Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric

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FIGURE 10.1 This engraving by an unknown Italian artist from the 15th century personifies rhetoric as eloquence or "discourse marked by force and persuasiveness." Study the details. *What is the engraver suggesting about the characteristics of rhetoric or eloquence? Why might the artist have chosen a woman to personify rhetoric or eloquence?* (credit: "Mantegna Tarocchi E23, Rhetorica" by Unknown engraver of the late 15th century/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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INTRODUCTION Around 350 BCE, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE) defined **rhetoric** as the ability to recognize and use different means of persuasion in writing and speaking effectively. These means of persuasion include **ethos**, appeal to ethics; **logos**, appeal to logic; **pathos**, appeal to emotions; and **kairos**, or timeliness. In simple terms, rhetoric is the art of persuasion—explaining a position or side of an argument in order to convince others to adopt the writer's or speaker's viewpoint. More deeply, rhetoric is the study of how language is written, spoken, and visualized. For more on rhetoric, see Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric.

Ethos, logos, pathos, and kairos are the foundation of persuasion strategies in Western civilization; other cultures rely on other types of appeals. In many Eastern civilizations, persuasive strategies are based on developing a sense of unity with the audience, promoting social responsibility, and working with the audience to increase knowledge.

This chapter presents a biography on position writer Charles Blow (b. 1970) and a speech by an American president Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973). It is a study in rhetoric, as its purpose is to persuade the audience (the American public) to agree with, support, and carry out his proposal for a Great Society. Later in the chapter, you will learn how to apply principles of rhetoric to create a position argument of your own.

10.1 Making a Case: Defining a Position Argument

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply key rhetorical concepts in presenting a position argument.
- Articulate how position and argument conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and reasoning.

In writing, a **genre** is a category of literary composition. The genre for this chapter is a **position arguments**. In a position argument, your purpose is to present a **perspective**, or viewpoint, about a **debatable issue** and persuade readers that your perspective is correct or at least worthy of serious consideration. A debatable issue is one that is subject to uncertainty or to a difference of opinion; in college classes, a debatable issue is one that is complex and involves critical thinking. These issues are not rooted in absolutes; instead, they invite writers to explore all sides to discover the position they support. In examining and explaining their positions, writers provide reasoning and evidence about why their stance is correct.

Many people may interpret the word ***argument*** to mean a heated disagreement or quarrel. However, this is only one definition. In writing, *argument*—what Aristotle called *rhetoric*—means "working with a set of reasons and evidence for the purpose of persuading readers that a particular position is not only valid but also worthy of their support." This approach is the basis of academic position writing.

Your instructor likely will require your position argument to include these elements, which resemble those of Aristotle's classical argument. However, as you continue the development of your writing identity throughout this course, consider ways in which you want to support these conventions or challenge them for rhetorical purposes.

- Introduce the issue and your position on the issue.
- Explain and describe the issue.
- Address the opposition.
- Provide evidence to support your position.
- Offer your conclusion.

Position arguments must provide reasoning and **evidence** to support the validity of the author's viewpoint. By offering strong support, writers seek to persuade their audiences to understand, accept, agree with, or take action regarding their viewpoints. In a college class, an audience is usually an instructor and other classmates. Outside of an academic setting, however, an audience includes anyone who might read the argument—employers, employees, colleagues, neighbors, and people of different ages or backgrounds or with different interests.

Before you think about writing, keep in mind that presenting a position is already part of your everyday life. You present reasoning to frame evidence that supports your opinions, whether you are persuading a friend to go to a certain restaurant, or persuading your supervisor to change your work schedule. Your reasoning and evidence emphasize the importance of the issue—to you. Position arguments are also valuable outside of academia. Opinion pieces and letters to the editor are essentially brief position texts that express writers' viewpoints on current events topics. Moreover, government organizations and political campaigns often use

position arguments to present detailed views of one side of a debatable issue.



On a larger scale, arguing in favor of a position is deeply rooted in the American political and social systems, in which free speech and, by extension, open debate are the essence of the democratic process. They are also at the heart of the academic process, in which scholars investigate issues dealing with science, society, and **culture**, or shared values, customs, arts, and other traits of any social group. However, in the academic world, unlike the political and legal worlds, posing position arguments is usually less about winning or losing than about changing minds, altering perceptions, or defending beliefs and ideas.

It is most useful to look at a position argument as rational disagreement rather than as a quarrel or contest. Rational disagreements occur most often in areas of genuine uncertainty about what is right, best, or most reasonable. In disciplines such as literature and history, position arguments commonly take the form of interpretation or analysis, in which the meaning of an idea or text is disputed. In disciplines such as engineering and business, position arguments commonly examine a problem and propose a solution. For example, a position paper in engineering might focus on improvement recommendations for systems in the oil and gas industry; a position paper in business might focus on technological changes that would benefit a particular company or industry.

In college, position arguments aim to persuade readers to agree with a particular viewpoint. Assignments commonly require you to take a stance on an issue and defend your position against attacks from skeptics or naysayers. You are asked to choose an issue, present a viewpoint about it, and support it with reasoning and evidence. Remember these basic points:

- **Choose a debatable issue.** A position argument that states, for instance, that *three-year-old children can be left alone all evening* is one with no room for debate, so the topic would not lead to an effective argument. Without a debate, there is no argument.
- **Present a clear, definite viewpoint.** Readers do not want to guess your position. Although you present both sides of a position, readers must be clear about which side you support.
- **Support your viewpoint with reasoning and evidence.** If, for instance, you are writing about backing a local proposal to remove a statute of a Civil War general who fought for the Confederacy, readers need to know why you favor its removal, why the statue was first erected, and how removal will help the community. You would then support each with cause-and-effect reasoning and evidence. For example, details that explain why you favor removal might include the general's support of the Southern economic system sustained by enslavement. Details that explain why the statue was erected might include that the general was from the town and that his family was rich and influential enough to fund the creation and placement of the statue. Details that explain how the removal of the statue will affect the community might include the promotion of a feeling of solidarity with local citizens of all races and the end of negative publicity resulting from association with the general.
- **Identify counterclaims (dissenting opinions).** When you address differing or contradictory opinions, show **empathy**, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, for those with dissenting views. If, for instance, people oppose a proposed new law because they think it will cost too much money, then explain why the money will be well spent or offset by savings in the future. Neither antagonize nor dismiss the opposition.

10.2 Trailblazer

Position Argument Trailblazer: Charles Blow

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate critical thinking when reading in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Articulate and analyze rhetorical and cultural contexts in reading.
- Distinguish relationships between the interplay of verbal and nonverbal elements, and explain how these features function for different audiences and situations.

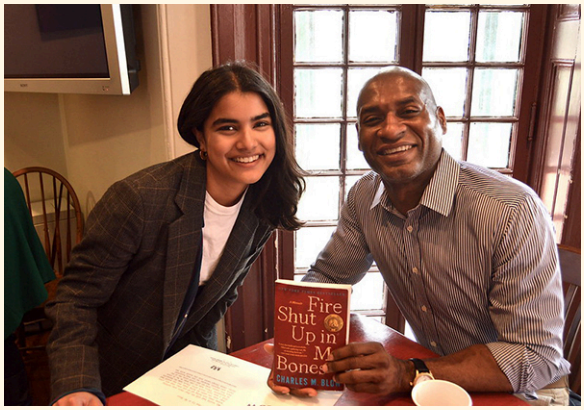


FIGURE 10.2 Charles Blow (credit: **"Charles Blow and Jillian Karanda 4-23-18" by** Kelly Writers House/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

"I . . . us[e] visual evidence . . . charts and maps and diagrams to support my positions."

Trendsetter

Trendsetting journalist Charles Blow (b. 1970) attended Grambling State University in Louisiana, where he edited his college newspaper, founded a student magazine, and interned (worked as a trainee to gain experience) in various positions. While a student, he heard *The New York Times* was participating in a job conference in Atlanta and decided to attend. When he arrived, however, he learned he was supposed to have preregistered, paid a fee, filled out a form, and submitted an essay. Undeterred, Blow borrowed pencil from a guard, completed the form, paid the fee, and wrote the essay on the spot. He then gained entry into the conference. When he got to the booth sponsored by *The New York Times*, he was told he would not be interviewed because he had not signed up beforehand. Again undeterred, Blow decided to wait anyway, thinking someone who had signed up might not appear for their interview. He waited until early evening and eventually was granted an interview. At the end of his interview, he was told that he had been impressive but that *The New York Times* had no openings at the time. The next day, however, a representative from the paper approached him again and announced they had created an internship for him.

In 1991, Blow graduated *magna cum laude* (with great distinction) with a degree in mass communications and began a journalism career, working in various cities. In 2008, he returned to *The New York Times* as its first "visual" op-ed columnist, writing opinion pieces that feature graphic aids such as diagrams, charts, and tables. In his visual op-ed column, Blow presents his position or argument, with the intent to persuade readers to agree with him. To augment what he says in print, he includes graphic aids, which clarify and simplify data. Blow is cautious, too, about using visuals that are too complex, for he believes his readers respond better to "a

strong point . . . in a visual nugget that they can digest right away."

Blow's topics revolve around current events, and his readers—his audience—expect his columns to highlight his positions on, or arguments about, hot-button issues in current events. Blow calls himself a "trend spotter," someone on the cutting edge of what is happening in the nation and the world. To discover ideas for topics about current events, Blow keeps his office television tuned to news channels so he can learn of breaking news or of how news is being covered. That is where his writing process usually begins.

First, when an interesting news item comes over the airwaves, Blow decides his opinion on the subject. Then he thinks about whether his readers might care about the subject. He does not stop there, though. Because Blow is a visual op-ed columnist, he will not pursue the topic if he cannot think of a visual hook to support his position or argument. He then studies data about the topic and asks himself whether the data surprises him or might surprise readers. His audience expects solid graphic aids in his columns, and it is the combination of written prose and visual hooks that makes him stand apart from other op-ed writers.

In addition to writing for *The New York Times*, Blow is the author of the memoir *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* and *The Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto*.

Discussion Questions

1. If you were to turn on the television today, what current topics might make interesting opinion columns?
2. How might Blow's use of graphics as evidence help support a point in a column?
3. What kinds of graphics could you use to support the topic(s) you identified in question #1?
4. Do you agree or disagree with Blow's claim that visuals should be simple and easily digestible rather than complex? Explain your thinking.
5. Blow calls himself a "trend spotter." In your college, your town, or the country as a whole, what is a current trend that might interest Blow?

10.3 Glance at Genre: Thesis, Reasoning, and Evidence

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Articulate and analyze key rhetorical concepts in presenting a position or an argument.
- Demonstrate awareness of context, audience, and purpose in a position argument.
- Identify the thesis and supporting evidence of a position argument.
- Distinguish different types of evidence used in a position argument.

The purpose of a position argument is to persuade readers to adopt a viewpoint. Writers of position arguments focus on a thesis that takes a stance on a debatable issue and support that thesis with reasoning and evidence. When writing persuasively, consider your audience and use the kinds of reasoning strategies and evidentiary appeals you believe will be convincing. In addition, use language with which your audience is most comfortable. In academic environments, academic language is generally most acceptable, although you may choose to challenge this notion for rhetorical purposes. Outside academic environments, tailor your language to connect best with your audience.

Reasoning is most effective when it is built on evidence that readers recognize as logical and practical. Suppose you want to persuade your audience that because of the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, additional police should be hired to protect the building and the people who work there. You could include information about the number of police on duty that day, the number of people injured, and the amount of damage done. You then could explain how the number of police on duty was insufficient to protect the people and the Capitol.

Additionally, you identify and refute the **counterclaims**. An example of a counterclaim against hiring additional police officers might be that the cost is too high. Your response, then, might be that the cost could easily be shifted from another nationally funded source.

Characteristics of Position Arguments

The characteristics of a position argument include the following elements.

Ethos (Ethical Appeal)

You establish credibility by showing readers that your approach to the issue is fair and that you can be trusted. One way to demonstrate fairness and trustworthiness is to use neutral language that avoids name-calling. For instance, in your paper about hiring additional police to defend the Capitol, you would avoid taking political sides and would use neutral language when describing police, workers in the Capitol, and demonstrators.

To show trustworthiness, always follow these guidelines:

- Use only respected, reliable sources as evidence. Avoid sources that lean heavily to the political right or left or that are otherwise questionable as to accuracy. Reliable sources include scholarly, peer-reviewed articles and books; professional articles and books; and articles from magazines, newspapers, websites, and blogs. For more information about credible sources, see Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources.
- Present evidence from sources in the same context in which it was originally presented. Do not change the original author's meaning or tone. Be especially careful of such changes when you paraphrase or summarize. See Spotlight on… Citation for more about paraphrasing and summarizing.
- Cite evidence to the proper sources. Use the citation style required by your instructor, usually MLA Documentation and Format or APA Documentation and Format Proper citations direct readers to more information about your sources and show you are not plagiarizing.
- Incorporate common ground between readers who support your position and those who do not. To do this, many authors use evidence pulled from patriotic or religious documents to create ethical appeal. For instance, regarding the activity that took place at the Capitol, both sides might find common ground in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which outlines rights of the people. The protestors might cite the section of the amendment that deals with freedom of assembly; those on the other side might point out that the amendment guarantees "the right of the people peaceably to assemble" and that the assembly was not peaceable.

Logos (Logical Appeal)

You appeal to your audience's intelligence by showing that you understand the value of sound reasoning. To do this, state your position clearly and support it with rational arguments, critical thinking, and credible evidence. Also, avoid exaggerating or making claims you cannot support with reliable evidence. Many authors use facts and statistics to create logical appeal.

To appeal to logic, follow these guidelines:

- State your position clearly with easy-to-understand language. For example, to appeal to readers' intelligence in your paper about hiring additional police to defend the Capitol, avoid using vocabulary that would feel unnatural. Instead of writing "The verbiage from the campaigners importuned the dispossession of their statesmen," write "The protestors demanded the resignations of their congressional representatives."
- Support your position with reasoning that is neither incomplete nor faulty. Sound reasoning is that which all can agree makes sense. For example, you would not contend that to be ready for future protests, the Capitol police force must be doubled from 2,000 to 4,000 because you cannot know the number needed at any time. However, you could argue that the Capitol police force and government leaders should study the January 6, 2021, riot to determine how many additional police are needed, should such an occasion arise

again.
- Present your critical thinking through a well-constructed argument. By ordering your position argument in a manner that moves logically from one point to the next, you help guide readers through your thought process, which is reflected in the smooth flow of ideas that work together to support your thesis.
- Incorporate credible evidence from trusted and reliable academic, government, media, and professional sources. Using these sources shows readers that you recognize biased material and have excluded it from your paper.

Pathos (Emotional Appeal)

You appeal to your audience's feelings—such as sympathy, anger, fear, insecurity, guilt, and conscience—to support your position.

For example, to appeal to your audience's emotions in your paper about the need for more Capitol police, you might do the following:

- Help your readers understand feelings of fear. One way to appeal to this emotion is to quote from interviews with government workers and bystanders who were hiding behind locked doors and had no police protection.
- Use vivid description and concrete language to recreate images that showed lone officers overwhelmed by crowds of people and beaten.
- Use nonaggressive language to address the positions of readers who do not support your stance. For example, some readers may believe that the federal government spends too much money already and should not allocate more. By using language that is not inflammatory, you can show your empathy for others, and this may help you convince them to support your position.

Kairos (Timeliness)

The sense of timing—presenting your position at the right time—is critical in a position argument. The issue must be worthy of attention at the time it is presented for readers to feel a sense of urgency. For example, in an argumentative paper about the significance of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, you could do the following:

- Point out the history of the BLM movement, which began in 2013 after the acquittal of the man accused of killing Trayvon Martin (1995–2012) in 2012.
- Note that today, most of the speeches delivered in BLM rallies held across the country reference the May 2020 murder of George Floyd (1973–2020).
- Emphasize that Floyd's killing remains front and center in the minds of rally participants. In other words, the topic of Floyd's death is timely, and related circumstances indicate a favorable time for action.

You can find further discussion about these appeals in Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric.

Key Terms

These are key terms and characteristics of position arguments:

- **Allusion:** direct or implied reference to a person, place, work of literature, idea, event, or anything a writer expects readers to know about. Allusion is a frequently used literary device.
- **Citation:** reference to the source of information used in a writer's research.
- **Critical thinking:** ability to identify and solve problems by gathering information about a topic and then analyzing and evaluating evidence to form a judgment.
- **Counterclaim (dissenting opinion):** statement of what the other side might say in opposition to the stance the writer takes about an issue.
- **Ethos:** appeal to readers' ethical sense; establishing authority and credibility.
- **Evidence:** facts and other information that prove or disprove the validity of something written or stated.
- **Introduction:** first part of a paper. In position arguments, the writer alerts readers to the issue or problem

discussed and often presents the thesis at the end of the introduction.

- **Kairos:** appeal to timeliness of the subject matter.
- **Logos:** appeal to readers' sense of logic, or reason.
- **Pathos:** appeal to readers' emotions.
- **Purpose:** author's reason for writing the paper. In a position argument, the purpose is to persuade readers to agree with the writer's stance.
- **Reasoning:** logical and sensible explanation of a concept.
- **Recursive:** movement back and forth from one part of the writing process to another.
- **Rhetorical appeals:** methods of persuasion (ethos, logos, pathos, and kairos).
- **Rhetorical question:** questions intended to make a point rather than to get an answer. Rhetorical questions, which often have no answers or no obvious answers, appear frequently in argument writing as a way of capturing audience attention.
- **Topic:** subject of a paper. In this genre, the topic is a debatable issue.
- **Thesis:** declarative sentence (sometimes two) that states a writer's position about the debatable issue, or topic, of the paper.
- **Transitional words or phrases:** words and phrases that help readers connect ideas from one sentence to another or from one paragraph to another. Transitions establish relationships among ideas.

10.4 Annotated Sample Reading: "Remarks at the University of Michigan" by Lyndon B. Johnson

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate critical thinking about a reading passage related to position and argument writing.
- Explain and evaluate how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Assess material for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical and cultural contexts.

Introduction



FIGURE 10.3 President Lyndon B. Johnson (credit: “Lyndon Johnson” by Arnold Newman, White House Press Office (WHPO)/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

In a commencement speech at the University of Michigan (https://openstax.org/r/universityofmichigan) on May 22, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson (https://openstax.org/r/lyndonbjohnson) proposed a set of domestic programs that would become one of the foundations of his administration. He called these programs the Great Society. Today, many of the same problems that Johnson addressed continue, and programs that seek to remedy them are referred to as initiatives of **social justice**, such as those directed toward human rights, health care, alleviating poverty, and guaranteeing democratic practices. To persuade his audience to agree that the programs needed to be adopted, Johnson presented his argument about why they were needed and what they would achieve.



FIGURE 10.4 On July 2, barely two months after the University of Michigan graduation speech, President Johnson

signed the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is among the onlookers. The Act forbids discrimination on the basis race, religion, gender, or national origin. Prohibiting the practice of "Jim Crow" laws, the Act also strengthened the enforcement of school desegregation and voting rights. (credit: "Lyndon Johnson signing Civil Rights Act, July 2, 1964" by Cecil Stoughton, White House Press Office/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

Testing Our Success as a Nation

President Hatcher, Governor Romney, Senators McNamara and Hart, Congressmen Meader and Staebler and other members of the fine Michigan delegation, members of the graduating class, my fellow Americans:

Audience. *This speech, although given at the University of Michigan commencement, is addressed to the nation. Johnson first mentions the people in attendance but ends his introduction by including in his wider audience: "my fellow Americans."*

> It is a great pleasure to be here today. This university has been coeducational since 1870, but I do not believe it was on the basis of your accomplishments that a Detroit high school girl said, "In choosing a college, you first have to decide whether you want a coeducational school or an educational school." Well, we can find both here at Michigan, although perhaps at different hours. I came out here today very anxious to meet the Michigan student whose father told a friend of mine that his son's education had been a real value. It stopped his mother from bragging about him.

> I have come today from the turmoil of your Capital to the tranquility of your campus to speak about the future of your country. The purpose of protecting the life of our Nation and preserving the liberty of our citizens is to pursue the happiness of our people. Our success in that pursuit is the test of our success as a Nation. For a century we labored to settle and to subdue a continent. For half a century we called upon unbounded invention and untiring industry to create an order of plenty for all of our people. The challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to use that wealth to enrich and elevate our national life and to advance the quality of our American civilization.

Kairos. *Johnson notes the mood of the nation and of the campus, a timely reference for those attending the graduation ceremony.*

Context. *Johnson contextualizes the current challenges of the country within the history of the nation. This strategy calls upon the patriotism of his audience to take their rightful place in history.*

> Your imagination, your initiative, and your indignation will determine whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs or a society where old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth. For in your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society.

Purpose. *Johnson's purpose is to introduce the concept of the Great Society to the American public.*

> The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that is just the beginning. The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents.

> It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community. It is a place where man can renew contact with nature. It is a place which honors creation for its own sake and for what it adds to the understanding of the race. It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.

Repetition. *Johnson repeats the clause "It is a place" to add emphasis to the various facets of the Great Society.*

Definition. *Johnson also defines for the audience what he means by the term Great Society.*

Allusion. *Johnson mentions "the city of man," a reference—or allusion—to St. Augustine's book The City of God, which gives ethical and religious significance to his Great Society.*

> But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor.

> So I want to talk to you today about three places where we begin to build the Great Society—in our cities, in our countryside, and in our classrooms.

Clear Viewpoint. *Johnson states that America needs reform and points out the three areas where the Great Society will focus: "in our cities, in our countryside, and in our classrooms." His choice of these places emphasizes where people live and where they learn.*

> Many of you will live to see the day, perhaps 50 years from now, when there will be 400 million Americans, four-fifths of them in urban areas. In the remainder of this century urban population will double, city land will double, and we will have to build homes, highways, and facilities equal to all those built since this country was first settled. So in the next 40 years we must rebuild the entire urban United States.

Kairos. *Johnson addresses the timeliness of the concerns these college graduates have about their lives after graduation.*

Logos. *Johnson will go on to provide a logical solution to the problems that Americans will face over the next 40 years.*

> Aristotle said: "Men come together in cities in order to live, but they remain together in order to live the good life." It is harder and harder to live the good life in American cities today.

Quotation from an Expert. *This quotation from a revered classical philosopher (Aristotle) echoes Johnson's idea, giving it more strength and credibility.*

> The catalog of ills is long: there is the decay of the centers and the despoiling of the suburbs. There is not enough housing for our people or transportation for our traffic. Open land is vanishing, and old landmarks are violated. Worst of all, expansion is eroding the precious and time-honored values of community with neighbors and communion with nature. The loss of these values breeds loneliness and boredom and indifference.

Kairos. *Johnson addresses the many concerns on Americans' minds.*

Pathos. *Using strong words like decay, despoiling, vanishing, and violated, Johnson connects his argument to emotions—mostly fear—the audience would feel about such destruction of nature and values.*

Culture. *Johnson addresses the need for a change in culture to improve the future of the country.*

> Our society will never be great until our cities are great. Today the frontier of imagination and innovation is inside those cities and not beyond their borders.

Supporting Evidence. *Johnson states that he will begin to build the Great Society in three places—cities, countryside, classrooms. Then he gives supporting evidence for each place.*

To support the need for change the Great Society will bring to cities, Johnson offers that

- *many people in the audience will see a time when four-fifths of the American population will live in cities;*
- *since urban population and city land will double in the coming years, America needs homes, highways, and facilities;*

- *cities suffer from decay, and suburbs are being despoiled;*
- *the country must fulfill housing and transportation needs;*
- *open land is vanishing;*
- *old landmarks are violated; and*
- *values of community and communion with nature are eroding.*

> New experiments are already going on. It will be the task of your generation to make the American city a place where future generations will come, not only to live but to live the good life. I understand that if I stayed here tonight, I would see that Michigan students are really doing their best to live the good life. This is the place where the Peace Corps was started. It is inspiring to see how all of you, while you are in this country, are trying so hard to live at the level of the people.

> A second place where we begin to build the Great Society is in our countryside. We have always prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the beautiful. Today that beauty is in danger. The water we drink, the food we eat, the very air that we breathe, are threatened with pollution. Our parks are overcrowded, our seashores overburdened. Green fields and dense forests are disappearing.

Transition between Paragraphs. *By using the phrase "second place," Johnson alerts his audience that he is shifting to another facet of the Great Society.*

Pathos. *Johnson appeals to the fears of his audience with examples of the tragedies that could result if the Great Society were not adopted.*

Supporting Evidence. *To support the need for change the Great Society will bring to the countryside, Johnson offers that*

- *the beauty of America is in danger;*
- *pollution threatens water, food, and air;*
- *parks are overcrowded and seashores are overburdened;*
- *green fields and dense forests are disappearing; and*
- *if destroyed, natural splendor cannot be recaptured.*

> A few years ago, we were greatly concerned about the "Ugly American." Today we must act to prevent an ugly America. For once the battle is lost, once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted.

Allusion and Play on Words. *Johnson alludes to a phrase in popular use that describes U.S. citizens as "ugly Americans": brash, conceited, and ignorant about cultures of other societies and matters of the world. He connects the phrase Ugly American with the phrase "ugly America," a play on how Americans are perceived with his desire that America not be perceived as "ugly America."*

> A third place to build the Great Society is in the classrooms of America. There your children's lives will be shaped. Our society will not be great until every young mind is set free to scan the farthest reaches of thought and imagination. We are still far from that goal.

Transition between Paragraphs. *With the phrase "third place," Johnson alerts his audience that he is shifting to the third facet of the Great Society.*

> Today, eight million adult Americans, more than the entire population of Michigan, have not finished five years of school. Nearly 20 million have not finished eight years of school. Nearly 54 million—more than one-quarter of all America—have not even finished high school.

> Each year more than 100,000 high school graduates, with proved ability, do not enter college because they cannot afford it. And if we cannot educate today's youth, what will we do in 1970 when elementary school enrollment will be five million greater than 1960? And high school enrollment will rise by five million. College enrollment will increase by more than three million.

> In many places, classrooms are overcrowded and curricula are outdated.

Statistics as Supporting Evidence. *To support the need for change the Great Society will bring to classrooms, Johnson uses statistics as evidence. He offers that*

- *eight million adult Americans have not finished five years of school;*
- *almost 20 million Americans have not finished eight years of school;*
- *more than one-quarter of Americans have not finished high school;*
- *yearly, more than 100,000 high school graduates do not enter college because they cannot afford it; and*
- *many classrooms are overcrowded.*

> Most of our qualified teachers are underpaid, and many of our paid teachers are unqualified. So we must give every child a place to sit and a teacher to learn from. Poverty must not be a bar to learning, and learning must offer an escape from poverty.

> But more classrooms and more teachers are not enough. We must seek an educational system which grows in excellence as it grows in size. This means better training for our teachers. It means preparing youth to enjoy their hours of leisure as well as their hours of labor. It means exploring new techniques of teaching, to find new ways to stimulate the love of learning and the capacity for creation.

> These are three of the central issues of the Great Society. While our Government has many programs directed at those issues, I do not pretend that we have the full answer to those problems.

Thesis Restated. *Johnson briefly summarizes his thesis: three issues of the Great Society.*

> But I do promise this: We are going to assemble the best thought and the broadest knowledge from all over the world to find those answers for America. I intend to establish working groups to prepare a series of White House conferences and meetings—on the cities, on natural beauty, on the quality of education, and on other emerging challenges. And from these meetings and from this inspiration and from these studies we will begin to set our course toward the Great Society. The solution to these problems does not rest on a massive program in Washington, nor can it rely solely on the strained resources of local authority. They require us to create new concepts of cooperation, a creative federalism, between the National Capital and the leaders of local communities.

Problem/Solution. *Johnson has pointed out the problems that America faces and now presents solutions to them.*

> Woodrow Wilson once wrote: "Every man sent out from his university should be a man of his Nation as well as a man of his time." Within your lifetime powerful forces, already loosed, will take us toward a way of life beyond the realm of our experience, almost beyond the bounds of our imagination.

Quotation from an Authority. *This quotation from a political expert leads into Johnson's idea and acts as a transition, linking Wilson's and Johnson's audiences across time.*

> For better or for worse, your generation has been appointed by history to deal with those problems and to lead America toward a new age. You have the chance never before afforded to any people in any age. You can help build a society where the demands of morality, and the needs of the spirit, can be realized in the life of the Nation.

Ethos. *Johnson uses ethos to appeal to the patriotic ideals his audience possesses for dealing with and finding a solution to America's problems.*

> So, will you join in the battle to give every citizen the full equality which God enjoins and the law requires, whatever his belief, or race, or the color of his skin?

> Will you join in the battle to give every citizen an escape from the crushing weight of poverty?

> Will you join in the battle to make it possible for all nations to live in enduring peace—as neighbors and not as mortal enemies?

> Will you join in the battle to build the Great Society, to prove that our material progress is only the foundation on which we will build a richer life of mind and spirit?

Rhetorical Questions. *Johnson uses rhetorical questions (questions intended to make a point rather than to get an answer) to encourage the audience to get involved in the Great Society.*

> There are those timid souls who say this battle cannot be won, that we are condemned to a soulless wealth. I do not agree. We have the power to shape the civilization that we want. But we need your will, your labor, your hearts, if we are to build that kind of society.

Addressing a Counterclaim. *Johnson identifies a counterclaim to the Great Society and then refutes it.*

> Those who came to this land sought to build more than just a new country. They sought a new world. So I have come here today to your campus to say that you can make their vision our reality. So let us from this moment begin our work so that in the future men will look back and say: It was then, after a long and weary way, that man turned the exploits of his genius to the full enrichment of his life.

> Thank you. Goodby.

Discussion Questions

1. For what purpose might Johnson have chosen to address the American people under the guise of a graduation address?
2. What parts of Johnson's speech show that he is trying to connect with the students in the audience?
3. For what reasons has Johnson singled out the cities, countrysides, and schools as the locations of his Great Society?
4. Johnson acknowledges one main counterclaim to the ideas proposed in the Great Society. How does Johnson address that counterclaim?
5. In today's political climate, Johnson's Great Society might be labeled by some as *socialism,* an economic system in which production, distribution, and exchange of goods are owned or governed by the community as a whole rather than by individuals. In what way might Johnson have responded to this counterclaim?
6. Johnson ends with a reference to the founders of the country and says, "You can make their vision our reality." In your opinion, does he adequately explain what he means by "our reality"? Why or why not?

10.5 Writing Process: Creating a Position Argument

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate brainstorming processes and tools as means to discover topics, ideas, positions, and details.
- Apply recursive strategies for organizing drafting, collaborating, peer reviewing, revising, rewriting, and editing.
- Compose a position argument that integrates the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources.
- Give and act on productive feedback to works in progress.
- Apply or challenge common conventions of language or grammar in composing and revising.

Now is the time to try your hand at writing a position argument. Your instructor may provide some possible topics or a singular topic. If your instructor allows you to choose your own topic, consider a general subject you feel strongly about and whether you can provide enough support to develop that subject into an essay. For instance, suppose you think about a general subject such as "adulting." In looking back at what you have learned while becoming an adult, you think of what you wish you had known during your early teenage years. These thoughts might lead you to brainstorm about details of the effects of money in your life or your friends' lives. In reviewing your brainstorming, you might zero in on one topic you feel strongly about and think it provides enough depth to develop into a position argument. Suppose your brainstorming leads you to think about negative financial concerns you or some of your friends have encountered. Thinking about what could have helped address those concerns, you decide that a mandated high school course in financial literacy would have been useful. This idea might lead you to formulate your **working thesis statement**—first draft of your thesis statement—like this: *To help students learn how to make sensible financial decisions, a mandatory class in financial literacy should be offered in high schools throughout the country.*

Once you decide on a topic and begin moving through the writing process, you may need to fine-tune or even change the topic and rework your initial idea. This fine-tuning may come as you brainstorm, later when you begin drafting, or after you have completed a draft and submitted it to your peers for constructive criticism. These possibilities occur because the writing process is **recursive**—that is, it moves back and forth almost simultaneously and maybe even haphazardly at times, from planning to revising to editing to drafting, back to planning, and so on.



FIGURE 10.5 Because the writing process is recursive, you can go from any step to another at any time to improve your paper. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

Summary of Assignment

Write a position argument on a controversial issue that you choose or that your instructor assigns to you. If you are free to choose your own topic, consider one of the following:

- The legal system would be strengthened if _____.
- The growing use of technology in college classrooms is weakening _____.

- For safety reasons, public signage should be _____.
- For entrance into college, standardized testing _____.
- In relation to the cost of living, the current minimum wage _____.
- During a pandemic, America _____.
- As a requirement to graduate, college students _____.
- To guarantee truthfulness of their content, social media platforms have the right to _____.
- To ensure inclusive and diverse representation of people of all races, learning via virtual classrooms _____.
- Segments of American cultures have differing rules of acceptable grammar, so in a college classroom _____.

In addition, if you have the opportunity to choose your own topic and wish to search further, take the lead from trailblazer Charles Blow and look to media for newsworthy "trends." Find a controversial issue that affects you or people you know, and take a position on it. As you craft your argument, identify a position opposing yours, and then refute it with reasoning and evidence. Be sure to gather information on the issue so that you can support your position sensibly with well-developed ideas and evidence.



Another Lens. To gain a different perspective on your issue, consider again the people affected by it. Your position probably affects different people in different ways. For example, if you are writing that the minimum wage should be raised, then you might easily view the issue through the lens of minimum-wage workers, especially those who struggle to make ends meet. However, if you look at the issue through the lens of those who employ minimum-wage workers, your viewpoint might change. Depending on your topic and thesis, you may need to use print or online sources to gain insight into different perspectives.

For additional information about minimum-wage workers, you could consult

- printed material available in your college library;
- databases in your college library; and
- online sources. For instance, you could use a search engine to find details about
  - pros and cons of raising the minimum wage;
  - what happens after the minimum wage is raised;
  - how to live on a minimum-wage salary;
  - how a raise in minimum wage is funded; and
  - minimum wage in various U.S. states.

To gain more insight about your topic, adopt a stance that opposes your original position and brainstorm ideas from that viewpoint. Begin by gathering evidence that would help you refute your previous stance and appeal to your audience.

Quick Launch: Working Thesis Frames and Organization of Ideas



After you have decided on your topic, the next step is to arrive at your working thesis. You probably have a good idea of the direction your working thesis will take. That is, you know where you stand on the issue or problem, but you are not quite sure of how to word your stance to share it with readers. At this point, then, use brainstorming to think critically about your position and to discover the best way to phrase your statement.

For example, after reading an article discussing different state-funded community college programs, one student thought that a similar program was needed in Alabama, her state. However, she was not sure how the program worked. To begin, she composed and answered "**reporters' questions**" such as these:

- ***What*** *does a state-funded community college program do?* pays for part or all of the tuition of a two-year college student
- ***Who*** *qualifies for the program?* high school graduates and GED holders
- ***Who*** *benefits from this?* students needing financial assistance, employers, and Alabama residents

- ***Why** is this needed?* some can't afford to go to college; tuition goes up every year; colleges would be more diverse if everyone who wanted to go could afford to go
- ***Where** would the program be available?* at all public community colleges
- ***When** could someone apply for the program?* any time
- ***How** can the state fund this*? use lottery income, like other states

The student then reviewed her responses, altered her original idea to include funding through a lottery, and composed this working thesis:

> *To provide equal educational opportunities for all residents, the state of Alabama should create a lottery to completely fund tuition at community colleges.*

Remember that a strong thesis for a position should

- state your stance on a debatable issue;
- reflect your purpose of persuasion; and
- be based on your opinion or observation.

When you first consider your topic for an argumentative work, think about the reasoning for your position and the evidence you will need—that is, think about the "because" part of your argument. For instance, if you want to argue that your college should provide free Wi-Fi for every student, extend your stance to include "because" and then develop your reasoning and evidence. In that case, your argument might read like this: *Ervin Community College should provide free Wi-Fi for all students because students may not have Internet access at home.*

Note that the "because" part of your argument may come at the beginning or the end and may be implied in your wording.

As you develop your thesis, you may need help funneling all of your ideas. Return to the possibilities you have in mind, and select the ideas that you think are strongest, that recur most often, or that you have the most to say about. Then use those ideas to fill in one of the following sentence frames to develop your working thesis. Feel free to alter the frame as necessary to fit your position. While there is no limit to the frames that are possible, these may help get you started.

_____ is caused/is not caused by _____, and _____ should be done.

Example: A declining enrollment rate in college is caused by high tuition rates, and an immediate freeze on the cost of tuition should be applied.

_____ should/should not be allowed (to) _____ for a number of reasons.

Example: People who do not wear masks during a pandemic should not be allowed to enter public buildings for a number of reasons.

Because (of) _____, _____ will happen/continue to happen.

Example: Because of a lack of emphasis on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) education in public schools, America will continue to lag behind many other countries.

_____ is similar to/nothing like _____ because _____.

Example: College classes are nothing like high school classes because in college, more responsibility is on the student, the classes are less frequent but more intense, and the work outside class takes more time to complete.

_____ can be/cannot be thought of as _____ because _____.

Example: The Black Lives Matter movement can be thought of as an extension of the Civil Rights movement from the 1950s and 1960s because it shares the same mission of fighting racism and ending violence against

Black people.

Next, consider the details you will need to support your thesis. The Aristotelian argument structure, named for the Greek philosopher Aristotle, is one that may help you frame the draft of your position argument. For this method, use something like the following chart. In Writing Process: Creating a Position Argument, you will find a similar organizer that you can copy and use for your assignment.

Using the Aristotelian Argument for Organization

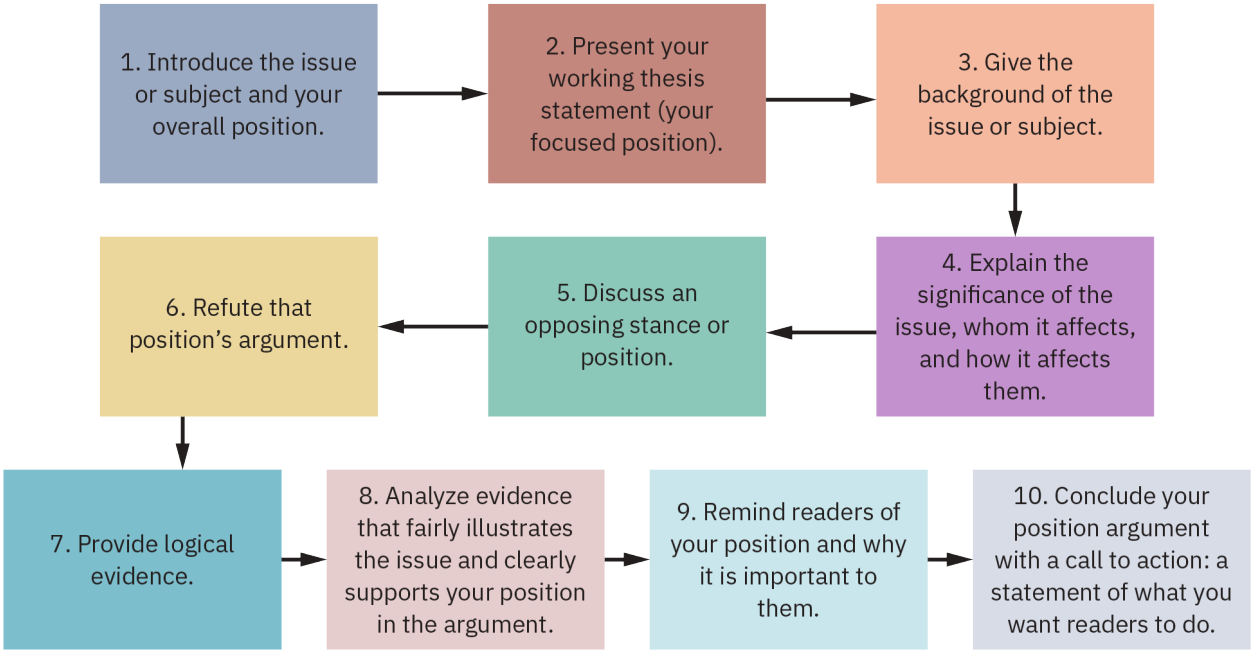


FIGURE 10.6 Position argument essay planning chart. Follow the numbers sequentially to plan your draft. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

Drafting: Rhetorical Appeals and Types of Supporting Evidence

To persuade your audience to support your position or argument, consider various rhetorical appeals— ethos, logos, pathos, and kairos—and the types of evidence to support your sound reasoning. See Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking for more information on reasoning strategies and types of evidence.

Rhetorical Appeals

To establish your credibility, to show readers you are trustworthy, to win over their hearts, and to set your issue in an appropriate time frame to influence readers, consider how you present and discuss your evidence throughout the paper.

- Appeal to **ethos**. To establish credibility in her paper arguing for expanded mental health services, a student writer used these reliable sources: a student survey on mental health issues, data from the International Association of Counseling Services (a professional organization), and information from an interview with a campus mental health counselor.
- Appeal to **logos**. To support her sound reasoning, the student writer approached the issue rationally, using data and credible evidence to explain the current situation and its effects.
- Appeal to **pathos**. To show compassion and arouse audience empathy, the student writer shared the experience of a student on her campus who struggled with anxiety and depression.
- Appeal to **kairos**. To appeal to kairos, the student emphasized the immediate need for these services, as more students are now aware of their particular mental health issues and trying to deal with them.

The way in which you present and discuss your evidence will reflect the appeals you use. Consider using sentence frames to reflect specific appeals. Remember, too, that sentence frames can be composed in countless ways. Here are a few frames to get you thinking critically about how to phrase your ideas while considering different types of appeals.

- **Appeal to ethos:** According to _____, an expert in _____, _____ should/should not happen because _____.

  Appeal to ethos: Although _____is not an ideal situation for _____, it does have its benefits.

- **Appeal to logos:** If _____ is/is not done, then understandably, _____ will happen.

  Appeal to logos: This information suggests that _____ needs to be investigated further because _____.

- **Appeal to pathos:** The story of _____ is uplifting/heartbreaking/hopeful/tragic and illustrates the need for _____.

  Appeal to pathos: _____ is/are suffering from _____, and that is something no one wants.

- **Appeal to kairos: _____** must be addressed now because **_____**.

  Appeal to kairos: These are times when _____ ; therefore, _____ is appropriate/ necessary.

Types of Supporting Evidence

Depending on the point you are making to support your position or argument, certain types of evidence may be more effective than others. Also, your instructor may require you to include a certain type of evidence. Choose the evidence that will be most effective to support the reasoning behind each point you make to support your thesis statement. Common types of evidence are these:

- **Anecdotes:** short narrative.

  Renada G., a junior at Powell College South, worked as a waitress for 15 hours a week during her first three semesters of college. But in her sophomore year, when her parents were laid off during the pandemic, Renada had to increase her hours to 35 per week and sell her car to stay in school. Her grades started slipping, and she began experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety. When she called the campus health center to make an appointment for counseling, Renada was told she would have to wait two weeks before she could be seen.

- **Definition:** explanation that emphasizes the meaning of an idea, term, or concept.

  Here is part of how Lyndon B. Johnson defined the Great Society: "But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor."

- **Description:** evidence that portrays a person, place, thing, or idea with sensory or other vivid details.

  Bowen Lake is nestled in verdant foothills, lush with tall grasses speckled with wildflowers. Around the lake, the sweet scent of the purple and yellow flowers fills the air, and the fragrance of the hearty pines sweeps down the hillsides in a westerly breeze. Wood frogs' and crickets' songs suddenly stop, as the blowing of moose calling their calves echoes across the lake's soundless surface. Or this was the scene before the deadly destruction of fires caused by climate change.

- **Example:** evidence that illustrates an idea.

When elaborating on America's beauty being in danger, Johnson says, "The water we drink, the food we eat, the very air that we breathe, are threatened with pollution. Our parks are overcrowded, our seashores overburdened. Green fields and dense forests are disappearing."

- **Expert opinion:** evidence or viewpoints provided by a professional in the field or someone whose ideas are respected on the subject.
  Speaking about President Lyndon B. Johnson and the Vietnam War, noted historian and Johnson biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin said, "It seemed the hole in his heart from the loss of work was too big to fill."
- **Fact:** information that is true and can be proven correct or accurate.
  Charles Blow has worked at the *Shreveport Times*, *The Detroit News*, *National Geographic*, and *The New York Times*.
- **Interview:** evidence gathered firsthand from a source person, usually in a person-to-person conversation, by phone, or through a remote meeting.
  When interviewed by George Rorick and asked about the identities of his readers, Charles Blow said that readers' emails do not elaborate on descriptions of who the people are. However, "the kinds of comments that they offer are very much on the thesis of the essay."
- **Quotation:** exact words repeated by someone other than the original author or speaker.
  In his speech, Lyndon B. Johnson says, "The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents."
- **Statistics:** numerical fact or item of data, usually from a study.
  To support the need for change in classrooms, Johnson uses these statistics: "Each year more than 100,000 high school graduates, with proved ability, do not enter college because they cannot afford it. And if we cannot educate today's youth, what will we do in 1970 when elementary school enrollment will be five million greater than 1960?"
- **Visuals:** graphs, photographs, charts, or maps used in addition to written or spoken information.

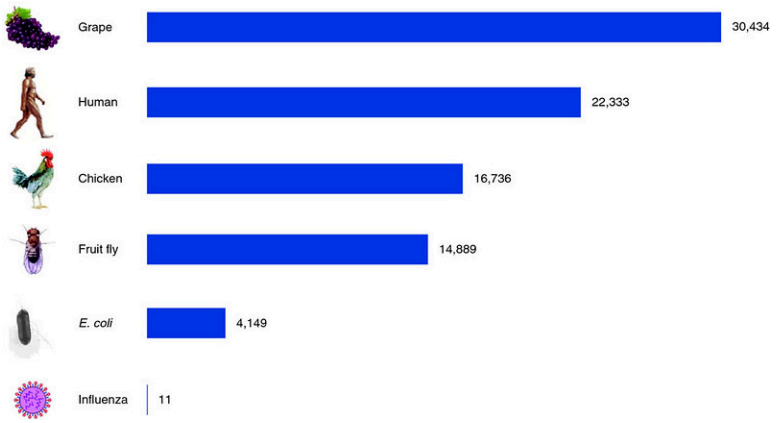


FIGURE 10.7 Bar graph of gene counts. Graphics like this one present information visually and concisely. (credit: "Between a Chicken and a Grape: Estimating the Number of Human Genes," by Pertea, Mihaela, and Steven L. Salzberg/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Brainstorm for Supporting Points

Use one or more brainstorming techniques, such as a web diagram as shown in Figure 10.8 or the details generated from "because" statements, to develop ideas or particular points in support of your thesis. Your goal is to get as many ideas as possible. At this time, do not be concerned about how ideas flow, whether you will ultimately use an idea (you want more ideas than will end up in your finished paper), spelling, or punctuation.

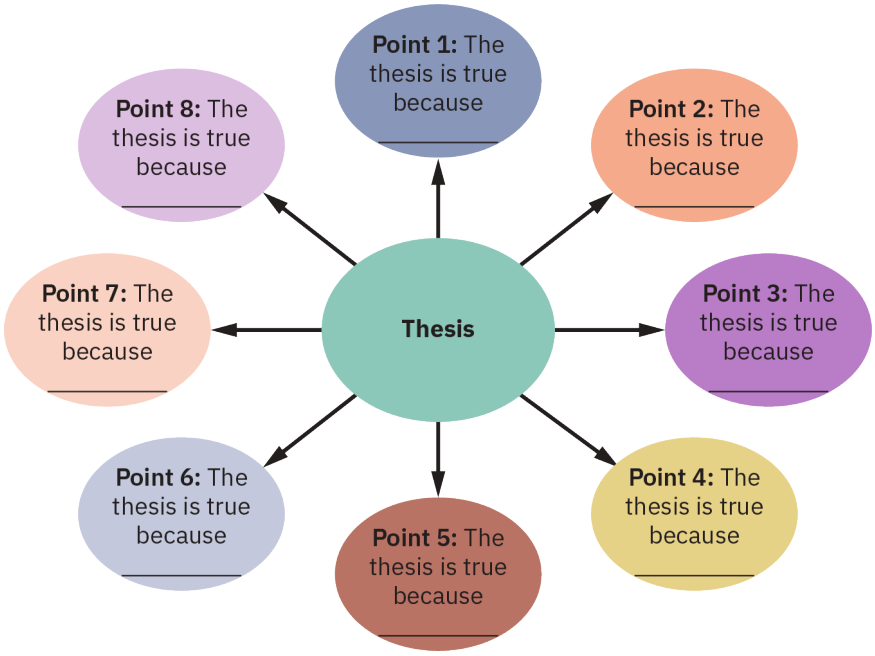


FIGURE 10.8 Idea web (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

When you have finished, look over your brainstorming. Then circle three to five points to incorporate into your draft. Also, plan to answer "**reporters' questions**" to provide readers with any needed background information. For example, the student writing about the need for more mental health counselors on her campus created and answered these questions:

- ***What** is needed?* More mental health counseling is needed for Powell College South.

  ***Who** would benefit from this?* The students and faculty would benefit.
- ***Why** is this needed?* The college does not have enough counselors to meet all students' needs.
- ***Where** are more counselors needed?* More counselors are needed at the south campus.
- ***When** are the counselors needed?* Counselors need to be hired now and be available both day and night to accommodate students' schedules.
- ***How** can the college afford this*? Instead of hiring daycare workers, the college could use students and faculty from the Early Childhood Education program to run the program and use the extra money to pay the counselors.

Using Logic

In a position argument, the appropriate use of **logic** is especially important for readers to trust what you write. It is also important to look for logic in material you read and possibly cite in your paper so that you can determine whether writers' claims are reasonable. Two main categories of logical thought are **inductive reasoning** and **deductive reasoning**.

- Inductive reasoning moves from specific to broad ideas. You begin by collecting details, observations, incidents, or facts; examining them; and drawing a conclusion from them. Suppose, for example, you are writing about attendance in college classes. For three weeks, you note the attendance numbers in all your Monday, Wednesday, and Friday classes (specific details), and you note that attendance is lower on Friday than on the other days (a specific detail). From these observations, you determine that many students prefer not to attend classes on Fridays (your conclusion).
- Deductive reasoning moves from general to specific ideas. You begin with a **hypothesis** or **premise**, a general concept, and then examine possibilities that would lead to a specific and logical conclusion. For instance, suppose you think that opportunities for foreign students at your college are inadequate (general

concept). You examine the specific parts of that concept (e.g., whether your college provides multicultural clubs, help with language skills, or work-study opportunities) and determine that those opportunities are not available. You then determine that opportunities for foreign students are lacking at your college.

Logical Fallacies and Propaganda

Fallacies are mistakes in logic. Readers and writers should be aware of these when they creep into writing, indicating that the points the writers make may not be valid. Two common fallacies are hasty generalizations and circular arguments. See Glance at Genre: Rhetorical Strategies for more on logical fallacies.

- A **hasty generalization**is a conclusion based on either inadequate or biased evidence. Consider this statement: "Two students in Math 103 were nervous before their recent test; therefore, all students in that class must have text anxiety." This is a hasty generalization because the second part of the statement (the generalization about all students in the class) is inadequate to support what the writer noted about only two students.
- A **circular argument** is one that merely restates what has already been said. Consider this statement: "*The Hate U Give* is a well-written book because Angie Thomas, its author, is a good novelist." The statement that Thomas is a good novelist does not explain why her book is well written.

In addition to checking work for fallacies, consider **propaganda**, information worded so that it endorses a particular viewpoint, often of a political nature. Two common types of propaganda are **bandwagon** and **fear**.

- In getting on the **bandwagon**, the writer encourages readers to conform to a popular trend and endorse an opinion, a movement, or a person because everyone else is doing so. Consider this statement: "Everyone is behind the idea that 7 a.m. classes are too early and should be changed to at least 8 a.m. Shouldn't you endorse this sensible idea, too?"
- In using fear, the writer presents a dire situation, usually followed by what could be done to prevent it. Consider this statement: "Our country is at a turning point. Enemies threaten us with their power, and our democracy is at risk of being crushed. The government needs a change, and Paul Windhaus is just the man to see we get that change." This quotation appeals to fear about the future of the country and implies that electing a certain individual will solve the predicted problems.



FIGURE 10.9 Propaganda is often used during times of war or crisis and is often presented visually. This World War I poster from the U.S. Navy appeals for men to enlist. It points out men in the navy have an opportunity to "see the world, save money, learn a trade, and serve their country" but avoids mentioning the likelihood of being in life-threatening situations during combat. (credit: "World War I Posters" by Ruttan, Charles E./Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Public Domain)

Organize the Paper

To begin, write your thesis at the top of a blank page. Then select points from your brainstorming and reporters' questions to organize and develop support for your thesis. Keep in mind that you can revise your thesis whenever needed.

To begin organizing her paper on increased mental health services on her college campus, the student wrote this thesis at the top of a page:

> *Because mental health is a major concern at Powell College South, students could benefit from expanding the services offered.*

Next she decided the sequence in which to present the points. In a position or an argument essay, she could choose one of two methods: **thesis-first organization** or **delayed-thesis** organization.

Thesis-First Organization

Leading with a thesis tells readers from the beginning where you stand on the issue. In this organization, the thesis occupies both the first and last position in the essay, making it easy for readers to remember.

- **Introduce the issue and assert your thesis.** Make sure the issue has at least two debatable sides. Your thesis establishes the position from which you will argue. Writers often state their thesis as the last sentence in the first paragraph, as the student writer has done:

> The problem of mental health has become front-page news in the last two months. *Hill's Herald*, Powell College South's newspaper, reported 14 separate incidents of students who sought counseling but could not get appointments with college staff. **Since mental health problems are widespread among the student population, the college should hire more health care workers to address this problem.**

- **Summarize the counterclaims.** Before elaborating on your claims, explain the opposition's claims. Including this information at the beginning gives your argument something to focus on—and refute—throughout the paper. If you ignore counterclaims, your argument may appear incomplete, and readers may think you have not researched your topic sufficiently. When addressing a counterclaim, state it clearly, show empathy for those who have that view, and then immediately refute it with support developed through reasoning and evidence. Squeezing the counterclaims between the thesis and the evidence reserves the strongest places—the opening and closing—for your position.

> *Counterclaim 1*: Powell College South already employs two counselors, and that number is sufficient to meet the needs of the student population.

> *Counterclaim 2*: Students at Powell College South live in a metropolitan area large enough to handle their mental health needs.

- **Refute the counterclaims.** Look for weak spots in the opposition's argument, and point them out. Use your opponent's language to show you have read closely but still find problems with the claim. This is the way the writer refuted the first counterclaim:

> While Powell College South does employ two counselors, those counselors are overworked and often have no time slots available for students who wish to make appointments.

- **State and explain your points, and then support them with evidence.** Present your points clearly and precisely, using Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking to explain and cite your evidence. The writer plans to use a problem-solution reasoning strategy to elaborate on these three points using these pieces of evidence:

> Point 1: Wait times are too long.

> Kay Payne, one of the campus counselors, states that the wait time for an appointment with her is approximately 10 days.

> Point 2: Mental health issues are widespread within the student community.

> In a recent on-campus student survey, 75 percent of 250 students say they have had some kind of mental health issues at some point in their life.

> Point 3: The staff-to-student ratio is too high.

> The International Accreditation of Counseling Services states that the recommended ratio is one full-time equivalent staff member for every 1,000 to 1,500 students.

- **Restate your position as a conclusion.** Near the end of your paper, synthesize your accumulated evidence into a broad general position, and restate your thesis in slightly different language.

> The number of students who need mental health counseling is alarming. The recent news articles that attest to their not being able to schedule appointments add to the alarm. While Powell College South offers some mental health counseling, the current number of counselors and others who provide health care is insufficient to handle the well-being of all its students. Action must be taken to address this problem.

Delayed-Thesis Organization

In this organizational pattern, introduce the issue and discuss the arguments for and against it, but wait to take a side until late in the essay. By delaying the stance, you show readers you are weighing the evidence, and

you arouse their curiosity about your position. Near the end of the paper, you explain that after carefully considering both pros and cons, you have arrived at the most reasonable position.

- **Introduce the issue.** Here, the writer begins with action that sets the scene of the problem.

> Tapping her foot nervously, Serena looked at her watch again. She had been waiting three hours to see a mental health counselor at Powell College South, and she did not think she could wait much longer. She had to get to work.

- **Summarize the claims for one position.** Before stating which side you support, explain how the opposition views the issue. This body paragraph presents evidence about the topic of more counselors:

> Powell College South has two mental health counselors on staff. If the college hires more counselors, more office space will have to be created. Currently Pennington Hall could accommodate those counselors. Additional counselors would allow more students to receive counseling.

- **Refute the claims you just stated.** Still not stating your position, point out the other side of the issue.

> While office space is available in Pennington Hall, that location is far from ideal. It is in a wooded area of campus, six blocks from the nearest dorm. Students who would go there might be afraid to walk through the woods or might be afraid to walk that distance. The location might deter them from making appointments.

- **Now give the best reasoning and evidence to support your position.** Because this is a delayed-thesis organization, readers are still unsure of your stance. This section should be the longest and most carefully documented part of the paper. After summarizing and refuting claims, the writer then elaborates on these three points using problem-solution reasoning supported by this evidence as discussed in Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking, implying her position before moving to the conclusion, where she states her thesis.

> Point 1: Wait times are too long.

> Kay Payne, one of the campus counselors, states that the wait time for an appointment with her is approximately 10 days.

> Point 2: Mental health issues are widespread within the student community.

> In a recent on-campus student survey, 75 percent of 250 students say they have had some kind of mental health issues at some point in their life.

> Point 3: The staff-to-student ratio is too high.

> The International Association of Counseling Services states that one full-time equivalent staff member for every 1,000 to 1,500 students is the recommended ratio.

- **State your thesis in your conclusion.** Your rhetorical strategy is this: after giving each side a fair hearing, you have arrived at the most reasonable conclusion.

> According to the American Psychological Association, more than 40 percent of all college students suffer from some form of anxiety. Powell College South students are no different from college students elsewhere: they deserve to have adequate mental health counseling.

Compose

Drafting begins when you organize your evidence or research notes and then put them into some kind of written form. As you write, focus on building body paragraphs through the techniques presented in Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking that show you how to support your position and then add evidence. Using a variety of evidence types builds credibility with readers. Remember that the recursiveness of the

writing process allows you to move from composing to gathering evidence and back to brainstorming ideas or to organizing your draft at any time. Move around the writing process as needed.

Keep in mind that a first draft is just a beginning—you will revise it into a better work in later drafts. Your first draft is sometimes called a *discovery draft* because you are discovering how to shape your paper: which ideas to include and how to support those ideas. These suggestions and graphic organizer may be helpful for your first draft:

- Write your thesis at the top of the paper.
- Compose your body paragraphs: those that support your argument through reasoning strategies and those that address counterclaims.
- Leave your introduction, conclusion, and title for later drafts.

Use a graphic organizer like Table 10.1 to focus points, reasoning, and evidence for body paragraphs. You are free to reword your thesis, reasoning, counterclaim(s), refutation of counterclaim(s), concrete evidence, and explanation/elaboration/clarification at any time. You are also free to adjust the order in which you present

your reasoning, counterclaim(s), and refuting of counterclaim(s).

Composing Your First Draft

Position Argument

Name _____

Thesis: In your thesis, remember to include 1) an explanation of the issue and 2) your position about what should happen regarding the issue.

Issue:

My position:

Thesis as a single declarative sentence: _____

Background information:

Reporters' questions:

_____

Point 1 in support of thesis:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

Concrete evidence:

_____

Point 2 in support of thesis:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

Concrete evidence:

_____

Point 3 in support of thesis:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

Concrete evidence:

_____

Points 4 & 5 in support of thesis:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

Concrete evidence:

_____

Counterclaim:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

_____

Refuting of counterclaim:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

TABLE 10.1 Position argument drafting organizer

Develop a Writing Project through Multiple Drafts

Your first draft is a kind of experiment in which you are concerned with ideas and with getting the direction and concept of the paper clear. Do not think that your first draft must be perfect; remind yourself that you are just honing your work. In most serious writing, every phase of the process can be considered recursive, helping you shape the best paper possible.

Peer Review: Critical Thinking and Counterclaims

After you have completed the first draft, begin peer review. Peer reviewers can use these sentence starters when thinking critically about overall strengths and developmental needs.

1. One point about your position that I think is strong is _____ because _____.
2. One point about your position that I think needs more development is _____ because _____.
3. One area that I find confusing is _____; I was confused about _____.
4. One major point that I think needs more explanation or detail is _____.
5. In my opinion, the purpose of your paper is to persuade readers _____.
6. In my opinion, the audience for your paper is _____.
7. One area of supporting evidence that I think could use more development is _____.
8. One counterclaim you include is _____.
9. Your development of the counterclaim is _____ because _____.

Refuting Counterclaims

Peer reviewers are especially helpful with position and argument writing when it comes to refuting counterclaims. Have your peer reviewer read your paper again and look for supporting points and ideas to argue *against*, trying to break down your argument. Then ask your reviewer to discuss the counterclaims and corresponding points or ideas in your paper. This review will give you the opportunity to think critically about ways to refute the counterclaims your peer reviewer suggests.

As preparation for peer review, match each of the following arguments with their counterarguments.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/10-5-writing-process-creating-a-position-argument)

Revising: Reviewing a Draft and Responding to Counterclaims

Revising means reseeing, rereading, and rethinking your thoughts on paper until they fully match your intention. Mentally, it is conceptual work focused on units of meaning larger than the sentence. Physically, it is cutting, pasting, deleting, and rewriting until the ideas are satisfying. Be ready to spend a great deal of time revising your drafts, adding new information and incorporating sources smoothly into your prose.

The Revising Process

To begin revising, return to the basic questions of **topic** (*What am I writing about?*), **purpose** (*Why am I writing about this topic?*), **audience** (*For whom am I writing?*), and **culture** (*What is the background of the people for whom I am writing?*).

- **Questions about the topic.** Be sure your topic and thesis focus on your position, and omit extra material. Answer these questions:
  1. What is the general scope of my topic? _____
  2. What is my thesis? _____
  3. Does my thesis focus on my topic? _____
  4. Does my thesis clearly state my position? _____
- **Questions about purpose.** It is often easier to locate your purpose—or lack of purpose—after you have

written a draft or two. Answer these questions:

1. What do I hope to accomplish in writing about this topic? _____
2. Do all parts of the paper advance this purpose? _____
3. Does my paper focus on my argument or position? _____

- **Questions about audience.** Make sure your paper is aimed accurately at your readers. Answer these questions:
  1. What does my audience know about this subject? _____
  2. What does my audience need to know to understand the point of my paper? _____
  3. What questions or objections do I anticipate from my audience? _____ _____
- **Questions about culture.** Your paper should reflect consideration of cultural differences, if any, between you and your audience. Answer these questions:
  1. What is the culture of the people for whom I am writing? Do all readers share the same culture? _____
  2. How do my beliefs, values, and customs differ from those of my audience? _____
  3. How do the cultures of the authors of sources I cite differ from my culture or the culture(s) of my audience? _____

Because of the recursivity of the writing process, returning to these questions will help you fine-tune the language and structure of your writing and target the support you develop for your audience.

Responding to Counterclaims

The more complex the issue, the more opposing sides it may have. For example, a writer whose position is that Powell College South Campus should offer daycare to its students with children might find opposition for different reasons. Someone may oppose the idea out of concern for cost; someone else may support the idea if the daycare is run on a volunteer basis; someone else may support the idea if the services are offered off campus.

As you revise, continue studying your peer reviewer's comments about counterclaims. If you agree with any counterclaim, then say so in the paragraph in which you address counterclaims. This agreement will further establish your credibility by showing your fairness and concern for the issue. Look over your paper and peer review comments, and then consider these questions:

- In what ways do you address realistic counterclaims? What other counterclaims should you address? Should you add to or replace current counterclaims?
- In what ways do you successfully refute counterclaims? What other refutations might you include?
- Are there any counterclaims with which you agree? If so, how do you concede to them in your paper? In what ways does your discussion show fairness?

After completing your peer review and personal assessment, make necessary revisions based on these notes. See Annotated Student Sample an example of a student's argumentative research essay. Note how the student

- presents the argument;
- supports the viewpoint with reasoning and evidence;
- includes support in the form of facts, opinions, paraphrases, and summaries;
- provides citations (correctly formatted) about material from other sources in the paper;
- uses ethos, pathos, and logos throughout the paper; and
- addresses counterclaims (dissenting opinions).

10.6 Editing Focus: Paragraphs and Transitions

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Implement transitional words and phrases in a position argument.
- Apply genre conventions in paragraphs and transitions for general and specific situations.

In the initial drafts of your paper, you may have concentrated on single ideas for your body paragraphs and single thoughts within those paragraphs. Your argument will read more smoothly, however, if you use transitional words and phrases to show readers how your ideas are connected or opposed to each other.

Using Transitional Words and Phrases

To organize your paper most effectively, use **transitional words or phrases**, which show readers the relationship between different ideas—that is, how ideas connect with or are separate from each other. In the paragraph below, transitional words and phrases are underlined.

> To get a copy of your transcript from Abbott Community College, first log on to the college web site. Next, click the "Transcript" link to the left of the college logo. When the link opens, fill out the information requested in the boxes. Then upload a copy of your student ID and pay $10 electronically. Finally, submit your form. Your transcript will be emailed to you, but you may have to wait up to three days before you receive it.

The transitional words and phrases show readers the sequence of steps they need to follow to get a transcript. If you remove the transitional words and phrases, the paragraph would be choppy, and readers might not follow the steps as easily.

Transitions also help guide readers between paragraphs. Below are the body paragraphs a student wrote about the need for a traffic light at a street that leads into his college. The first version has no transitions.

> Many vehicles speed through the intersection without regard to the posted speed limit. A traffic signal would make vehicles slow down. They would not be able to speed through the signal.

> Pedestrian safety is a problem. Many students and others cross this intersection when coming to or leaving campus, and they must dodge traffic to get across. A traffic signal would allow them to cross at appropriate times.

> The amount of traffic has increased dramatically. A manufacturing plant opened four blocks from the intersection. The number of businesses in the strip mall at the intersection has grown by 50 percent. The college has changed its traffic routing for football games. Fans must enter via this intersection.

> The most compelling reason to install a traffic signal is that the number of accidents has risen far past an acceptable limit. According to recent police reports, a traffic accident occurs at least three times a month. One accident resulted in a loss of life.

The student then added transitions and changed the wording accordingly to help readers follow his ideas. The underlined transitions at the beginning of each paragraph alert readers to the four reasons he presents and to where he changes from one to another. The underlined transitions within the paragraphs help readers understand the relationship of ideas.

> First, many vehicles speed through the intersection without regard to the posted speed limit. A traffic signal would make vehicles slow down, for they would not be able to speed through the signal.

> Second, pedestrian safety is a problem. Many students and others cross this intersection when coming to or leaving campus, and now they must dodge traffic to get across. A traffic signal, therefore, would allow them to cross at appropriate times.

> Another reason to install the traffic signal has to do with the amount of traffic, which has increased dramatically in recent years. Two years ago, a manufacturing plant opened four blocks from the intersection. In the past 16 months, the number of businesses in the strip mall at the intersection grew by 50 percent. Furthermore, the college has changed its traffic routing for football games, and now fans must enter via this intersection.

> Finally, the most compelling reason to install a traffic signal is that the number of accidents has risen far past an acceptable limit. According to recent police reports, a traffic accident occurs at that intersection at least three times a month. In fact, one of those accidents resulted in a loss of life.

Frequently Used Transitional Words and Phrases

Addition: again, and, further, in addition, next, then, also, as well as

Cause-and-effect: accordingly, consequently, for this reason, hence, therefore, thus, as a result

Amplification: again, also, apparently, first (second, third), moreover, indeed, more, most, in fact

Chronological order: after, before, during, earlier, finally, first (second, third), immediately, last, next, then, later

Concession or agreement: although, at least, at any rate, certainly, (even) though, in spite of, of course, still, nevertheless, nonetheless

Compare and contrast: at the same time, comparatively, conversely, however, instead, likewise, moreover, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, rather, similarly, still, yet, despite

Detail: including, in particular, namely, specifically, to list

Emphasis or clarification: above all, again, certainly, especially, furthermore, in fact, particularly, indeed

Example: chiefly, for example (instance), in other words, in particular, mainly, specifically

Intention: for this purpose, in order to do this, to this end, with this in mind

Location: above, along, behind, below, here, near, next to, opposite, to the left (right) of, under

Summary: finally, in conclusion, in short, in other words, thus

For more information about paragraphs and transitions, see Paragraphs and Transitions.

10.7 Evaluation: Varied Appeals

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Evaluate feedback regarding rhetorical choices and conventions of position writing.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the structure of a position argument as it relates to credibility, logic, and emotions.

Have a peer evaluate your final draft using the following rubric. Although you might not agree with all the feedback or evaluation, peer reviewers bring a fresh perspective. At the end of the rubric is a section for your peer to offer additional feedback or expand on the reasoning behind their assessment. Listen to or read your peer's feedback closely, asking any questions you have. Then, revise your paper again, according to the feedback you think is helpful.

Rubric

Score	Critical Language Awareness	Clarity and Coherence	Rhetorical Choices
5 **Skillful**	The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using transitional words and phrases, as discussed in Section 10.6. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is stated clearly and expertly supported with credible evidence. The paper reflects careful attention to either thesis-first or thesis-last organization; in either case, the claims and evidence support the structure.	The paper identifies and expertly refutes realistic counterclaims; the paper's structure demonstrates the writer's fairness and advanced skill at appealing to readers' logic and emotions. The writer pays close attention to the rhetorical situation.
4 **Accomplished**	The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using transitional words and phrases, as discussed in Section 10.6. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is stated clearly and usually supported with credible evidence. The paper reflects attention to either thesis-first or thesis-last organization; in either case, the claims and evidence support the structure.	The paper identifies and refutes realistic counterclaims; the paper's structure usually demonstrates the writer's fairness and skill at appealing to readers' logic and emotions. The writer demonstrates awareness of the rhetorical situation.
3 **Capable**	The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using transitional words and phrases, as discussed in Section 10.6. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is stated clearly and generally supported with some credible evidence. The paper reflects some attention to either thesis-first or thesis-last organization; in either case, the claims and evidence give limited support to the structure.	The paper identifies and partially refutes realistic counterclaims; the paper's structure generally demonstrates the writer's fairness and some ability in appealing to readers' logic and emotions. The writer shows inconsistent awareness of the rhetorical situation.

TABLE 10.2

Score	Critical Language Awareness	Clarity and Coherence	Rhetorical Choices
2 **Developing**	The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using transitional words and phrases, as discussed in Section 10.6. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is occasionally stated clearly and occasionally supported with limited credible evidence. The paper reflects limited attention to either thesis-first or thesis-last organization; in either case, the claims and evidence give little support to the structure.	The paper may not identify counterclaims or may identify them and not address them further. The paper's structure minimally demonstrates the writer's awareness of fairness or skill at appealing to readers' logic and emotions. The writer shows little awareness of the rhetorical situation.
1 **Beginning**	The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using transitional words and phrases, as discussed in Section 10.6. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is not stated clearly and is minimally supported with credible evidence. The paper reflects minimal or no attention to either thesis-first or thesis-last organization; in either case, the claims and evidence give little to no support to the structure.	The paper does not identify and refute a realistic counterclaim; the paper's structure does not demonstrate that the writer has any awareness of fairness or an ability to appeal to readers' logic and emotions. The writer shows little or no awareness of the rhetorical situation.
Comments:			

TABLE 10.2

10.8 Spotlight on … Citation

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply citation conventions systematically in your work.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of intellectual property that motivate documentation conventions.

Academic writing relies on evidence and support. When this evidence or support comes from others, you must cite it properly to give credit where credit is due. Citing information to its source will build your credibility. See Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and MLA Documentation and Format and APA Documentation and Format for more information on citations.

Types of Citation



In a position argument, you are expected to provide evidence that supports your stance and addresses counterclaims to it. You may use one of three types of citation: quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing. If you are quoting the exact words of a person or a written work, you must

- use quotation marks around the words;
- credit the source of your quotation; and

- use the formatting style mandated in the style guide your instructor assigns.

If you are **paraphrasing**, you are shaping someone else's words into your own words, but you are conveying the same meaning as the original speaker or writer. When you are paraphrasing in academic writing, provide formatted information about the original source so that readers know from whom the idea originates.

If you are **summarizing**, you are condensing the words of someone else into a shorter form but still retaining the main point and major details. As with quoting and paraphrasing, provide formatted information about the original source when you are summarizing.

For more information about quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing, see Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information.

Examples of Types of Citation

American author Jack London (1876–1916) began his novel *The Call of the Wild* (1903) with this paragraph:

> Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tide-water dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego. Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland.

Quoting in MLA style

If you are quoting from that paragraph using MLA style, you might have something like this:

> *The Call of the Wild* sets the contrasting tone for the story with its second sentence, highlighting the differences between nature and industrialization: "Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland" (London 1).

Quoting in APA style

If you are quoting from that paragraph using APA style, you might have something like this:

> *The Call of the Wild* sets the contrasting tone for the story with its second sentence, highlighting the differences between nature and industrialization: "Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland" (London, 1903, p. 1).

Paraphrasing

If you are paraphrasing that paragraph, you might have something like this:

> In the opening paragraph of *The Call of the Wild*, Jack London establishes the conflict between man and nature by letting readers know that because Buck doesn't read, he doesn't know that trouble is at hand for himself and every other dog on the west coast of the United States. The trouble occurs because gold has been discovered in the Arctic and thousands of men are rushing to the Northland by land and sea so that they can also take part in the discovery.

Summarizing

If you are summarizing that paragraph, you might have something like this:

> In the opening paragraph of *The Call of the Wild*, Jack London establishes the conflict between man and nature by telling readers that neither Buck nor any other dog knows that trouble at hand because of the gold discovered and men rushing to find it.

Intellectual property

When you create a written work, you do not want someone else to take credit for it. It is your **intellectual property**, an original idea resulting from your creativity and work and that, consequently, you own. If you look at a book, for instance, you will see a copyright symbol (©) somewhere in the opening pages, usually along with other publication information. This symbol gives the copyright owner legal protection against those who try to **plagiarize** (steal material and publish it as their own). *Plagiarism* can refer to entire works or parts of works that are not cited as being created by someone else, whether the work is copyrighted or not. If writers or speakers use someone else's words, ideas, or information, they must cite the source. For detailed information about what plagiarism is and is not, see Spotlight on ... Ethical Research.

10.9 Portfolio: Growth in the Development of Argument

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect on and articulate how you used the steps of the writing process and how they affected your work.
- Reflect on and write about your use of reasoning and critical-thinking skills in developing your paper.

As you complete each writing assignment, you complete another part of your portfolio. After each paper, think critically about your writing process, reflecting on what you created from the first steps of discovering ideas to the last steps of composing and editing the final paper.

Lessons Learned



As you reflect on writing your position argument, answer these questions about your writing process.

- What factors helped you determine the topic for your paper?
- Which brainstorming method worked best for you to develop ideas for your topic?
- How did you arrive at a workable thesis?
- How did you use ethos, pathos, and logos in your paper?
- How did you use kairos in your paper?
- What outside sources did you consult to get information to support your topic or to understand counterclaims?
- How did you determine which counterclaims to address?
- What type of citation did you use for giving credit to material you did not write?
- How did collaboration with others help you as you wrote and revised your paper?
- In collaboration, what specific constructive criticism did you receive that helped you?
- In what ways was this paper easier or harder to write than others you have written?
- What could you have done differently to make writing your paper easier or more effective?
- What insights about your topic did you gain from writing your paper?

Further Reading

The following titles are well-known examples of position speeches or papers.

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