

The Argumentative Essay

PART A

Blueprints for Argumentative Essays

Objectives

Analysis:

Unity and Coherence:

Unity:

Coherence: Transition Expressions

Grammar Focus:

Sentence Check:

Practice:

In Part A, you will:

study the structure of argumentative essays

learn how to take only one stance

learn to use *although it may be true that/despite the fact that, certainly, and surely*

study prepositions

study noun clauses

determine the opposing sides of an issue and use different methods of organization



IMPORTANT NOTE:

Often argumentative essays include some of the other types of writing discussed in *Blueprints*. For example, you may want to *compare and contrast* (Unit 4) the opposing views in your essay to show the reader why your view is the best one. Or, to illustrate your point that a diet low in cholesterol can prevent heart disease, you might explain the *process* (Unit 3) of how cholesterol develops into plaque in coronary arteries. You will study more about using these and other methods later in this unit.

What Is an Argumentative Essay?

Writers choose argumentative essays when they want to persuade readers to change their minds about something. In this kind of essay, writers must convince readers of their point of view.

Developing an Argumentative Essay

The word “issue” is frequently used to describe a problem situation in which there are differing points of view. To argue about an issue, you must first discover all the different sides of the issue and which viewpoints you agree with. Then, you must clearly understand *what the opposing viewpoint is*. It is helpful to first state your viewpoint in a direct and clear manner. Then take the opposite position: what is that viewpoint? Stating the opposing viewpoint will help you clearly identify an opponent’s position, which you will need to address in your essay.



EXERCISE

1

DETERMINING THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS

Determine the opposing viewpoints for each of the following statements. Write the viewpoints in the blanks. The first one is done for you.

1. Early childhood education programs prevent later criminal activity.
Early childhood education programs have no impact on later criminal activity.

2. Parents should impose rules for their teenage children about the use of the Internet.

3. Doctors and nurses do not provide adequate pain management for terminally ill patients.

4. Marijuana use for medical purposes should not be legalized in the United States.

5. It is perfectly ethical to accept donations from pharmaceutical companies to conduct scientific research at universities.

Once you choose a side to defend and state the opposite argument, you can develop your argument by creating a list of reasons for your viewpoint.

EXERCISE

2

SUPPORTING IDEAS

For each main argument, think of two different supporting ideas to back it up. Write your ideas after each statement. The first one is done for you.

1. Columbus Day should not be celebrated as a holiday in the United States.

a. Columbus did not really "discover" America.

b. Columbus slaughtered and enslaved native people.



2. Spanking is harmful to children.

a. _____

b. _____

3. A vegetarian diet is healthier than one that includes meat.

a. _____

b. _____

4. One parent should care for children full time until they begin school.

a. _____

b. _____

5. The government should not prevent genetic cloning of human organs for medical purposes.

a. _____

b. _____



Unity in Argumentative Essays

While you may understand more than one viewpoint about an issue, it is important to argue for only one viewpoint in your essay. Otherwise you might weaken your argument and your essay will lack unity. For example, you can confuse your reader if you stray from one position. You might even lend credibility to other views if you don't stay focused on one viewpoint.

Taking only one stance (viewpoint) in an argument helps you achieve **unity**. For example, if you argue against the death penalty but then assert that it is acceptable in some cases, you provide an opening for those who would argue for it in many more circumstances. This opposing viewpoint would discredit your argument (See Unit 1, pp. 4–5 and 21–22 for more about unity in essays.)

EXERCISE

3

STICKING TO ONE STANCE

One of the supporting statements listed for each viewpoint does not relate to the argument. Cross out the statement that does not belong in the list. The first one is done for you.

1. Television adversely affects children.
 - a. Children who watch long hours of television do not read often enough.
 - b. School performance goes down when children spend many hours watching television
 - ~~c. Some educational television programs help children who are visually oriented learn better.~~
2. The mounting body of science proving that manmade greenhouse gases trap heat in the earth's atmosphere is convincing more and more people that we must cut greenhouse pollution drastically.
 - a. Global warming in coastal states like Florida will lead to flooding and saltwater contamination of underground drinking water supplies.
 - b. More frequent wildfires and declining crop yields are only two of the consequences of global warming.
 - c. This paper seeks to assist policymakers and the public in better understanding the institutional resistance to efforts to curb greenhouse pollution.
3. Exposure to the sun for long periods can cause skin cancer.
 - a. There is a direct connection between skin cancer and chronic exposure to the sun.
 - b. A history of sunburns is correlated with skin cancer later in life.
 - c. Exposure to sunlight is an important source of Vitamin D, a vital nutrient.
4. Alexander the Great was considered one of the finest kings of the western world.
 - a. Although he brutally conquered many people, Alexander often encouraged the intermarriage of his own Macedonians and the women who survived his conquests.



- b. Alexander opened routes for trade and communication between the eastern and western worlds.
 - c. Alexander's religious tolerance earned him the respect of many people around the world.
5. The benefits of space exploration are worth the costs.
- a. As natural resources needed for human survival are depleted, new sources may be found on other planets and moons.
 - b. Eventually, to alleviate overcrowding on Earth, humans will need to settle on other planets.
 - c. Most of our knowledge of the solar system comes from ground-based observations and Earth-orbiting satellites.

Coherence in Argumentative Essays

As discussed in previous units, the use of well-placed transition expressions is among the most important practices for adding coherence to paragraphs and essays. In addition to the transition expressions you have already learned, the ones below are especially useful for argumentative writing.

Transition Expressions

Transition Expressions: *although it may be true that/despite the fact that, certainly, and surely*

although it may be true that/despite the fact that

Function: to say that something is true before saying something else about it

Use: *Although it may be true that* and *despite that* are used to concede a point that supports the opposing argument. These transition expressions are followed by a clause that introduces the opposing view.

Examples: **Although it may be true that** there appear to be dry riverbeds on the planet Mars, this does not prove that water or life once existed there.

Despite the fact that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, you cannot often drive or walk in a straight line to your destination.

Punctuation Note: *Although it may be true that/despite the fact that* + clause that states the opposing view is followed by a comma before stating your stance in a separate clause.

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certainly

Function: to say that the writer agrees with something without any doubt

Use: *Certainly* is an adverb used in argumentative writing to lend credibility to the writer's stance.

Examples: **Certainly** one would not wish to risk the lives of innocent people by driving recklessly.

The new regime will **certainly** take over the formerly private industry to make it publicly controlled.

surely

Function: implies that the writer has faith in the statement that follows

Use: *Surely* is an adverb used to express certainty. It differs slightly from *certainly* in that *surely* expresses more urgency and persuasion.

Examples: **Surely** if the banks run into trouble, the Federal Reserve should lower interest rates again.

Nuclear power plants **surely** represent the most efficient energy sources for today's needs.

Blueprints Argumentative Essays

In this section, you will read and analyze two sample argumentative essays. These essays can act as blueprints when you write your own argumentative essay in Part B.

Blueprint Argumentative Essay I: Why Adopt a Vegetarian Diet?

PREREADING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you know anyone who is a vegetarian? Do you know why that person is a vegetarian?
2. Why do you think most vegetarians choose not to eat meat?

EXERCISE

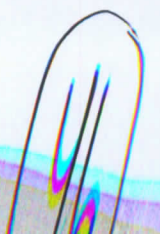
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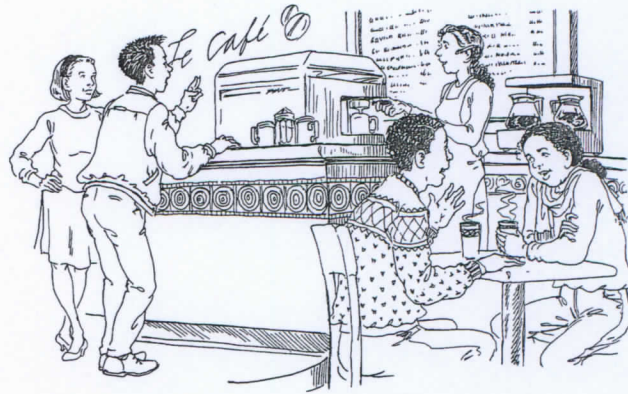
READING AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Read the argumentative essay. Fill in the blanks with transition expressions from the list. Then answer the postreading questions.

although it may be true that surely certainly

despite the fact that





COFFEE: SURPRISING BENEFITS FROM THIS HERBAL SUPPLEMENT

1 People everywhere are trying to cut back on their consumption of this "harmful" drink, all the while craving coffee desperately and feeling guilty when they indulge. Coffee is said to cause nervousness and is **purported** to be addictive. We have all heard about these harmful effects of coffee, but many Americans continue to drink it daily. What if instead of feeling guilty about drinking coffee, you could feel good about taking this herbal supplement? Consider these facts: coffee combats drowsiness, temporarily boosts athletic performance, eases congestion due to colds and flu, prevents asthma attacks, and **enhances** the pain-relieving effects of aspirin. Research on the benefits of coffee shows that it deserves our respect as an important supplement.

2 Over the years, many attempts have been made to associate coffee with negative health effects. However, these claims remain

unsubstantiated. _____ coffee can cause sleeplessness and nervousness, this is true only when it is drunk in large doses. The medically important **constituent** of coffee is caffeine, but the caffeine content of coffee depends on how it is prepared. A cup of instant coffee contains about 60 milligrams of caffeine, whereas a cup of drip, percolated or even espresso coffee has about 100 milligrams. Most doctors say that coffee appears to pose no particular threat to most people if it is consumed in moderation. According to new research presented at the national meeting of the American Chemical Society, coffee is not very addictive. French researchers reported that caffeine has no effect on the area of the brain involved with addiction at doses of one to three cups of coffee per day. Astrid Nehlig, Ph.D. of the French National Health and Medical Research Institute conducted research on coffee consumption with laboratory animals. This research confirmed that while moderate doses of caffeine contribute to increased alertness and energy, dependence does not occur at those levels.

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purported: given a false appearance

enhances: makes something greater or of more value

unsubstantiated: not established by proof or competent evidence

constituent: an essential part

+

PRO

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chlorogenic acid:

$C_{16}H_{18}O_9$, a substance that forms around infected tissue in some higher plants and has anti-fungal properties

cognition: mental ability

bronchodilator:

a substance that causes expansion of the air spaces of the lungs

therapeutic: acting as a cure or relief

3 _____ coffee is best known as the powerful stimulant that helps people stay awake during night driving and cramming before final exams. Its caffeine is capable of boosting energy, increasing alertness, and quickening reaction time. It is also a mood elevator and may help mild depression. The explanation for this may lie in research conducted in the mid-1980s, which suggested that the **chlorogenic acids** in coffee might have an antidepressant effect on the opiate system in the brain. Recently, researchers from the University of Bristol reviewed a decade of research into caffeine's influence on **cognition** and mood. The survey revealed that a cup of coffee could help in the performance of tasks requiring sustained attention, even during low alertness situations such as after lunch, at night, or when a person has a cold.

4 Coffee's health advantages are not confined to mood elevation and increased energy; there are more specific benefits as well for colds, asthma, athletic performance and pain relief. Some over-the-counter cold formulas contain caffeine, partly to counteract the sedative effects of the antihistamines they contain, but caffeine also helps open the bronchial tubes, relieving the congestion of colds and flu. Coffee's action as a **bronchodilator** can also help prevent asthma attacks. In addition, several studies show that, compared with plain aspirin, the combination of aspirin and caffeine relieves pain significantly better than aspirin alone. The reason is caffeine's ability to speed up the body's metabolism so that the aspirin's pain reducing effects are felt faster. Finally, coffee may also improve physical stamina, according to a report published in the journal *The Physician and Sports Medicine*. Athletes who want coffee's benefits typically drink three or four cups during the hour or two before an event.

5 Although most people don't think of it as such, coffee is _____ America's most popular herbal beverage. Despite the scare tactics of those who would try to discredit coffee's reputation, years of research have not shown harmful effects, when coffee is taken in moderation. It not only helps a sleepy nation wake up in the morning, but it also has significant **therapeutic** value, which has been scientifically proven.

Adapted from <http://www.healthyideas.com/healing/herb/coffee.html>

Prevention magazine reports, and

<http://www.accessexcellence.com/WN/SUA12/cafe399.html>,

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POSTREADING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the argumentative thesis statement of this essay? Write it here.

2. How many subtopics are there? What are they? Write them here.

3. Does the introductory paragraph include background information about the issue?

4. Does the introduction section include a clear statement of both sides of the issue?

5. Underline the controlling idea of each body paragraph in the essay. Does each body paragraph address one of the subtopics?

6. What one stance is taken on the issue to provide unity?

Is the argument successful? _____

7. What is the opposing argument? _____

8. Which method of organization is used to develop the argument? (See *Methods of Organization for Argumentative Essays* on p. 171.)

9. An argumentative essay includes details about each reason offered to support the argument. Often the details are examples. At other times they might be details of a process, causes and effects, comparisons, etc. What is primarily used in this essay to give details about the reasons for the author's view? Circle one.

examples

descriptions of a process

causes and effects

comparisons

the opinion of experts

10. Besides signaling the end of the essay, what other purpose does the conclusion fulfill?

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