

WRITING: WHAT IS AN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY?

Unit Key Vocabulary:

argumentative essay
argumentative text
claim
reasons
evidence
opposing argument
rebuttal
complex sentence
compound-complex sentence

Overview

In this unit, you will discover why argumentative essays are important, analyze the structure and length of an argumentative essay, and examine prompts for argumentative essays on the AIR Assessment. At the end of the unit, you will review complex and compound-complex sentences. Above you will find a list of key vocabulary for this unit.



*Download the attached pdf to take notes during the lesson.

Newspaper editorial sections and blogs offer strong opinions. Press conferences and debates are prolific and essential parts of the political process. Advertisements fill television time and pop up across cyberspace. How are all of these types of communication alike? They all present arguments in an attempt to persuade readers, listeners, or viewers to agree with certain opinions.

This unit will show you how to write a strongly supported and convincing argument of your own.

Argumentative Essays

When you write an **argumentative essay**, you develop an argumentative text—much like the one we studied in the previous unit. Your goal is to persuade someone to think the way you do. Your words have the potential to convince others that your position is correct, and even have the power to change people's worldviews.

The **Argumentative Essay** you will write on the AIR Assessment will be written with in a *formal style* and will be *based on at least two texts* that you are required to read.

Elements of an Argumentative Essay

The first and most important element in an argumentative text is the **claim**. In rhetoric and argumentation, a **claim** is an arguable statement—an idea that the author asks an audience to accept. In an argumentative text, the **claim** is the *central idea*. In your **argumentative essay**, the claim will be your **thesis**. In Unit 1 we defined **thesis** as a statement of your main idea.

In an **argumentative text**, the author will develop his or her **claim** with a series of **reasons** and **evidence**. **Reasons** are more specific statements that support the overall claim. **Evidence** is a series facts, examples, statistics, and quotes that support the reasons and ultimately the claim. Your **reasons** will become the topics for your body paragraphs, while your **evidence** will come directly from the texts you are assigned to read in the form of **explicit textual evidence** (direct quotes or paraphrases).

If an author presents only his or her perspective and ignores the other side of an issue, a text may be too one sided and mislead readers. A good argument includes information about the **opposing argument**, in which an author acknowledges that there is a view different from his or her own. However, the author will then provide a strong **rebuttal**, or counterargument, to refute it, effectively dismissing it with support for his or her own claim.

STOP! Complete Questions 1 through 6 in the questions section.

Setting up an Argumentative Essay

An *Argumentative Essay* for the AIR Assessment should be at least 5 paragraph essay with an:

- Introduction,
- Body paragraphs (main points), and a
- Conclusion

Argumentative essay: Outline

1. Introduction

- a. Hook
- b. Background information
- c. Claim (Thesis)

2. Body Paragraph 1

- a. Reason 1
- b. Textual evidence
 - i. Explanation
- c. Textual evidence
 - i. Explanation
- d. Wrap-up reason 1

3. Body Paragraph 2

- a. Reason 2
- b. Textual evidence
 - i. Explanation
- c. Textual evidence
 - i. Explanation
- d. Wrap-up reason 2

4. Body Paragraph 3

- a. Opposing argument's reason
- b. Textual evidence for opposing argument's reason
 - i. Explanation
- c. Rebuttal
- d. Textual evidence for rebuttal
 - i. Explanation
- e. Wrap-up rebuttal

5. Conclusion

- a. Restate claim (thesis) in a different way
- b. Why does it matter?
- c. Snappy ending

Argumentative Essay Prompt Examples:

- Construct a multi-paragraph response in which you support a claim about whether it better to be at the center of one group of friends or at the perimeter of several.
- Construct a multi-paragraph response in which you support a claim about whether it is possible to make friends online.
- Construct a multi-paragraph response in which you support a claim about whether self-driving cars should be allowed on the road.
- Construct a multi-paragraph response in which you support a claim about whether or not juvenile offenders should be sentenced to prison.
- Construct a multi-paragraph response in which you support a claim about whether students should use Wikipedia as a factual source of information.

Let's unpack a prompt...

What is the prompt asking you to do?

Construct a multi-paragraph response in which you support a claim about whether or not juvenile offenders should be sentenced to prison. Use the information from the texts in your response.

Construct a multi-paragraph response... = Write a 5 paragraph essay

... in which you support a claim= Begin with a statement about which side you are on

Use the information from the texts in your response. = Include explicit textual evidence in your body paragraphs using I.C.E.

STOP! Complete Questions 7 through 12 in the questions section.

Model

Read a model of an Argumentative Essay based on the following prompt:

- *Construct a multi-paragraph response in which you support a claim about whether it better to be at the center of one group of friends or at the perimeter of several. Use the information from the texts in your response.*

Are Close Friends Better?

People should never place all of their eggs in one basket. If the basket breaks, what are they left with? Every day teenagers in schools struggle with old friendships, new friends, and groups of friends. Remaining at the center of one group of friends is essentially putting all of their eggs in one basket. Those small groups can be too controlling and, if problems arise with the group, a teen could find him or herself alone. While being a part of a small, tight group can strengthen a teen's sense of identity, it often inhibits a teen from trying other interests and ideas. Therefore, it is better for a teenager to be at the perimeter of several groups of friends.

To begin with, small, tight knit groups can be too controlling. In the article "New School, New Groups of Friends", the author discusses her experience with being a member of a small group. She described how she would make decisions about "who [they] would hang out with" (New School, New Groups of Friends 4). In other words, the group, not individuals, dictated who was allowed to hang out with them. Additionally, the article "New School, New Groups of Friends" highlights that kids should "... rethink themselves and their friendships without the limitations of what can amount to a group veto" (4). In making this comment, the author shows that being at the center of a controlling group limits an individual's ability to evolve because they are afraid of the group opinion. Thus, teenagers should avoid being too focused on one controlling group.

Additionally, if all of a teenager's friends are contained one group, one disagreement could leave that teenager alone and friendless. The author of "New School, New Groups of Friends" discussed how being inside of a tight knit group led to "intense friendship drama" (New School, New Groups of Friends 4). When teenagers are intensely close within a group, those intense feelings can quickly and easily turn into drama. According to "Teen Friendships: A Cauldron of Closeness," "Maintaining a variety of friendships, some close, and some more casual, can help a teen through a tough transition out of a group" (Teen Friendships: A Cauldron of Closeness 5). This allows teenagers to have some friends even if they are in a disagreement with others. Hence, teenagers should cultivate a variety of friendships so that they never have to feel alone.

Some people would argue that being a part of a small, tight group can strengthen a teen's self-worth. The author of "Teen Friendships: A Cauldron of Closeness" claims that "Being a part of a small, tight group can bolster a teen's sense of identity, supply a feeling of belonging, and provide close, loyal, and lasting friendships" (5). Generally speaking, the author believes that a teenager's identity comes from that close knit group. However, that strong sense of group identity often inhibits a teen from trying other interests and ideas. According to "Teen Friendships: A Cauldron of Closeness", "Being at the center of a tightly knit group can mean there is less freedom to explore, meet new friends, and try out other interests and ideas" (5). The group's identity limits what a member is able to explore. Therefore, remaining friendly with many groups of friends provides a teenager with the freedom to evolve and grow.

Teenagers should cultivate friendships with many different individuals and groups rather than remaining at the center of one single group. Remaining on the perimeter of many groups allows a teenager to escape the control of a tightly knit group, grow apart from certain friends without losing them all, and explore different interests without fear of judgement. When eggs are divided into several different baskets, dropping one basket does not result in a total loss. Similarly, having several groups of friends provides teenagers with more opportunities for friendships and personal growth; dropping one of those groups of friends does not result in a total loss.

Title

Are Close Friends Better?

Introduction

People should never place all of their eggs in one basket. If the basket breaks, what are they left with? Every day teenagers in schools struggle with old friendships, new friends, and groups of friends. Remaining at the center of one group of friends is essentially putting all of their eggs in one basket. Those small groups can be too controlling and, if problems arise with the group, a teen could find him or herself alone. While being a part of a small, tight group can strengthen a teen's sense of identity, it often inhibits a teen from trying other interests and ideas. Therefore, it is better for a teenager to be at the perimeter of several groups of friends.

Body Paragraph 1

To begin with, small, tight knit groups can be too controlling. In the article "New School, New Groups of Friends", the author discusses her experience with being a member of a small group. She described how she would make decisions about "who [they] would hang out with" (New School, New Groups of Friends 4). In other words, the group, not individuals, dictated who was allowed to hang out with them. Additionally, the article "New School, New Groups of Friends" highlights that kids should "... rethink themselves and their friendships without the limitations of what can amount to a group veto" (4). In making this comment, the author shows that being at the center of a controlling group limits an individual's ability to evolve because they are afraid of the group opinion. Thus, teenagers should avoid being too focused on one controlling group.

Body
Paragraph 2

Additionally, if all of a teenager's friends are contained one group, one disagreement could leave that teenager alone and friendless. The author of "New School, New Groups of Friends" discussed how being inside of a tight knit group led to "intense friendship drama" (New School, New Groups of Friends 4). When teenagers are intensely close within a group, those intense feelings can quickly and easily turn into drama. According to "Teen Friendships: A Cauldron of Closeness," "Maintaining a variety of friendships, some close, and some more casual, can help a teen through a tough transition out of a group" (Teen Friendships: A Cauldron of Closeness 5). This allows teenagers to have some friends even if they are in a disagreement with others. Hence, teenagers should cultivate a variety of friendships so that they never have to feel alone.

Body
Paragraph 3

Some people would argue that being a part of a small, tight group can strengthen a teen's self-worth. The author of "Teen Friendships: A Cauldron of Closeness" claims that "Being a part of a small, tight group can bolster a teen's sense of identity, supply a feeling of belonging, and provide close, loyal, and lasting friendships" (5). Generally speaking, the author believes that a teenager's identity comes from that close knit group. However, that strong sense of group identity often inhibits a teen from trying other interests and ideas. According to "Teen Friendships: A Cauldron of Closeness", "Being at the center of a tightly knit group can mean there is less freedom to explore, meet new friends, and try out other interests and ideas" (5). The group's identity limits what a member is able to explore. Therefore, remaining friendly with many groups of friends provides a teenager with the freedom to evolve and grow.

Conclusion

When one considers that remaining on the perimeter of many groups allows a teenager to escape the control of a tightly knit group and grow apart from certain friends without losing them all, it becomes clear that teenagers should cultivate friendships with many different individuals and groups rather than remaining at the center of one single group. With the rise of social media and constant cell phone use, teenagers these days are facing more and more pressure to fit in with their peers. Being at the center of a controlling, tightly knit group only magnifies those pressures. When eggs are divided into several different baskets, dropping one basket does not result in a total loss. Likewise, having several groups of friends provides teenagers with more opportunities for friendships and personal growth; dropping one of those groups of friends does not result in a total loss.

Grammar Lesson 6: COMPLEX & COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES

- A **complex sentence** contains one independent clause and at least one subordinate clause.
 - a. Learn more about [complex sentence](#).

- A **compound-complex** sentence contains two independent clauses and at least one subordinate clause.
 - a. Learn more about [compound-complex sentences](#).
- In a complex sentence, if the subordinate clause comes before the independent clauses, you must put a comma between the two clauses; if the independent clause comes before the subordinate clause, no comma is necessary.

Let's Practice!

1. Identify if the sentence is complex or compound-complex. Then highlight any **independent clause** in red and any **subordinate clause** in blue.

It is not the case here in the United States where people are still a bit squeamish about eating insects as our sole source of protein.

(Answer is below)

COMPLEX

It is not the case here in the United States where people are still a bit squeamish about eating insects as our sole source of protein.

2. Identify if the sentence is complex or compound-complex. Then highlight any **independent clause** in red and any **subordinate clause** in blue.

Because insects unintentionally end up in food, it is estimated that the average American eats a pound of insects every year, and they do not even know it.

(Answer is below)

COMPOUND-COMPLEX

Because insects unintentionally end up in food, it is estimated that the average American eats a pound of insects every year, and they do not even know it.

STOP! Complete Questions 13 through 16 in the questions section.



Below are additional educational resources and activities for this unit.

[Sentence Types: Simple, Compound, Complex, and Compound-Complex](#)