organization). When taking all these factors into account, one can only imagine the epidemic of health problems our population may face in the coming decades due to this contamination of one of our major food sources.

This advertisement by the Surfrider Foundation effectively brings attention to the issue of plastics entering the oceans today. Through different rhetorical appeals such as logos, ethos, and pathos, the advertisement grabs the attention of the public and makes them think twice about littering. It is an urgent plea for viewers to think about the future health of our oceans, acknowledging that if the modern world continues its current course, not only will our oceans be adversely affected, but the well-being of future generations will suffer as well.
Works Cited


Sources

*Ad Analysis* by Jessica McKee. Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

*An Illustrated Book of Bad Arguments* by Ali Almossawi. Licensed under the [Creative Commons BY-NC license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/).

*Aristotle Bust White Background Transparent.png* by jlorenzi1. Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).

*Communication in the Real World: An Introduction to Communication Studies*. Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

*Language for Analyzing Ads* by Jennifer Janechek. Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

*Master List of Logical Fallacies*. Licensed under Creative Commons [Public Domain License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/).

*Rhetoric and Composition/Rhetorical Analysis*. Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/).

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at [Excelsior College](https://owl.excelsior.edu/). Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

*Why Study Rhetoric? or, What Freestyle Rap Teaches Us about Writing* by Kyle D. Stedman. Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).
Chapter 3
Definition Arguments

The definition argument focuses on clarifying a definition for a controversial term or concept. In other words, a definition argument is one that asserts we cannot make clear assertions or possess a clear understanding of an issue until we understand exactly what the terms mean.

Examples of this type of argument might look something like this:

An argumentative essay calling for a re-examination of the birth control requirements in a recent health care act with a focus on explaining what birth control is, what the options are, and how they work.

An argumentative essay calling for an end to the two-party system of government in the United States with a focus on defining what a two-party system really is and what the laws are related to it.

An argumentative essay arguing for the benefits of organic foods with a focus on defining what organic really means.

There are several ways to go about defining the term you choose for your definition argument.

Authority
Consulting and citing an authority, such a dictionary or an expert on the term you are defining can be a good starting point for your own argument (if you agree with the authority on the definition!).

Contextualize
It is often helpful to provide context for the definition of your term. How has your term changed over time? What historical influences or events are important for understanding your term?

**Examples**
Consider providing specific examples of your term in use to help support your argument. Just like a dictionary provides examples of a term, the more examples you can provide will help your reader better understand your term. Your examples need to be commonly accepted by your audience, however; otherwise they won’t be persuaded by your argument.

**Construct**
You may decide to create your own new definition of a term. In order to do this successfully, you need to provide strong reasons or evidence to support your new definition and convince your audience.

**Constructing Your Argument**

Although there may always be variations, a good basic outline for a definition argument might look like this . . .

**Summarize Details of Your Problem**
In your introduction, which may be more than one paragraph, summarize the details of your problem. End with a thesis that presents your claim.

**Provide Detailed Definitions**
Provide detailed definitions of the key term or terms. This may take one or two paragraphs.

**TIPS**
When writing a definition argument, it’s important to keep your essay focused. Choose an issue where there is a clear misunderstanding of a term or terms. Focus on those terms in relation to your claim.

If you’re having trouble thinking of topics for a definition argument, read a little bit about what is going on in the world. Look for issues that come up related to misunderstandings over what certain terms mean.
Present Detailed Support for Claim
Present detailed support for your claim with a focus on how your claims work within the definition of the term. You should present at least three key ideas for support, so this section should be at least three paragraphs long.

Address the Opposing Views
Address the opposing views. What problems exist with your claim? Be sure to bring the focus back to your points in relation to the definition of the term.

Summarize the Main Points
Finally, in your conclusion, summarize your main points of your essay and relate your issue to the bigger picture. Make it clear to your audience that a new-found understanding of the issue leads to a better understanding and support for your claim.
Fallacies to Watch Out For

Here are a couple fallacies you'll want to watch out for, when writing a definition argument.

Bandwagon
The bandwagon fallacy is also sometimes called the appeal to common belief or appeal to the masses because it's all about getting people to do or think something because "everyone else is doing it" or "everything else thinks this."

Just because a lot of people think something or do something does not mean it’s right or good to do. For example, in the 16th century, most people believed the earth was the center of the universe; of course, believing that did not make it true.

You want to be careful to avoid this fallacy, as it’s easy to fall into this kind of thinking. Think about what your parents asked you when you insisted that “everyone” was doing something that you were not getting to do: "If everyone of your friends jumped off of a cliff, would you?" It's important to fight the urge to fall into a bandwagon fallacy

Example

Everyone is going to get the new smart phone when it comes out this weekend. Why aren't you?

Begging the Question
Begging the question is a fallacious argument that assumes the point the speaker is trying to argue for is true. Another way to think about this fallacy is as a circular argument where the conclusion is basically a restatement of the premise or based on an argument that hasn’t actually been proven.

Examples

This painting is trash because it is obviously worthless.
Dominic went to an expensive private school, so he’s obviously better educated than Iman, who went to a public school.

Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger)

Bandwagon
A strong argument can never be supported solely by an argument that “everyone does this.” However, there are times when it is appropriate to cite popular appeal as part of your argument. For example, during health care debate, it is essential that members of Congress listen carefully to what their constituents have to say, because in our democracy, Congress is supposed to act on the will of the people. In this case, it is relevant to the argument what “everybody says.” In the end, however, if you are relying solely on public opinion to support your argument, you’re constructing a weak argument. You’d need to find some factual evidence along with public opinion to construct a strong argument.

Begging the Question
Begging the question is also known as circular reasoning, meaning your argument goes around in circles, rather than progressing in some linear fashion. The best way to know whether or not you’ve fallen into this fallacy is to write out your claim and then write out your main supporting argument. If your main supporting argument is saying essentially the same thing as your claim, you’ve got a fallacy. Your supporting argument should be providing a variety of reasons or criteria, backed up by evidence (logos) that help support or prove your claim.
Sample Definition Arguments

Now that you have had the chance to learn about writing a definition argument, it’s time to see what one might look like. Below, you’ll see a sample definition argumentative essay written following MLA formatting guidelines.

Montgomery 1

Jessica Montgomery
Dr. Sylvia Johnson
Writing 121
8 November 2013

Teenage Sexting and the Law

Up to one in four teenagers has admitted to exchanging nude photos with other teenagers, usually by digital means (Alseth). In an article called “Why Kids Sext” for the November 2014 issue of The Atlantic magazine, Hanna Rosin tells readers that the majority of these explicit images are sent consensually between boyfriends and girlfriends. For many teens, like those at the Virginia high school in Rosin’s article, this ritual, commonly referred to as sexting, is a part of their adolescent existence. However, this act can have huge unforeseen consequence because sexting between minors is currently considered a violation of child pornography laws. Thus, a female student who sends her partner a sexually explicit image and the intended recipient can both be persecuted as felons. As such, they may be subject to jail time, fines, and lifelong sex-offender status (Alseth). One juvenile action has the potential to severely limit the potential of young people. To more adequately deal with the issue of teen sexting without turning thousands of young people into automatic felons, society and the law must separate the definitions of sexting and child pornography.
Currently, most laws define child pornography as “a depiction of a nude minor,” and the creation, circulation, and possession of such images are felonies (Levick and Moon 1037). According to Marsha Levick and Kristina Moon in “Prosecuting Sexting as Child Pornography,” the breadth of this definition is meant to protect minors from sexual exploitation. They write, “Preventing the sexual abuse of children is at the heart of laws proscribing the making or distribution of child pornography. In Pennsylvania, for example, the relevant child pornography statute is titled ‘Sexual Abuse of Children’” (1042). The unanticipated consequence of this definition is that it now turns children into criminals when it is applied to their use of sexting. Sexting, by Rosin’s common definition, references “the transmission of provocative selfies you wouldn’t want your mother to see—not words, but pictures.” This definition does little to differentiate between images that are taken and distributed to another teen according to a subject’s wishes and images that are misused by the recipient, taken without the subject’s knowledge, or produced in response to coercion. Levick and Moon note that out of the twenty percent of teens who admit to sexting, sixty-seven to seventy-one percent of the images are exchanged between couples (1040), many of whom are probably old enough to consent to sexual intercourse. Yet, the law categorizes the participants in these instances as felonious pornographers right along with egregious sex offenders and teens who have done something much more malicious.

Despite this conflation of definitions, most sexting between teenagers is not the same as child pornography because these actions represent sexual exploration that is not noticeably different than other adolescent encounters. In her research, Rosin spoke to
teenagers who were distanced from their boyfriends and girlfriends by a slew of extracurricular activities and the physical scale of rural living. For these teens, sexting allows intimacy despite restrictions. One teen said, “Our only way of being alone was to do it over the phone. It was a way of kind of dating without getting in trouble” (qtd. in Rosin). In these cases, which constitute that sixty-seven to seventy-one percent (Levick and Moon 1040), teenagers are simply navigating their sexual experience through the means that they have. Levick and Moon agree that sexting is often a means of expression and exploration that feels comfortable to teens. According to these authors, the actions of today’s teenagers are inseparable from technology. Minors sext because phone and computer communication is the manner in which they can interact.

Consensual teen sexting, then, is not a crime, like child pornography, where one party is abused or victimized. Levick and Moon argue that more nuanced definitions of child pornography demonstrate this separation. They assert, “[t]he Court has stated the reason possession of child pornography is prohibited is to ‘protect the victims of child pornography [and] . . . to destroy [the] market for the exploitative use of children’” (1043). In these cases of teenagers sexting other teenagers, participation is usually voluntary; thus, no one is exploited or victimized (1042). Furthermore, persecuting teens who sext under child pornography laws creates victims because the teens are ostracized and punished as sex offenders. Society publicly shames and “assault[s]” these teens for a natural exploration process (1050). The only reason for this public shaming is that the exploration is in digital form. If the exploration had been done on a teenager’s couch, as is perhaps more traditional, laws could not be used to victimize teenagers, even though the players and the actions are essentially the same.

Here, the writer qualifies her claims by pointing that there must be exceptions, that not all teen “sexting” can be defined as normal or healthy.
Of course, the consequences for sexting should be different if the images are procured and distributed in a form that violates one party’s rights or safety. According to Rosin, these cases where “an adult was involved, one teen had blackmailed or sexually abused another, or had ‘recklessly circulated’ the image without the person’s consent” are a serious minority. These cases are different because one or more of the players is indeed a victim. For example, she notes that twelve percent of teenage girls who sext feel excessive pressure to engage in an activity they would otherwise avoid. These teens are at risk for engaging in “substance abuse and high-risk sexual behavior” (Rosin). Some teens whose sexts have been widely circulated without their consent have committed suicide. Clearly, these cases have victims who have been exploited, and thus they fall closer to the definition of child pornography. Perpetrators should be held accountable for their actions. Still, assuming all the players in these cases are teens or within the bounds of legal consent, punishing inappropriate photo sharing on the same scale as rape creates more problems than it solves.

Some individuals want teenagers to be punished as pornographers despite the potential damage to the minors’ development. Rosin acknowledges this attitude in her article when she tells of one Virginian who felt that “[sexting is] child porn, and you ought to lock those people up for a long time.” However, “those people” are teenagers, and even the ones who illicitly published the pictures of their peers have the chance to learn from their actions. According to Levick and Moon, “child offenders were less culpable and more capable of reform than adults who committed similar crimes” if the subsequent consequences are
appropriate (1038). Charging a minor who angrily circulates a picture of his nude ex-girlfriend with a felony is not appropriate because it creates “serious and long-lasting consequences” that inhibit integration with healthy society (1050). Adolescents who behave in malicious ways should face consequences that are contextual to their mistakes and implemented by professionals who deal specifically with juveniles rather than district attorneys who should be busy prosecuting dangerous criminals.

Authorities should discipline teenagers in careful, age-specific ways if something injurious or cruel has been done. However, treating young people who sext as sex offenders is preposterous and could result in lasting psychological and social issues. Sexual exploration between teens is normal, and merging the definitions of sexting and child pornography creates unhealthy situations that victimize rather than protect minors. Child pornography is a serious social issue, and teenagers are not the true predators that deserve the attention of the law.
Works Cited


Sources
Last-Ditch Effort to Save Begging the Question by Theo Clark and Jef Clark. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Excelsior College. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-4.0 International License.
Chapter 4
Causal Arguments

A causal argument is one that focuses specifically on how something has caused, or has led to, some particular problem. A causal argument answers a how or why question: How did things get to be the way they are? Why did something happen?

A causal argument is an important argument type, as people are often looking for reasons as to why things have happened but may not be sure or have all of the necessary information. In your causal argument, you get the chance to make these things clear.

For example, humanities professors may ask for an analysis of what causes particular music genres or artistic genres to capture the imagination of popular culture; history professors, the impact of cultures on world history; social science professors, the effects of inventions on culture or the effect of gun control laws on violent homicide rates; business professors, the effects of changes in the interest rates on the economy.

Cause-and-effect texts are extremely common in professions—particularly the sciences, where researchers employ the scientific method to seek out cause-and-effect relationships. Writers commonly focus on analyzing causes or effects. A medical writer, for example, might explore the effects of a poor diet or the causes of a disease. A lawyer might argue the effect of an accident on their client. A sports writer might analyze why a team continues its losing or winning streak.

When dealing with causes and effects, it is important to keep to a narrow topic. Time constraints and resources should always be kept in mind when pursuing a topic. For example, to find the reasons for world hunger would take years of research and/or tons of hours, so focus on a specific entity of a broad topic. Perhaps you could identify one country’s efforts over the past few years.
Be aware that most causal arguments will need to cite multiple causes or effects. If an effect had a simple cause, there wouldn’t be much reason for constructing an argument about it! For example, if you were exploring the effects of TV on children, you need to do more than attack the violence as being unethical or immoral. Likewise, if you were analyzing the causes of our nation’s high divorce rates, you can’t just cite troubles with finances as the cause of divorces.

Examples of this type of argument might look something like this:

An argumentative essay focused on why the U.S. has a high number of children who are “food insecure.”

An argumentative essay explaining why Facebook remains popular despite privacy complaints.

An argumentative essay exploring the specific causes of climate change.
Constructing Your Argument

Although there may always be variations, a good basic outline for a causal argument might look like this:

**Summarize the Details**
In your introduction, which may be more than one paragraph, summarize the details of the issue. This may take one or two paragraphs. End with a thesis statement that makes an assertion about causes or what led to something.

**Present Detailed Support for your Claim**
Present your detailed support for your claim with a focus on the reasons something has happened or a sequence of events that led to something.

**Address the Opposing Views**
Address the opposing views. What problems exist with your claim? Be sure to bring focus back to your points in relation to the causes or sequence of events you address.

**Summarize Main Points**
Finally, in the conclusion, summarize the main points of your essay and relate your issue to the bigger picture. If you see the current situation as something that needs to change you can call for change here, but your focus should be on emphasizing the causes of something.

**TIPS**
- When writing a causal argument, it’s important to keep your essay focused. You want to be sure to choose a narrow topic, one in which you can trace reasons or a sequence of events clearly and succinctly.
- Be sure to avoid the *slippery slope fallacy* in your argument. Be sure the reasons you provide, or the sequence of events you provide, make sense and are logical.
Fallacies to Watch Out For

Here are a couple fallacies you'll want to watch out for, when writing a causal argument.

Slippery Slope
This fallacy is aptly named, because of the image it provides of a person or object sliding down a slope or hill. In the same way, sometimes we get so excited about making an argument that we start to slide down a hill (or argument), without stopping to check facts or evidence that prove an event is caused by or could cause a certain effect.

These runaway arguments can turn into a kind of scare tactic, where the cause or effect of something appears to be terribly dire. For example, when gay marriage was first legalized in certain states, some people argued that the next step would be the legalization of less desirable groups, slipping the argument down to soon we'll allow humans to get married to penguins. The argument doesn't provide any facts or evidence to explain how legalization of same sex marriage would lead to inter-species marriage. Instead, this argument relies on fear (or pathos) to convince its readers.

Examples

If we allow laws prohibiting parents from hitting children with heavy objects it's only a matter of time before their laws prohibiting any kind of physical punishment.

If euthanasia is legalized, eventually we will begin to euthanize patients, not because they request it, but because certain patients cost too much to kept alive.

Faulty Causation
This fallacy is the result of the common human tendency to associate events that occur in sequence and to assume that there is a causal link. When a writer claims that there is
a causal relationship between two events, they need to give a plausible reason beyond simple association. If they cannot do this they are probably in error.

Examples

It’s the president’s fault that the economy hasn’t recovered more.

There was a correlation of 0.8 between morbid obesity and low self-esteem. We need to raise the self-esteem of obese people to help them overcome their weight problem.

Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger)

Slippery Slope
Use your knowledge of the slippery slope fallacy to check the links between your cause and effect arguments, making sure each connection is clearly explained and supported by facts. It’s possible that there IS a supportable connection between your arguments; you may have simply failed to explain those connections thoroughly in your writing.

Faulty Causation
Think of faulty causation as similar to superstitions. Many people may assert that there’s a clear causation between two events just because those two events happened at the same time. Instead of arguing that “x caused y,” it may be more accurate for a writer to say “x influenced y.” As a writer, it’s up to you to verify that connection through facts and evidence (logos). When using causal reasoning, present evidence that shows the following: (1) the cause occurred before the effect, (2) the cause led to the effect, and (3) it is unlikely that other causes produced the effect.
Sample Causal Argument
Now that you have had the chance to learn about writing a causal argument, it’s time to see what one might look like. Below, you’ll see a sample causal argumentative essay written following MLA formatting guidelines.

Theresa Henkes
Dr. Jacobs
English 101
5 December 2014

Crossing the Line: Remembering September 11

In the first four days after September 11, the three major news networks—CBS, NBC, and ABC—lost around $400 million in revenue due to commercial free news coverage of the terrorist attacks (Eisman 64). In the more than ten years that have followed, countless television stations, magazines, and companies have issued special programs and products to “commemorate” and “pay tribute” to 9/11 and its victims. These institutions want the public to believe their productions are a token of respect, and perhaps some of them are. However, many industries are simply capitalizing on this tragic event, more than making up for any monetary loss they initially suffered in 2001 with the sheer number of television programs alone produced for each anniversary. With every new movie, comic book, or exposé, Americans shell out their money to get a sensationalized version of what really happened. This excess of exposure, and the corresponding greed, is causing more harm than good. If the displays of “respect” for
9/11 were not only more spontaneous but also conscientious and truly reverent, the truth about those tragic events would remain clearer for most Americans.

Many different industries invested in the business of 9/11. Not surprisingly, the entertainment industry was one of the biggest hitters, and from them came a mass of television shows, magazines, movies, video games, and comic books that aimed to make the most of the terrorist attacks. In the days following September 11, 2001, the news industry was among the first to respond. Major television networks suspended commercials, and magazines like *Time* produced commemorative issues *sans* print ads. However, this generous attitude was short lived. In her article “The Media of Manipulation: Patriotism and Propaganda—Mainstream News in the United States in the Weeks Following September 11” published in *Critical Quarterly*, April Eisman claims, “Following a loss of approximately $400 million in ad revenue during the four days of commercial-free news coverage after the attacks, television networks were keen to keep viewers and advertisers, and therefore pulled or ‘killed’ anything that caused—or could cause—controversy” (64).

The reports on September 11 began to resemble propaganda, and overexposure crept in as the news sources tried to re-make money. Even now, over ten years later, the news industry is trying to make money on 9/11. For two straight weeks or more every September “special features” run constantly on television and in magazines and newspapers. Take, for example, *People Magazine’s* cover story on the ten-year anniversary of the even. It was called “Remembering the Father I Never Met,” and it features ten or so children whose fathers perished in the twin towers before
these children were even born. Each child is shown close up with a solemn, almost haunted, expression. They look miserable. It is unlikely that those fathers would have wanted their children portrayed like this on a national magazine, exploited to sell a few copies.

Then there are the films that are sure to follow every major world event. One popular example of a big budget September 11 movie is *World Trade Center* released in 2006 (Frago, La Porte, and Phalen 58). In this film, two police officers are trapped when one of the towers collapses, and they spend the next twelve hours under the rubble until they become two of only twenty people who are rescued (65). Although based on a true account and relatively well received in the box office, this film was still a money-maker.

In their article “The Narrative Reconstruction of 9/11 in Hollywood Films,” Marta Frago, Teresa La Porte, and Patricia Phalen, faculty of the University of Navarra and The George Washington University respectively, write, “*World Trade Center*’s origin is much more conventional: a proposal made by producers, bought by Paramount, with a higher budget (US $65 million). The project attracted A-list director Oliver Stone and actor Nicholas Cage.” (64). Any film with a $65 million dollar budget is sure to be created with revenue in mind. Additionally, Frago, La Porte, and Phalen say, “If we bear in mind Stone’s earlier filmography, the critics’ surprise at the results of *World Trade Center* is understandable. The film does lack the commitment and critical tone of some of his other projects...” (64). This is a director with experience in touchy subjects, and although an effort was made at being respectful, it is highly unlikely that the producers and the actors created the film as a charitable contribution to society. It
was designed to evoke emotions and open wallets.

The video game industry is not the first industry that comes to mind in connection to 9/11, but they have been some of the worst offenders in taking advantage of a horrible tragedy. In her article “Kodak Moments, Flashbulb Memories: Reflections on 9/11,” Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett explains that after 9/11, antiterrorism/war video games briefly disappeared. However, they soon returned with a vengeance. She tells of one video game that features Osama Bin Laden:

Ethan McKinnon and Drew Baye... ‘decided to express their anger by developing a game based on the popular first-person, teamwork oriented game in which the search for and death of Osama bin Laden would be the central theme.’ After gaming companies refused to consider the idea, in part because they did not wish ‘to be seen as cashing in on the September 11 tragedy,’ McKinnon and Bayes founded their own company. (18)

Another video game that appeared on the scene allowed players to shoot the hijacked planes from the sky on 9/11 (18). The fact is the video game companies that refused to produce these products had a good reason; these games are a form of “cashing in” on a national tragedy. They serve no functional purpose. They do not help young people express their feelings in a healthy way, and they do not respectfully pay tribute to the victims of September 11. Instead, these games desensitize players to the real tragedy and promote the kind of violence that caused 9/11 in the first place.

With all of this said, the public needs an outlet for
remembering September 11. However, Americans need one that does not use violence, drama, and greed like the entertainment industry products. The community can come together without manipulating the truth about what happened, and many have already done so in a local setting. As an example, consider the impromptu photo memorials that cropped up in NYC right after September 11. In her “Kodak Moments” article, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes one of the most famous photo memorials called *Here in New York*. She describes a display of unframed photographs in an empty store-front in Manhattan submitted by anyone and everyone (20). *All* photo submissions of September 11 were accepted and displayed. Volunteers, both amateur and professional, ran the gallery, and each print was sold for the exact same price (21-22). Best yet, all $600,000 in revenue (at the time of publication) were donated to the Children’s Aid Society (22). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes, “With a collection of 7,000 photographs, which is still growing, and 1.5 million visitors to the exhibition worldwide thus far, ‘Here is New York’ is without question the largest archive of its kind in history, and may well become the most looked-at exhibition of our time”’ (21). This is an example of a community grieving and remembering together. This is a beautiful, self-less token of love for a battered nation. They did not need a big budget or an angry dramatization; they simply asked for those who were willing to contribute to do so, and the floodgates opened.

Many museums across the country sponsored similar non-profit events in the aftermath of 9/11. “Kodak Moments” also tells of some of these exhibits and special events:
Museums were encouraged to work closely with their local communities in planning events. Many museums developed special exhibitions and programs and honored local rescue workers; hosted concerts, ceremonies, and dialogues; and provided opportunities for visitors to reflect upon and express their thoughts and feelings in journals, murals, and albums...Museums were encouraged to extend their hours and many offered free admission to these commemorative events (33). The results included everything from the “Wall of Prayer” in The Museum of the City of New York to the hourly ringing of the American Freedom Bell at the Charlotte Museum of History (32-34). Even now small, tasteful community events like these still persist. Even in minor cities like Bangor, Maine there are events like a free local concert entitled “Pops on the Green” to bring the community together on the tenth anniversary of September 11. That is what remembering should be all about: bringing the public together.

The way to pay tribute to such a day of infamy is through voluntary, reverent displays of recollection. It does not need to be enhanced with a theatrical production to generate income or sell papers. Rather these ostentatious displays devalue the raw emotions of the day. They twist the truth out of greed. Although many industries have tried such tactics to make money, they are not the ones that should help us remember September 11. Instead, we should remember that day as it really happened through the eyes of ordinary, everyday people because these people were the real victims, heroes, and survivors of September 11, 2001.
Works Cited


Sources

*Causes & Effects* by Joe Moxley. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.

*Communication in the Real World: An Introduction to Communication Studies*. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

*False Cause; Correlation Error* by Theo Clark and Jef Clark. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Excelsior College. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-4.0 International License.
Chapter 5
Evaluation Arguments

An evaluation argument critiques a subject or topic, based on certain criteria or reasons to determine that the topic is good, bad, the best, or the worst. It’s important that the criteria you choose to evaluate your topic sounds reasonable to your audience. If they don’t accept your criteria about what makes your topic good or bad, then it’s doubtful they’ll be persuaded by your argument. Another way to add to your credibility is to acknowledge that there’s something good (or bad) about your subject, even if overall you find your subject bad (or good).

Examples of this type of argument might look something like this:

- Is this the right college or academic degree for me?
- Was the movie suspenseful, entertaining, worthwhile?
- Should I wear these clothes?

Writers bring focus to their evaluations by revealing the criteria they are using to judge the topic being evaluated. They often present their argument up front, providing readers with a good roadmap of their argument and reasoning.
Constructing Your Argument

Although there may always be variations, a good basic outline for an evaluation argument might look like this:

**Summarize the Details**
In your introduction, which may be more than one paragraph, summarize the details of your topic. This may take one or two paragraphs. End with a thesis statement that makes an assertion about the quality of your topic and mentions your criteria for evaluating that topic.

**Present Detailed Support for your Claim**
Present your detailed support for your claim with a focus on the reasons/criteria your topic is good or bad. Each body paragraph should focus on one specific reason or criteria, and your analysis of how your topic is good or bad based on that reason.

**Address the Opposing Views**
Address the opposing views. Why might your audience disagree your claim or evaluation? How can you persuade them that your evaluation is still valid?

**Summarize Main Points**
Finally, in the conclusion, summarize the main points of your essay and end in a memorable, engaging way.
Fallacies to Watch Out For

Here are a couple fallacies you’ll want to watch out for, when writing an evaluation argument.

False Dichotomy
This fallacy occurs when a writer only offers two options and argues that the audience must choose either one or the other. Critical thinkers know that the world can’t be simplified to black and white, good and bad, or right and wrong. Yet many people rely on such oversimplifications when making arguments. A speaker who argues that immigrants to the United States should learn English or go back to their own country doesn’t acknowledge that there are many successful immigrants who have successful lives and contribute to society without speaking English fluently. The speaker also ignores the fact that many immigrants do not have access to English language instruction or the time to take such classes because they are busy with their own jobs and families. Granted, such a rhetorical strategy does make it easier to discuss complex issues and try to force people into a decision, but it also removes gray area in the form of context that can be really important for making a decision. Be critical of arguments that claim there are only two options from which to choose.

Examples

Everyone who saw Lady Gaga’s dress made out of meat thought it was either offensive or awesome.

Genetically modified food is going to end world hunger—not cause a food crisis, as some critics believe.

Hasty Generalization
The hasty generalization fallacy is the result of too few examples being cited to warrant the generalization. Jumping to conclusions is tempting, especially when pressed for
time, but making well-researched and supported arguments is key to being an effective and ethical argument maker.

Examples

After asking six different people in my neighborhood about the president’s plan to reduce the deficit, it was clear that the president’s plan would satisfy everyone in the United States.

Train travel in Michigan is always a bad experience. The last two train trips I took I experienced 2-4 hour delays.

Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger)

False Dichotomy
No one likes to be told, “It’s my way or the highway.” Though it may be tempting to simplify your argument by proposing to your audience that there are only two choices (and that your choice is way better than any other choice they could make)--this is a fallacy. You’re severely compromising your credibility as a writer by ignoring other viable choices or options. If you give other possibilities a fair chance, then your audience is more likely to trust your argument (adding to your use of ethos). If you’re able to clearly argue why your possibility is the best one, by discrediting or refuting the other possibilities, then you will have a superior persuasive argument!

Hasty Generalization
We make generalizations all the time: “People from Ohio are like that;” “all teachers are like this;” “Drivers of that kind of car always do that.” These are all examples of stereotypes or the hasty generalization fallacy. When writing arguments, we sometimes make hasty generalizations about our topic, claim, or supporting arguments. Avoid making “everyone” or “no one” arguments in your writing, because this causes your argument to lose its logos or factual appeal.
Sample Evaluation Argument
Now that you have had the chance to learn about writing an evaluation argument, it’s time to see what one might look like. Below, you’ll see a sample evaluation argumentative essay written following MLA formatting guidelines.

Robert Schnekenburger
Professor Carl Seaver
ENG 226 DW7
8 June 2017

A Mountain of Cocaine (with a Large Side of Ham and Cheese)

The 1983 film *Scarface*, directed by Brian De Palma, written by Oliver Stone and starring Al Pacino is hailed as a modern-day classic. The film tells the story of Tony Montana, a young Cuban Refugee, played by a middle-aged Al Pacino. Montana joins the cocaine trade and works his way up to being a wealthy drug kingpin. When the film was released in December of 1983, it had mediocre box office results. Critically, it fared even worse, receiving mostly negative reviews at the time of its release. However, it has gone on to enjoy a large cult following in the subsequent decades after its release and is revered by many as a masterpiece. It currently sits at #105 on the Internet Movie Database’s Top 250 Top Rated Movies (“Top”) and has a respectable 93% score with audiences on RottenTomatoes.com (“Scarface (1983)”). But why is this film so praised? The film has many flaws and is far from being a masterpiece. *Scarface* is not the gritty classic that many people make it out to be. It is a terrible film because it has poor acting, an absurd story, an abhorrent message, dull characters, and suffers from excessive length.
One essential aspect of a good movie is convincing acting, which is not present in *Scarface*. Pacino gives a hammy, over-the-top “I am so angry” performance in his portrayal of an offensive stereotype with a dreadful attempt at a Cuban accent. This performance delivers an extra side of ham and cheese. A film with a weak cornerstone performance like this has no hope of being a masterpiece. Michelle Pfeiffer sleepwalks through her role, when not showing the occasional flash of melodrama that would get laughed out of a soap opera. Robert Loggia gives the most eye-rolling performance of the film as Montana’s boss-turned-nemesis, Frank Lopez. His performance is so bad that it makes Pacino’s look almost subtle and authentic by comparison. It is hard to imagine this guy being the leader of a major criminal organization. With lead performances this inept, it is hard to justify this film’s reputation as a masterpiece.

The story is ridiculous. Absurdities and plot holes abound in this supposedly “gritty” film. Montana and his men carry huge bags of money over their shoulders like Santa Claus with his bag of toys and just walk into the front door of a busy downtown Miami Bank to launder said money. In reality, this is something that not even the most careless criminals would do. There is another scene where Montana kills a detective with no consequences at all, and it is not ever brought up again. Not only was it totally unbelievable, but also entirely pointless to the story since it is never mentioned again. Another absurd scene is where Montana survives a botched assassination attempt at a night club. The two assassins’ marksman skills would make even Elmer Fudd roll his eyes. Despite being armed with machine guns and being less than twenty feet away, they only manage to shoot Montana in the arm. What makes the
scene even sillier is that the assassins are killed by a falling light fixture that conveniently plummets down on them as Montana is fleeing the club. These scenes are all ridiculous, but the highlight of absurdity in this movie is the protagonist’s last stand at the end of the film. Montana takes what must be several dozen bullets to the torso and remains standing for several minutes, managing to kill dozens of mercenaries while shouting corny lines like, “You think you can take me? You need an army to take me!” (Scarface). While it may be the case that stimulants will give a person a great burst of energy, they will not keep a person alive after their heart and lungs have been pierced by dozens of bullets. The scene feels like something out of a Saturday Night Live sketch rather than a gritty crime drama like Scarface tries to be. It is hard to justify the film’s reputation as a masterpiece when it has plot absurdities like these.

One component of a classic movie is that it has a good message, which Scarface does not have. Instead, it glamorizes crime and drug use. Montana dies because he commits an act of mercy, not because of his crimes against society or his drug addiction. While on a contract killing assignment that he is forced to do by his supplier, Montana has a last-minute change-of-heart and kills the other assassin to stop him from blowing up a car with a family in it. As a result of this botched job, the supplier sends an army of mercenaries to kill Montana. The message of the movie seems to be, “crime pays, as long as you show no mercy,” which is an abhorrent message. It also fails as an anti-drug movie, a message that screenwriter Oliver Stone was trying to convey in the film. In a 2015 interview, Stone said that he had written the script while going cold turkey after struggling with cocaine addiction for two years and that writing the script for the film was his revenge against
cocaine (qtd. in Luck). Watching the film without knowledge of this, it would be hard to guess that this was his intention. The movie never really shows that Montana has a problem with cocaine other than his anger and paranoia, and to be honest, he was an angry, paranoid psychopath before he even touched the drugs. His drug addiction is not what causes his death, an act of compassion does. The movie makes cocaine out to be a moderate annoyance at most. A movie that fails to effectively convey its message is not a masterpiece.

Another criterion for a masterpiece is an interesting story that has multi-dimensional characters that sustain the audience’s interest for the duration of the film, components that Scarface lacks. The simplistic story and dull characters do not warrant the film’s excessive length. It is essentially a “rags to riches to early grave” story with a one-dimensional lead character. This might be tolerable in a movie half the length of Scarface (and not as pretentious), but not in an almost three-hour film that takes itself way too seriously. Another problem is that the characters are not interesting or likeable enough to sustain a movie of this length. An almost three-hour epic masterpiece should have interesting, multi-dimensional characters that the audience cares about. Scarface has shallow caricatures whose tragedies elicit little emotional response. This makes the film’s excessive run time completely unbearable.

The movie does have a few good points. It is funny in a “so bad that it is entertaining” way in certain parts. Pacino’s scenery-chewing, over-the top performance is fun to watch at times. For better or worse, it was an influential movie and made an impact on popular culture. It does have its entertaining moments and would be mindlessly enjoyable if it were not for its excessive length, but as a
gritty anti-crime/drug drama it misses the mark big time and fails to convey its message. The film also takes itself far too seriously for as cheesy and absurd as it is.

*Scarface* is not the masterpiece that many people make it out to be. It is bogged down by poor acting, absurdities in the plot, an abhorrent message, and uninteresting characters. Mainstream audiences seem to have done a complete turn in their opinion of this film, but after rewatching the film recently, I think the critics and audiences in 1983 judged it correctly. This film has far too many flaws to be considered a classic. To even say that it is mediocre is being far too generous.
Works Cited


Scarface, Dir. Brian De Palma, Universal Studios, 1983, Film.


Sources

Communication in the Real World: An Introduction to Communication Studies. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Excelsior College. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-4.0 International License.
A rebuttal argument allows you to disagree with another person’s ideas or argument. A rebuttal argument allows you to express your opinion by disagreeing, point by point, with another’s argument (refutation) and/or express your opinion by offering a different argument that disagrees with the basic premise of another argument (counterargument).

Examples of this type of argument might look something like this:

While job creation programs may indeed increase the nation's short-term financial burden, the strategy of putting people back to work has consistently been proven to create a stronger economic and social fabric in the long run.

An argumentative essay that disagrees with the claims made in an opinion piece in a newspaper about the effectiveness of the current president of the United States.

An argumentative essay that disagrees with an author of a study about the causes of obesity.

Find an argument in an article that you can

- Disagree with most of the supporting arguments made within the article and/or
- Disagree with the overall argument, in general, and have ideas for a better argument regarding this topic

The strongest rebuttal will both refute specific claims being made by an author AND provide a strong counterargument. Be sure to examine the facts, sources, and rhetoric used by the author of the argument you’re rejecting, to see if you can refute any of those for your own rebuttal argument.
Use Neutral Language When Summarizing the Article for your Rebuttal
Make it clear that you are presenting someone else's viewpoint, without emotionally charged, biased, or polemical language to summarize it. Avoid dismissing your opposition from the outset with language like, "Veda Morris naively argues . . ." Instead, stay neutral, saying, "Veda Morris contends," and summarize Morris's argument. Once you've objectively explained your opponent's argument, then you can explain exactly why their opinion is naïve, wrong, or uniformed.

Here are some neutral verbs you can use to introduce another author's opposing view:
- Contends
- Argues
- Suggests
- Admits
- Believes
- Claims
- Admits

Build your credibility with your readers by being fair to your opponents, so they're more open to your rebuttal arguments.

Provide Concessions, When Possible
Of course, there is a point to be made that nuclear energy creates less pollution than using coal or oil.

This is called a concession. You are conceding that the opposing argument is not completely false. Of course, you will go on to explain why this counterargument is not conclusive, but as you introduce it, you show that you understand the logical and rational basis for the argument.

A conditional statement (if x, then y) gives the reader's objections a voice in the context of the writer's argument.

If all people suddenly became vegan in order to save the planet, would that create an overpopulation of livestock that would then do even more damage to the planet?

Here, the writer approaches concession by acknowledging that it makes sense to at least consider this counterargument. If this is true, then that may be true.

While all of the above examples use a serious and respectful tone to introduce counterarguments, there is another option that can be effective, depending on your audience and your intentions.

Satire
For example, in a popular essay advocating for strictly enforced leash laws in cities, you might write something like this:
While it may seem like an act of pet-friendly beneficence and trust to allow your mutt to roam free in the streets, exercising his right to sniff and bite whomever he pleases, unrestrained animals in public places ultimately pose a potential threat to the safety of pedestrians.

Well-done satire can make the reader smile, perhaps even if he or she is one of the pet-friendly owners referenced in the paragraph. It's good for us to laugh at ourselves, and when we do so, we can relax our defenses and open up to the opposing argument.

The trick is to use this technique without alienating readers, and that is not an easy balance. If your reader feels mocked, you've lost him. And even if your reader agrees with your thesis, she may be turned off completely by the lack of respect for other readers.

You can poke fun and be respectful at the same time. You'll just need to use this technique with caution and care.

Your argument will be much stronger if you present opposing viewpoints in a sympathetic light. Compare the following examples:

Students claim that they cheat on tests because they are too busy to study. In reality, students can find the time to study if they learn time-management skills.

Students face many time constraints: between work and family obligations, social responsibilities, sports, clubs, and the expectations of professors, who all think their class should be the top priority, students can have trouble finding time to study for all of their tests. Some students admit that they see cheating as the only way to reconcile their conflicting obligations. However, students can find the time to study if they work on their time-management skills.

The second example presents the argument more sympathetically and realistically. It acknowledges that students may face legitimate difficulties as they try to find time to study for all of their classes. Clearly, in the second example, the writer has considered this issue from the students' perspective, and has attempted to find a solution that takes their concerns into account.

You'll want to present counterarguments to your thesis in ways that respect those who disagree. That includes researching to find the thought leaders on the opposing side of your topic, presenting their arguments in an honest light, and then moving into respectful refutation.
Constructing Your Argument

Although there may always be variations, a good basic outline for a rebuttal argument might look like this:

**Summarize the Details**
In your introduction, which may be more than one paragraph, briefly and objectively summarize the article’s main argument that you’re arguing against. Provide context for the article’s argument, if needed. End with a thesis statement that presents your refutation or counterargument.

**Present Your Refutation or Counterarguments**
If refuting many details/arguments from your article, dedicate one paragraph to each detail/argument. Quote or paraphrase from the author’s argument, and then offer your refutation for why each detail/argument is flawed.
If counterarguing, dedicate your body paragraphs to your own reasons for why your argument is stronger than the author’s arguments, without focusing too much on the specific arguments the author made.

**Summarize Main Points**
Finally, in your conclusion, summarize your refutations or counterarguments. Consider ending with your own proposal or solution.
Fallacies to Watch Out For

Ad Hominem
An ad hominem argument is one that attacks a person's character rather than what he or she is saying with the intention of diverting the discussion and discrediting the person's argument. For example, You're not a historian; why don't you stick to your own field. Here, whether or not the person is a historian has no impact on the merit of their argument and does nothing to strengthen the attacker's position.

Examples

She is for raising the minimum wage, but she is not smart enough to even run a business.

He is critical of bank profits because he's poor.

Straw Man
Intentionally caricaturing a person's argument with the aim of attacking the caricature rather than the actual argument is what is meant by “putting up a straw man.” Misrepresenting, misquoting, misconstruing and oversimplifying are all means by which one commits this fallacy. A straw man argument is usually one that is more absurd than the actual argument, making it an easier target to attack and possibly luring a person towards defending the more ridiculous argument rather than the original one.

In the first example below, the writer offers a misrepresentation of what evolutionary biology claims, which is the idea that humans and chimpanzees shared a common ancestor several million years ago. Misrepresenting the idea is much easier than refuting the evidence for it.
Examples

My opponent is trying to convince you that we evolved from monkeys who were swinging from trees; a truly ludicrous claim.

People who think humans contribute to climate change, clearly believe we are directly responsible for extreme weather, like hurricanes, and have caused the droughts in the southwestern U.S. If that’s the case, maybe we just need to go to the southwest and perform a “rain dance.”

Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger)

Ad Hominem
Children are constantly admonished to stop calling each other names. Some adults, however, still need this admonishment. It can be very tempting to want to discredit a person’s argument by attacking that person’s credibility, rather than the claims they’re making. But this kind of attack or fallacy causes you to lose your credibility (or ethos). On the other hand, sometimes it may be relevant to attack the arguer. For example, if the arguer is claiming to be qualified to make a certain assertion, but isn’t actually an expert on that topic then it would be acceptable to attack both the arguer’s credibility and their position.

Straw Man
You may have overheard a couple’s argument that goes something like this:

"I’m annoyed with you right now and want to be alone tonight.”

“Fine! If you hate spending time with me, then we should break up!”

When you make a straw man fallacy, you attack another person’s argument, but blow things out of proportion, exaggerating your opponent’s claim or watering it down, so it’s easier to refute. The image here is of a man made out of straw (an opponent’s argument) that can literally be blown apart by the slightest wind (or rebuttal). A strong rebuttal, however, refutes the real argument that an opponent is making, sticking to the facts (logos), rather than misrepresenting it.
Sample Rebuttal Arguments

Now that you have had the chance to learn about writing a rebuttal argument, it’s time to see what one might look like. Below, you’ll see a sample rebuttal argumentative essay written following MLA formatting guidelines.

Sam Beever
Bayne Roland
Eng 226
27 July 2017

Gaining with Gluten

The gluten-free diet has gained mass popularity within the past decade with its claims to aid in weight loss and relieve fatigue and digestive problems. In addition, carbohydrates in general have gotten a bad reputation and many people avoid eating them altogether. For athletes, however, consuming carbohydrates is an essential part of their diet as it provides the sustainable energy needed for prolonged aerobic exercise. This is where many athletes come to a crossroad—gluten or no gluten? In a health and fitness article called “Winning Without Wheat,” featured online in Men’s Journal, it claims that ridding the diet of gluten is beneficial to endurance athletes who require massive carbohydrate intake for optimal performance. The article claims that gluten is responsible for bloating and digestive distress and that it is entirely performance hindering. This article scarcely touches on any factual information supporting these claims, and it seems as if this author has completely bought into the gluten-free diet fad. Without having Celiac’s disease, adopting gluten-free diet is not just pointless, but...
it can also present some very serious health concerns and unexpected dangers.

Not only is a gluten-free diet a bad idea for non-celiacs, it’s an especially dangerous idea for athletes who regularly carb load. According to the article “Winning Without Wheat,” bicyclists consume around 8,000 calories per day, and this diet is made up of mostly carbohydrates. Eliminating gluten and replacing it with rice as the author suggests, poses a serious health threat. The article "Ten Things To Know About Arsenic and Rice" from last year stated that new discoveries about the heavy metal content in rice has prompted the FDA to create standards regarding arsenic in infant rice cereal: “Researchers say the plant is at least ten times as effective as other grains at siphoning up arsenic from soil and water” (Blum). This is an unavoidable feature of rice resulting in soil toxins being soaked into the grain in the harvesting process. According to Blum’s article, those who consume large amounts of rice are particularly at risk: “Infants who are fed a steady diet of rice cereal were consuming three times as much arsenic each day as adults eating rice products.” This is worrisome because a steady diet of inorganic arsenic, even in trace amounts, has been found to affect cognitive function (Allan & Tyler). The Director of Consumer Safety and Sustainability at Consumer Reports stated that, “Without meaningful standards, consumers of all ages who eat rice and especially those who eat a lot of rice are still at risk” (qtd. in Allan & Tyler). Although rice does seem to be safe in moderate amounts, adopting an 8,000-calorie diet consisting of high quantities of this grain could be very detrimental to one’s health over time.

In addition to macronutrients like protein and carbohydrates, micronutrients are also vital to athletic performance and overall

Notice how the writer provides a paraphrase from the article, providing specific information about the article's claim and then refutes that claim using information from credible sources.

After citing a lot of research, the writer ends their paragraph with a clear refutation of one of the claims made in the article.
health. Vitamins such as vitamin B and iron are fortified into many gluten-containing products on the market to ensure that people are meeting their recommended daily needs. Replacing the fortified pasta that bicyclists usually consume in their diets with oats or heavy metal-laden rice isn’t the wisest move for athletes that are constantly on the move. Oats, though not toxic, lack the vitamins and minerals that fortified pasta and whole grain cereal is able to provide for longevity and endurance during extended exercise.

A clear fallacy that stood out in the article was when the article deemed gluten responsible for bloating, stiffness, and gastrointestinal distress. There is not much fact behind these claims other than explaining the uncomfortable effects of Celiac’s disease and gluten intolerance, which the article claims affects 1 in 133 people. Recent studies are not in agreement with these claims. In fact, for non-celiacs and those who aren’t gluten intolerant, gluten has the opposite effect. When a group of healthy young adults were put on a gluten-free diet for one month, researchers concluded that their gut microbes were negatively altered. In fact, the number of healthy gut bacteria decreased, while the unhealthy bacteria increased (Sanz). Healthy gut bacteria are essential for digestive health, and improved digestion clearly cannot be a direct result of a gluten-free diet.

The inflammatory response resulting from digesting gluten provides a stimulatory effect for the immune system. Athletes are consistently fatigued, and without the proper nutrition, their immune systems could easily be compromised. If they were to remove foods like gluten that are more complicated to digest, it could pose some unsuspecting consequences, and it may actually remove immune boosting stimuli needed to fight off infection. A
study involving a group of healthy individuals supplemented with gluten revealed that their natural killer cell activity significantly increased, while those on a gluten-free diet did not see any positive increase (Horiguchi et al). In other words, eating gluten helps boost the immune system, while not eating gluten has no positive effect on a person’s immune system.

At the end of the day, the ultimate goal is not just to win one race, it is to win at life in general. This requires wise decisions regarding health and wellness. For those without Celiac’s disease, a gluten-free diet is not the answer to optimal health. Circulating claims that a diet free of gluten results in serious weight loss and loads of new energy are highly questionable. At a certain point, one must question whether these changes are due to lack of gluten itself or just due to relative changes from cutting out sugary and fat-ridden junk food that gluten is often associated with. The article “Winning without Wheat” is misinformed about gluten. The article failed to acknowledge the health benefits that a whole grain diet has to offer and neglected to convincingly support the arguments against it. Furthermore, the article’s concentration focused too much on maintaining endurance through one race, rather than sustaining lifelong longevity. There are many benefits to consuming a whole grain diet, and there are countless healthy whole grain alternatives to processed food. Gluten shouldn’t be blamed for such a broadly categorized health epidemic, and people need to separate themselves from the trend and become more educated on the subject.

The writer carefully qualifies their argument by being clear that those with Celiac disease MUST eat a gluten free diet for their health.
Works Cited


Sources

*An Illustrated Book of Bad Arguments* by Ali Almossawi. Licensed under the [Creative Commons BY-NC license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/).

*Techniques for Acknowledging Opposing Views*, Licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/).

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at *Excelsior College*, Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/).
A proposal argument is a structure of argument that focuses on presenting some kind of proposal as a solution to a problem, outlining the details of the proposal, and providing good reasons to support the proposal. This type of essay works well if you see a problem you want to fix or see change you want to make.

Examples of this type of argument might look something like this:

- An argument about adding bicycle lanes to encourage more green commuting and reduce traffic congestion.
- An argument about a plan to cut down on teens who are becoming addicted to cigarettes.
- An argument about a way to reduce noise after 10pm in your neighborhood.
Constructing Your Argument

Although there may always be variations, a good basic outline for a proposal argument might look like this:

**Summarize the Details**
In your introduction, which may be more than one paragraph, summarize the details of the problem. End with a thesis statement that presents your proposal.

**Present a Detailed History of the Problem**
Provide a detailed history of the problem. Give your audience background on the issue.

**Present Solution in Detail**
Present your solution in detail. Explain how it would address the problem, be a better “fix” than current solutions, and exactly how your proposal would work. You need to think about the logistics—money, manpower, workability. What new issues or problems might your solution cause? This should take several paragraphs.

**Provide Evidence for Solution**
Provide evidence that proves your solution will work. Refute any claims others might make to dismiss your proposal. Explain why your solution is the best solution to the problem.

**Explain the Feasibility of Solution**
Address issues of feasibility and agreeableness of your solution. Explain how your solution will work, practically speaking. Who needs to agree with this solution for it to be implemented?

**TIPS**
When writing a proposal argument, it’s important that you don’t try to take on too much given the length of your assignment and the time you have to write your essay. Think about proposals that work well given the constraints of the assignment.

If you have a choice in what you write about, find something you feel passionately about. If you’re going to be writing a specific proposal to solve a problem, it helps if you care about the problem.

Think about your audience members as you plan and write. What kind of information do they need? What will be convincing to them? Think about your audience as you work to use ethos, pathos, and logos.
Summarize Main Points
Finally, in your conclusion, summarize your main points of your essay. This is a good place to give your audience something to do in order to make your proposal a reality.
Fallacies to Watch Out For

Here are a couple fallacies you’ll want to watch out for, when writing a proposal argument.

Dogmatism
An authoritative principle, belief or statement of opinion, especially one considered to be absolutely true and indisputable, regardless of evidence or without evidence to support it.

Dogma refers to positions such as those of aggressive political interests, religious beliefs, or authorities. More generally it is applied to some strong belief that the ones adhering to it are not willing to rationally discuss.

Examples
No other political party will lead our country to better prosperity.

This is the only news channel that offers real, not fake, news.

False Analogy
The false analogy fallacy results when situations or circumstances being compared are not similar enough. A common false analogy that people make is comparing something to putting a person on the moon: “If we can put a person on the moon, why can’t we figure out a way to make the tax code easier to understand?” This question doesn’t acknowledge the different skill sets and motivations involved in the two examples being compared.

Another example might be an argument that access to firearms should not be severely restricted, as access to kitchen knives is not severely restricted and yet, like firearms, they are sometimes used to kill innocent people. This analogy deliberately ignores critical differences between guns and kitchen knives.
Examples

Just like a cat needs to prowl, a normal adult can’t be tied down to one single lover.

The model of the solar system is similar to that of an atom, with planets orbiting the sun like electrons orbiting the nucleus. Electrons can jump from orbit to orbit; so we should study ancient records for sightings of planets jumping from orbit to orbit.

Avoiding Fallacies (And Making Your Argument Stronger)

Dogmatism
Narrowing your solutions down to only one possibility, without first exploring and refuting other possibilities leads to the fallacy of dogmatism. To build your credibility (or ethos), you need to let your audience know that you have an open mind, and that you’ve done your research about other possibilities. Either way, it’s almost always a mistake to say “never” or “impossible” when refuting a possibility. It’s better to temper your language with “almost never” or “very unlikely.”

False Analogy
Using analogies in your writing is like adding chocolate chips to cookies: it enriches the flavor of the piece you’re working on. A good analogy not only adds flavor to your writing, it can help clarify your argument or ideas. On the other hand, a false analogy makes a faulty comparison between two things. Using false analogies can lead to the spread of false information (logos) that does not support your argument.
Sample Proposal Arguments
Now that you have had the chance to learn about writing a proposal argument, it’s time to see what one might look like. Below, you’ll see a sample proposal argumentative essay written using APA formatting guidelines.

Rethinking Recycling: Why Reusing Needs to Be User Friendly
Emily Hanna
Oregon State University
Rethinking Recycling: Why Reusing Needs to Be User Friendly

Many people hold on to the belief that recycling is unnecessary, and even among those who believe in reducing waste, some find recycling to be inconvenient. Facilities do not always exist to handle certain materials (such as packaging and batteries), and some towns require residents to go through elaborate sorting processes or transport their recycling to a central location, all of which can seem like extra tasks in a busy world. But recycling is becoming increasingly important. According to Zellar (2008), in an article for National Geographic entitled “Recycling: The Big Picture,” “Every shrink-wrapped toy or tool or medical device we buy bears the stamp of its energy-intensive history. . . . A product’s true cost includes greenhouse gases emitted in its creation as well as use, and pollutants that cause acid rain, smog, and fouled waterways” (para. 4). Essentially, recycling is necessary because of the amount of resources and energy required to produce new items from scratch. Furthermore, landfills have become too large to accommodate in some areas, and they emit unwanted gases that damage the environment (Kaufman, 2009). Because of the repercussions of wastefulness, recycling is essential. Thus, it should be universally available and streamlined for maximum benefits.

At Oregon State University, the administration, faculty, and students are used to seeing and using recycling containers to pitch water bottles, surplus paper from printers, and cardboard (Oregon State University, 2014). However, the administration does not systematically implement the recycling services on campus, creating misunderstanding about what can be recycled and where.
The types of bins and services available vary by building and department, making it hard for those who live, work, and study on campus to make the most efficient recycling choices. For example, the residence halls have commingled recycling that accommodates some plastic, metal, cartons, and paper, whereas the library has different bins for paper or bottles and cans only. This difference means that, in some campus locations, most waste continues to be sent to landfills. In addition, many of the vendors and departments on campus continue to use products—such as waxed paper cups, coffee-cup lids, and plastic utensils—that cannot be recycled on campus. To solve these problems, Oregon State University should implement a reorganized system that includes matching bins across campus to accommodate a wider range of items and the systematic replacement of everyday items that cannot be recycled with ecofriendly or recyclable options.

Streamlined bins will allow staff, students, and faculty to learn about one recycling system and to use it regularly. If the recycling system in the library matches the system in the Memorial Union, those on campus will be less likely to toss things into the trash because they are not sure if it is recyclable. The University of Maryland (2010) has worked hard, and had success, with such measures on their campus. The school’s website states that one of the university’s goals was to make steps toward a “zero waste” initiative. Specifically, “These improvements include installing more recycling and compost collection bins, implementing education and outreach activities, and eliminating the distribution of condiment packets and instead creating condiment stations near food courts” (University of Maryland, 2010, para. 2). The university also made trash bins harder to access, allotting each...
faculty member a tiny desk bin that he or she then had to take to a central location. Such initiatives combined with a sleek, well-run recycling system increases recycling participation on campus.

New—and more—bins will require Oregon State to invest in additional education on recycling for members of the community. That is, students, faculty, and staff will need to be taught what can go in each bin and why these measures are so important. Things tend to go awry if new systems are not accompanied by clear instructions. According to Kaufman (2009), such a mishap occurred in Santa Monica, California when residents mistook compostable cutlery for plastic and put them into the recycling bins. She wrote, “Josephine Miller, an environmental official for the city of Santa Monica, Calif., which bans the use of polystyrene foam containers, said that some citizens had unwittingly put the plant-based alternatives into cans for recycling, where they had melted and had gummed up the works” (para. 26). Such problems can be avoided, she added, when education is part of the initiative.

The new system and education initiatives should be combined with a movement away from products that are the hardest to dispose of ethically and with concern for the environment. This not only limits waste, but also offsets some of the initial costs of the new endeavors. For example, the University of Maryland began using compostable takeout containers that cost a bit more than the old products (University of Maryland, 2010). However, they combined the use of these new products with an emphasis on using reusable plates, cups, and silverware. As a result, the food services produced less waste, needed fewer takeout containers, and spent less money. Zellar confirmed that one of the best ways to lessen the amount of waste being produced is to move
away from heavily packaged items that contain unrecyclable elements.

Critics of recycling initiatives often cite wasted energy during collection, high costs, and poor user-friendliness as reasons that recycling does not work. Zellar (2008) made note of some opponents who felt the environmental impact of collecting recyclable waste offsets the benefits of recycling. However, Zellar demonstrated that creating brand new products actually uses significantly more energy than an efficiently run, frequently used recycling system. If members of the Oregon State University community are encouraged to use a simplified (but still comprehensive) system, the environmental impact is much smaller. Similarly, the costs of such a program are mitigated by using fewer disposable items and by a decreased need to haul trash to landfills. Zellar also noted that “some municipalities . . . are starting to demand that businesses help cover the costs of recycling” (para. 14), certain materials that are expensive or difficult to recycle. This approach has the benefit of lowering recycling costs for consumers, along with the bonus of discouraging companies from creating and distributing products that are bad for the environment. Oregon State could, then, ask the city of Corvallis to consider such a measure.

According to sources cited by Kaufman (2009), large institutions have the most potential for affecting change in how waste and recycling are handled because they produce more waste and, thus, have the ability to change demand for certain products and services. She continued, “[C]ustomers will have to be taught to think about the destination of every throwaway if the zero-waste philosophy is to prevail, environmental officials say” (para. 27).
As home base to thousands of employees and students, Oregon State University has the privilege of being an institution that can make a positive impact through education about and implementation of a comprehensive, user-friendly recycling system. If you see the need for this change to occur, contact your administrative officials in Business Affairs and tell them you want to see improved recycling efforts on your campus!

The writer concludes her essay by emphasizing her proposal and leaving her audience with a call to action.
References


Sources

*Argument From Analogy*. Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).

*Communication in the Real World: An Introduction to Communication Studies*. Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

*Master List of Logical Fallacies*. Licensed under Creative Commons [Public Domain License](http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/).

*False Analogy* by Theo Clark and Jef Clark. Licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

*Dogma*. Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

*Dogmatism*. Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at [Excelsior College](http://owl.excelsior.edu). Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).