

3. CLASSIC ARGUMENTATION

Although the effective use of the three appeals will improve the persuasiveness of any paper, an important question remains: How should one organize and present an argument which not only presents one's position but undermines the opposition as well? The answer lies in combining both persuasion and analysis.

Many argue that all writing is persuasive and essentially, an argument, that every time we write, we are attempting to make a point and to prove it. The ad that urges us to buy a Camaro, the letter to a friend suggesting he come visit for the summer, the memo to a boss telling her to stock more supplies in the warehouse, the note that says, "I love you," all make a point and have a purpose. Yes, these examples inform, but they also subtly and not so subtly persuade the audience of something.

The difference between the above examples and a paper that contends, "Congress should not only continue investing in the space station but increase America's share in the venture" is one of form. It looks different. It is also more complete, not only using appeals and strong evidence to support the claim, but counter-arguments, which analyze and undermine the arguments of those opposed to the writer's claim.

The classic argument consists of two major parts with subsections:

- * The Contention: In this part, the writer
 - * states the problem in an introduction,
 - * gives his or her solution to the problem (thesis or claim), and
 - * presents the evidence needed to support the claim.

- * The Refutation: In this part, the writer
 - * acknowledges not everyone agrees with the claim,
 - * accommodates opposition points which make sense, and
 - * refutes those opposition points which do not, by giving a thorough analysis of the flaws in the opposition's claims.

Be aware that the contention and the refutation and all their components do not have to be organized in any one particular way. Indeed, argumentative essays written by professionals and read for class may be creatively organized and presented in other sequences, often mixing refutations of opposing arguments into the contention or even dynamically placing one in an introduction; however, when first learning argument, most students find it easier and more effective to follow the classical scheme.

Why? When first learning to rebut an opponent's point, it is very easy to forget that the refutation is an analysis, not another chance to give even more reasons and evidence to support a claim (contention). Consequently, such rebuttals do not analyze; in fact, in the act of repeating what the writer believes, opposition points are not undermined by close analysis at all, but left intact, leaving

the reader to wonder what if anything is wrong with them. Since the purpose of a rebuttal is show the opposition as flawed, this defeats the purpose of the refutation. To avoid this, most students find that if they write the contention first, they exhaust their contention; so when it comes to the refutation, they notice if they slip into contention by seeing the repetition of earlier arguments and can get back to the task at hand, which, in the refutation, is analysis.

3.1. Classical Scheme of Argumentation

Contention

Introduction:

- * States problem, issue, controversy
- * Includes important background information and/or definitions
- * Makes claim (thesis, point, theme, contention, solution)
- * Does so in one or more paragraphs depending on problem and audience

Confirmation:

- * Develops three or more points supporting the claim
- * Uses clear, specific evidence to develop points
- * Employs appeals (depending upon the audience) to develop evidence
 - * Logical appeal using inductive and/or deductive reasoning
 - * Expressed in patterns of development
 - * Avoiding logical fallacies
- * Ethical Appeal using common ground, knowledge of subject matter, reasonable tone, and outside authorities
- * Emotional Appeal using connotative words and examples
- * Does so in as many paragraphs as necessary to develop points

Refutation

Concession:

- * Acknowledges opposing claims exist
- * Concedes opposing points which make sense and evidence which must be accommodated
- * Asserts that accommodated points and evidence are not enough
 - * To undermine the author's claim
 - * To justify opposition claims

Rebuttal:

- * States two or more opposition claims
 - * in sections devoted to each
 - * in one or more sentences for each
- * Negates the claim in a separate (topic) sentence
- * **Discredits opposition claim by analyzing its flaws**
 - * Points out assumptions, reasoning, and/or evidence and shows their faults
 - * Avoids mention of writer's own contention
- * Does so in paragraphs (one or more for each opposing claim to be discredited)
- * Proves opposing claims are seriously flawed and unacceptable

Conclusion:

- * Reasserts claim in new language; ties argumentative "strings" together.

3.1.1. Audience and the Refutation

When considering audience, some argue that the classic approach better addresses a wavering audience while a reverse ordering-refutation first, followed by contention, a Rogerian approach—more effectively addresses a hostile audience and is particularly useful when discussing differences directly with an opponent or when attempting to reach a compromise with one. The advantage of first focusing upon analysis (refutation), showing the differences in thinking processes (logic), underlying beliefs and values (warrants), and evidence, rather than what one wants (contention), is that it directly states up front the problems one has with the opposition so it, as an audience, can evaluate immediately the soundness of the analysis and hear the problems people have with its position. Maybe some of the warrants pointed out are not true; maybe, they are and the opposition did not realize it. To follow with the contention—an alternative approach to the issue—may now be more effective for it may have a better chance of being received and/or understood.

Discuss audience with your instructor. For the purposes of this Study Guide, it is thought more beneficial for students to develop contentions first in order to avoid confusion with refutations, which are really mini-analyses, because students have a tendency to avoid analysis and merely repeat their contention after introducing an opposition point and negating it. Once students have successfully written an argument to a wavering audience, learning to analyze opponents' points effectively, they are ready to take on a hostile audience more successfully.

3.2. The Contention

The contention may be called the claim, the argument, the confirmation, the thesis, or even the narrative in various grammatical texts, but its function is always the same: to state the problem being addressed (the issue), its solution (the thesis), and the evidence supporting the proposed solution.

How is a contention different from a Comp I essay? The answer lies in the details, even in such traditional sections as the introduction.

3.2.1. Introduction

An Introduction in any essay usually serves a number of purposes:

- Introduces the topic and issue
- Creates interest
- Gives necessary background information
- States the thesis or claim

The introduction in an argumentative essay does this also, focusing on the problem (situation or issue) to which the essay responds. It may need to define terms, cite a controversial incident, or even briefly summarize a situation. For example, if an essay were to address the growing problem of guns on high school campuses, the wave of shootings in schools across the country might be noted, focusing on the pathetic deaths of the fifteen students at Littleton, Colorado. In another case, an essay arguing whether

or not Hamlet's hesitation is indicative of the modern condition might develop the fact that of all the plays written by Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is the most often produced for stage and film.

It could note recent film efforts by Kenneth Branagh and Mel Gibson and statistics on their productions' successes at the box-office and in video markets.

The length of an introduction will depend upon an audience's knowledge of the issue and the nature of the problem. An essay on the validity of the space program might need a lengthy development because the controversy is less publicized; one on cloning humans might also need more length due to the need to define terms.

3.2.2. Thesis

The Thesis or claim, takes a stand on the issue in question, often proposing a solution or a best answer to the problem. Some examples include:

- ❖ Since the cloning of humans is inevitable, we should take steps now to license this work, severely punishing scientists who experiment without permission.
- ❖ As the ozone layer is depleted and global warming increases, our planet's well being, not GNP, should be the primary focus of every nation.
- ❖ Hamlet hesitates, not because he's indecisive, but because he values being righteous more than gaining revenge.

Notice that none of these theses, these claims, these solutions to problems or controversies, include a list of the points that prove the contention. Instead of a laundry list included in the thesis and developed afterwards, such as, "Wyatt Earp was brave, courageous, and bold" followed by three points, one each on his bravery, his courage, and his boldness, the argumentative thesis focuses on making one point. For instance, we might say, "Wyatt Earp was not just effective; in studying his days as a lawman, we discover him to be one of the most dangerous marshals ever to carry a gun." What's to be proven? What intrigues the reader? The word "dangerous." The reader hasn't a clue as to how this point will be developed and, consequently, is more interested than if he were told Wyatt Earp was "brave, courageous, and bold." When provided with the essay points, the reader votes on whether he's interested or not. When he's given a claim that's contentious, which sparks the imagination and seems difficult to prove, the reader doesn't think about voting. "Dangerous?" we ask ourselves? "How so?" We're hooked.

Does this mean it's wrong to include the essay points in a thesis? No, but it is often less effective. Think of the writer and the conventions used as a snake shedding a skin. Now, the writer has grown and, ready to move on to the next level, no longer needs those conventions first learned in junior high or high school.

Incidentally, even the sophisticated writer will sometimes find those essay points helpful to include in a thesis. For instance, when first writing on unfamiliar subjects, perhaps a literary essay, it might be useful for the writer to step back and say, "The setting, imagery, and symbolism in John Updike's 'A & P' show that it's an important step in maturation to stand up for a principle, no matter how trite." This essay will attempt to persuade the audience that the proposed theme for this short story is developed by the setting, the imagery, and, finally, the symbolism. Has the writer given away the analysis? Yes. But writing is a process, and on the next literary analysis, having gained confidence during the first, the

writer can drop the analysis points from the thesis and once again surprise his readers as they follow the analysis in the text.

Developing a Thesis

Most textbooks explain how to develop an effective thesis. Two important points to remember are that this development is a process and that at the end of that process, a strong thesis will be specific and crystal clear in its position.

Let's review the process. It consists of brainstorming a topic, writing and rewriting possible claims, and becoming more and more specific. For the student wanting to write an essay on education, if we were to break this process down into some thoughts about the process, they might look like this:

- ❖ Since "education" is far too broad, further refinement is required to produce a good working thesis. Violence in our public school system is more specific, but even still, the topic is too broad. Perhaps focusing on students bringing guns to school would be more manageable.
- ❖ But who would say that students bringing guns to school is a good thing? Additionally, bringing guns to school is illegal, so what's the issue? What about this topic is controversial?
- ❖ How can an argumentative thesis be produced from this topic? One approach might be to suggest corrective action against those who are caught bringing guns to school. Or methods of preventing or minimizing the presence of guns on campus might be recommended.

After much thought, a **working thesis** is developed, one that may need further refinement before it reaches its final form: Metal detectors and unannounced locker searches should be implemented on all campuses to prevent students from bringing guns to school.

- ❖ What is controversial about this statement? For one thing, many students might think that unannounced locker searches are unconstitutional and invade privacy. Others may argue that guns could be slipped by metal detectors, adding that more guns might be present since kids might see a "challenge" in trying to sneak guns on campus.

One way to know if a thesis is truly contentious, to know if it really takes a stand on an important issue, is to examine what those opposed to the thesis might contend. The opposite thesis or **antithesis** should be just as clear and as authoritative as the thesis: Metal detectors and unannounced locker searches should not be implemented as a way to prevent students from bringing guns to school: these measures are an infringement on the right to privacy and would be ineffective in curtailing school violence.

A good argumentative paper would prove the thesis in its contention and work to disprove or accommodate the antithesis in its refutation. This would result in a unified, balanced, and cohesive argument. It is then up to the audience to weigh the opposing views. Of course, since the writer is controlling the argument through his or her contention and refutation, as well as using the three appeals, the audience should either be sold on the claim or, at least, persuaded to favorably consider it.

Placement of the thesis: Nine times out of ten, the best positioning lies at the end of the introduction because it emphatically lets the audience know the claim and direction of the essay, keeping supporting

points unified and focused on the thesis. Perhaps, one time out of ten, when an argument is purely inductive, the thesis might be placed emphatically at the end of the contention, just before the refutation. When would this be appropriate? The best opportunity would be when the audience is familiar with the subject and where deep concern is felt. To have the reader make the inductive leap with the writer both dramatizes the point and satisfies the reader's growing interest and ongoing participation in the argument.

3.2.3. Checklist: Introduction and Thesis

1. How clear is the problem, issue, or controversy stated in the introduction? If lengthy, is it too wordy or does it contain background information that's of little use?
2. Does the introduction provide all of the amount and type of background information needed by the audience? Does it need definitions? Historical data? Other information?
3. How does the introduction engage the reader? How does it make a good first impression?
4. It what manner does the thesis take a stand on the problem?
How does it attempt to solve it?
How might it be more developed?
How is it contentious?
Where is it specific?
5. If essay points are in the claim, how could it be rewritten without mentioning them?
6. What is the antithesis of the thesis? Is it just as debatable?
7. Is the thesis placed most effectively? If not, where might it be better located?

3.3. The Confirmation: Supporting the Claim

In the most direct argumentative essays, supporting points follow the claim (also called the thesis, stand, contention, solution) just as they would in any other essay. How many supporting points are enough? A minimum of three is always safe; and remember, this does not mean three paragraphs, but three major points of support. The number of paragraphs is irrelevant. The first point may take three paragraphs; the next, two; the third, three; and the fourth, four. Also, avoid page-long paragraphs; the goal is to engage and to persuade the reader, not make it hard for him or her to absorb the material by burying it in large, unwieldy blocks of text.

In supporting an argumentative essay, writers focus on the effective use of some very important tools:

- The Three Appeals
- Evidence

The Three Appeals (Emotional, Ethical, and Logical) have been explained in detail in the previous section of this study guide. Given the audience, one, two, or a combination of all three appeals might be used in support of a thesis or claim. This means that if an emotional appeal were appropriate, words and examples with strong positive and negative connotations would be employed; that if an ethical appeal were appropriate, knowledge of subject matter, outside authorities, common ground, and a reasonable tone would be used; and if a logical appeal were appropriate, inductive and/or deductive

reasoning and the accompanying patterns of logical development would be emphasized. As noted previously, in all but the case of the strongly supportive audience, different combinations of all the appeals are most effective.

Further, in a logical appeal, the methods of reasoning used in the three or more major supporting points could shift from point to point.

Examples of different logical approaches in each of an essay's major points:

- Point one might be a deductive argument focusing on a definition or a law or a truism, followed by specific instances related to the subject, followed by sound conclusions;
- Point two might exemplify a number of points of evidence and make an inductive leap, coming to another conclusion in support of the thesis;
- Point three might be a cause and effect paragraph developing another deductive argument;
- Point four might cite more evidence based on personal experiences illustrating inductively.

This dynamic approach to the use of logic engages a reader's interest, not only entertaining him, but also convincing him.

3.3.1. Evidence

Evidence is the key to the success of most arguments. Given its importance, students should take a hard look at what constitutes evidence and learn how to use it effectively.

What Is Evidence?

We are most familiar with evidence in the context of court cases. For example, in the famous O. J. Simpson trial, the glove, bloody sock, and DNA tests were all evidence the prosecution attempted to use to convince the minds of the jury to make an inductive leap: O. J. Simpson was guilty.

When writers develop points, they too must work hard to convince the reader that they have strong evidence to support their claims. In fact, the bulk of work associated with developing a contention requires gathering, evaluating, interpreting, presenting, and defending evidence. Standard evidence may include:

- Observation and Experiments
- Statistics and Samples
- Known Facts and Shared Beliefs
- Common Knowledge
- Examples
- Personal Experience

- Testimony of Experts

Observation and Experiments create results that are very objective forms of evidence. Relying on the rigors of uniformity and science to create situations and tests, observations and experiments produce information that could be duplicated by others. The student who observes the regimen and care given to infants in a daycare on a daily basis can accurately pass on information such as how often diapers are changed, how often and for how long children are parked in front of a television, and how often and what they are fed.

Similarly, we can learn a lot about behavior through experiments. Just as Einstein studied and experimented with the behavior of energy, the police officer might study the behavior and experiment with different approaches to a street gang to find ways to reach or understand its members. The results of experiments with people don't have the accuracy of experiments in biology or physics, but nevertheless shed light on issues of concern. Even failures are often revealing, because telling others what doesn't work—for instance, dressing up like a gang member—may be valuable information and evidence that may support a claim.

Statistics and Samples prove points by using the power of numbers. By their specific nature, numbers are readily comparable and understood. By definition, statistics are numerical data gathered, assembled, and presented to give relative information about a subject. For example, let's say 75% of the students that take American History II at HCCS pass it. This is a statistic. Let's also say that 10% get As, 30% Bs, 30% Cs, and 5% Ds. Depending on the argument, citing the fact that 10% of the students earned As could be important.

We often hear that we should be wary of statistics. Why? Statistics can be misleading

Even in our simple example, do we really know who earned the As, Bs, Cs, and Ds? No. Do these grades include all the campuses at HCCS? All the colleges? Are summer school students included? Do they include students who withdraw? The numbers, their interpretation, and their value would change depending on the sample.

Also, we often hear of professional surveys and statistics. Again, they are as good as the group polled. Professional sampling is a science where groups are selected with characteristics or qualities representative of a very large population. For example, the Gallup Poll selects a sample of citizens by which it measures public opinion on everything from abortion and drugs to who will win an election, even taking up to the minute opinion surveys on national election results before polls close on the west coast. Are such surveys always right? Often, but not always.

Be careful with statistical evidence, and if possible, state the sample and its margin of error when reporting such findings.

Known Facts and Shared Beliefs are what the people within a given culture hold to be true. For example, we all believe the earth orbits the sun, the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620, and George Lucas is the creator of *Star Wars*. Why are such obvious truths important as evidence? When used creatively, they not only establish a shared understanding between writer and reader, but also can strengthen a point. Note the following sentence:

Although we now take it for granted that the earth orbits the sun, Galileo, who was the first to prove Copernicus's theory, was condemned by the Inquisition for heresy and burned at the stake.

By using a known fact, the writer creates a contrast between past and present beliefs in order to demonstrate the depth of society's intolerance and resistance to change.

Common Knowledge is when a fact or a belief, which may not be known by all, is common enough that it would be found in three or more books on a subject. Again, this is evidence. An example of this might be the effects of clear-cutting on an old growth forest as described by Donella Meadows in "Not Seeing the Forest for the Dollar Bills":

The trees and owls disappear and so does everything else. Burned slash releases to the sky nutrients that have been sequestered and recycled by living things for 500 years. What's left of the soil bleeds downhill as from an open wound. Waters cloud and silt, flood and dry up. The temperature goes up, the humidity goes down. It will take hundreds of years to regather the nutrients, rebuild the soil, and restore the complex system of the intact forest.

While most of us do not know exactly what happens after clear-cutting, any book on the subject will describe the process, using the above facts (although, perhaps, with less emotional language and imagery).

Examples are one of the most common forms of evidence. The writer takes a typical instance of what he or she is talking about and uses it to help explain, clarify, and/or prove a point. For instance, the earlier reference to the O. J. Simpson trial cited the glove, bloody sock, and the DNA tests as samples of the evidence the prosecution gathered to build its case. Likewise, in an essay about John Updike's "A&P," the textual references to customers as "sheep" and "scared pigs in a chute" are samples of evidence, or examples, of the narrator's disdain for conformity.

When examples are specific (such as, the references to the glove, sock and tests) and detailed (blood and DNA), they are highly effective forms of evidence. At their best, they demonstrate to the reader why the writer is justified in making his or her claim.

Personal Experience can be a very effective form of evidence, also. Although it is anecdotal and totally subjective (meaning it is only one person's experience and may have all of his or her beliefs coloring the interpretation of it), personal experience can quickly focus and support an argument when bolstered by facts, statistics, and other forms of evidence. We listen to the former convict who talks about prison conditions, the woman who expresses her feelings about her abortion, and the man who was pronounced dead by doctors, telling everyone about a comforting white light he walked into in his death sleep. Again, such evidence is biased. Writers base the telling of personal experiences on their senses and their ability to accurately interpret what they witnessed; and as we know from trials, three people can witness the same car accident and have three different interpretations of what happened.

Then why is such evidence effective? It's direct and personal; we relate to another human being's experiences. Also, note that a writer may write about others' personal experiences. Although not as direct, it's still personal.

Testimony of Experts is often considered evidence, also. When someone has a reputation or a position that invites trust, we consider his or her opinions very highly. For example, at a trial, a noted psychologist may declare a defendant sane and give evidence in support of this claim. However, the defense may later call another noted psychologist to the witness stand, one who declares the same defendant insane, giving different evidence to support this new claim.

It is important to note that, in each case, the psychologists gave their opinions and supported it with evidence. Are such opinions facts? No. They are opinions based on different assumptions, evidence, and/or logic that the two noted professionals have given to support their position.

Writers must realize that such experts and their testimony are effective in supporting a position because they develop the credibility of the writer, but are they evidence? No. Some of the information used in the arguments is evidence, of course, but the opinion it supports and/or the person is not.

The Importance of Evidence cannot be overemphasized. In an ethical appeal, the writer uses knowledge of subject matter to assure credibility. One of the most effective ways to show knowledge is to cite evidence. In a logical appeal, the writer uses information in the form of evidence to develop and make an inductive leap, and consequently, the conclusion of the inductive argument is as good as the evidence which supports it.

Finally, without proof, a claim has no merit. Without support, assertions have no substance. Without tangible evidence, before all but a highly supportive audience, an argument has no foundation.

3.3.2. The Criteria for Good Evidence

As in anything else, some efforts are effective and others are not. The evidence used in an essay must have certain qualities to be accepted by the thoughtful audience.

All evidence should be

- * Accurate
- * Relevant
- * Representative
- * Specific and Detailed
- * Sufficient
- * Current

Accurate: Verify evidence to be sure it is correct. Even a relatively unbiased source, such as *The New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal*, can err. Cross check important or surprising evidence with other sources to see if it is common knowledge or the result of a new survey, experiment, or test. If new, check to see if any secondary sources claim the results are exaggerated or understated.

Relevant: Evidence must speak directly to the issue at hand. When discussing the effects of multiculturalism on college syllabi, the essay must not discuss the differences in child rearing practiced

by different ethnic groups, but the syllabi. When discussing the irony in Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," the essay must not talk about the author's life but about examples of ironies in the text.

Representative: Evidence must fairly represent the situation and topic. For example, when discussing the use of seat belts, the truck driver whose life was saved by not wearing a seat belt when he grabbed a tree branch and hauled himself out of the window of his tumbling truck as it crashed down a ravine and exploded is not representative of most accidents and experiences using seat belts. Such an example is a "wild hare." Please, evidence must be indicative of the norm, not the abnormal.

Specific and Detailed: The more generalized or vague the evidence, the less convincing and effective it is. Review again the O.J. Simpson evidence described in the Examples subsection above. If specific facts, studies, numbers, quotations, or other information exist, use them. Always name persons, places, things and events whenever possible. When details are left out, we wonder if they exist.

Sufficient: Although no rule exists for the right amount of evidence, enough should be present to convince the audience. Three to four samples are often considered a safe minimum to support subordinate points with most audiences, but when in doubt or attempting to prove something that might not be readily accepted, give more, not less, than may be necessary. Remember also that examples alone are rarely sufficient. Other forms of evidence are also necessary.

Current: Evidence that includes the latest thoughts on a topic is said to have currency or to be current. For example, an inductive proof that does not include the latest observations or tests or discoveries usually should not be accepted. An audience deserves the latest information. When is currency important? This depends upon the subject. In science, the last six months may not be recent enough if a discovery's been made. In most subjects, however, two to three years may be current enough. Also note that sometimes, perhaps in a critique of "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe, a work that's been studied for decades, currency may not be all that important (unless someone just wrote a startling new interpretation!).

Must a Confirmation Include Evidence from Every Category?

No. From three categories? From more than one? The answer depends upon the issue and the available evidence. More categories of evidence create a more balanced contention, but sometimes, if one category is extremely well developed, it's sufficient.

3.3.3. Checklist: Confirmation

1. What are the three or more major points that support the claim? How are they unified to it?
2. Where are recognizable appeals present? To emotion? To logic? To credibility?
3. How could the different approaches to logic be classified in each point?
4. What kind of evidence is used?
 - * Examples? * Statistics and Samples?
 - * Common Knowledge? * Known Facts and Shared Beliefs?
 - * Personal Experience? * Observations and Experiments?
5. If not many varieties of evidence are used, what additional category or categories might be effective?
6. Are the points of contention specific and concrete? If not, what names of persons, places, things, and events would make them more detailed? What references to the five senses would make them more concrete?
7. Why is the evidence
 - * Relevant? * Specific and detailed?
 - * Representative? * Sufficient?
 - * Accurate? * Current?
8. What else might be said to prove the claim? What, if any, essential information has been left out?

3.4. Refutation

Unlike the contention, which deals with the writer's claim and the reasons and evidence used to support it, the refutation focuses on the opposition's beliefs, analyzing the warrants, reasons, and evidence used to support them.

The refutation usually consists of two parts:

- * Concession or Accommodation

- * Rebuttal

3.4.1. Concession

While some might think of an argument as comprised of two or more opposing ideas lined up across some invisible line like armies about to destroy each other, the wise writer usually seeks to avert a headlong confrontation. Why? It's bloody and ineffective. As mentioned in the introduction to this study guide, one can disagree with another over an issue and gain, not lose, respect, if one knows how to be graceful in acknowledging the opposition. How? Often, the opposition's ideas consist of many of the same assumptions, reasoning, and evidence as our own. Thus, although the ultimate conclusions of the opposition are not acceptable, some of its subordinate points or conclusions are. In fact, more often than not, opposing sides have areas of common ground, where both sides agree.

Although common ground has already been discussed in the Ethical Appeal section, it's important to restate that the value and importance of conceding one or more points, of giving the opposition its due, is both effective and fair, causing an audience to think one's position more balanced and thoughtful. Also, realize the difference between accepting one argument or another often rests on a straw: a different interpretation of a fact or a statistic, an assumption that one side may not be willing to concede, a major premise that's unacceptable. When isolated, the difference is significant, but one major difference does not imply that all the two sides still have in common does not exist.

This act of accommodation, of conceding a point or points, also draws the opposing sides together, allowing an audience to more readily see the analytic distinctions between arguments (the rebuttal) for having seen what they have in common (the concession).

The point, then, of the concession, is to acknowledge that

- * Yes, not everyone is in agreement with the claim, and
- * some of the opposition's points can be accommodated.

For example, common ground between gun control advocates and the National Rifle Association (NRA) might seem impossible, but look at what happens if the gun control advocates claim only handguns should be outlawed, not rifles. By conceding rifles, by accommodating this type of weapon, the areas of dispute between the two sides have narrowed. Areas of common ground have expanded. As a result, gun control advocates are perceived as being more reasonable, and their rebuttals of opposition points will now be more focused. The flaws they reveal will only discredit the assumptions, reasoning, and evidence behind the private ownership of handguns.

3.4.2. Rebuttal

After the concession, the second part of the refutation requires a new approach to writing. Instead of supporting the writer's thesis, the rebuttal undermines the supporting points of the theses of others who are in disagreement with the writer. While a confirmation develops and supports, a rebuttal analyzes and shows flaws. Why? A rebuttal's purpose is to show that the points, which cannot be accommodated in another's position, are wrong.

Occasionally, some writers react negatively to the idea of rebuttal and making others' positions wrong, saying, "I don't want to hurt anyone." It's important to understand that this is not the case. This

comment is based on a couple of false warrants (assumptions): that a person equals a position and that to undermine someone's position is to undermine them, to hurt them. Yes, the opposition will be disappointed if its argument is shown to be lacking, but a person is not an issue. We must separate the issue from the person and show that the position taken on the issue is based on false evidence, false reasoning, or false assumptions. The person in opposition is not attacked as wrong, only his or her position.

For example, let's say a club owner wants to open a new nightclub in an exotic location and his two most valued assistants, Yin and Yang, support different spots: Las Vegas and Hong Kong. Yin argues for Las Vegas in her confirmation, showing its advantages to the company, and in her rebuttal, she shows why Hong Kong is wrong for the company. She does not attack Yang, only his position, perhaps pointing to faulty evidence (an unstable currency and political climate), faulty warrants (managing a property so far away might not be as simple as one thinks; and due to cultural differences, their club concept which works in the States may not be popular in Hong Kong). Notice, Yin does not say anything about Las Vegas in the rebuttal of Yang's argument. To do so would be redundant because she's already stated the benefits of Las Vegas in her contention. The rebuttal only refutes, undermining the reasons behind the thesis of another. Based on Yin's well-developed contention and refutation, the boss decides on Las Vegas.

In the business, economic, academic, and social worlds we live in, decisions often have to be made between two attractive alternatives, and we are forced to make decisions based on what is most right. In such cases, we must learn to take a stand, defend a position, and analyze opposing ideas, showing they are not the best answer due to their flaws. To know how to fairly and effectively refute opposing arguments is a powerful tool that can make the difference between gaining what's best for our community and us or having to live with a poor alternative.

A good rebuttal consists of three parts:

- (1) Stating the opposition point
- (2) Negating the opposition point
- (3) Analyzing and Revealing its flaws

Stating the opposition point opens a rebuttal by clearly and fairly expressing the opposition's position. Note the second paragraph of this section on Rebuttal. The first sentence of the second paragraph is an opposition point.

Let's examine it, analyzing the three questions any opposition point should answer:

who, what, and why.

Example: Occasionally, some writers react negatively to the idea of rebuttal and making others' positions wrong, saying, "I don't want to hurt anyone."

Who? Some writers

What? react negatively to the idea of rebuttal and making others' positions wrong,

Why? saying, "I don't want to hurt anyone."

To be clear and fair gives credibility because a writer shows he has nothing to hide and is willing to meet the opposition's best point head on. In this form, it is also effective to analyze because the writer has indicated who the opposition is, what it believes, and why. The "why" is extremely important because it becomes the focus of the writer's rebuttal or analysis. If the reasons, assumptions, or facts the opposition bases its belief upon is not stated, what is there to analyze? In this case, "I don't want to hurt anyone," is the reason

some students feel uncomfortable about rebuttal. If the writer can show through analysis that no one gets hurt, the opposition's stance is undermined and it no longer has a strong argument.

Do not make the opposition point too long or too involved. Get to the reason behind the opposition's position directly, and accurately state its best supporting argument clearly and concisely. At most, keep it to a sentence or two. Any more and the opposing side's point might start to sound better than the writer's. The challenge here is to state the case without selling it. The writer shows his or her knowledge of the subject matter, including what those who disagree contend, without losing focus on what's important: to set up an analysis to show how opposing points are flawed.

Negating the opposition point is essential, so the audience knows immediately that the writer does not agree with the point expressed. In fact, the negation is the topic sentence of the paragraph and subsequent rebuttal points. In the second paragraph of this section, a strong negation arises after a clarification of the opposition point. Take another look at the paragraph:

Occasionally, some writers react negatively to the idea of rebuttal and making others' positions wrong, saying, "I don't want to hurt anyone." It's important to understand that this is not the case. This comment is based on a couple of false warrants (assumptions): that a person equals a position and that to undermine someone's position is to undermine them, to hurt them. Yes, the opposition will be disappointed if its argument is shown to be lacking, but a person is not an issue. We must separate the issue from the person and show that the position taken on the issue is based on false evidence, false reasoning, or false assumptions. The person in opposition is not attacked as wrong, only his or her position.

In the topic sentence, "It is important to understand that this is not the case," "this" refers to the opposition point; "is not the case" is the position. It is imperative to immediately negate the opposition in a complete, separate sentence because it is what the rest of the paragraph proves. The sentences following it support the claim and are organized and developed as any supporting points and evidence should be in a paragraph.

A couple of errors plague novice writers. Occasionally writers immediately begin a rebuttal after the opposition point, without the negation, without the topic sentence, without the information letting the reader know that the points to follow will show the opposition to be wrong. When this happens, the reader gets lost, coherence withers, unity suffers. To maintain unity and coherence, always clearly negate the opposition point, and do so just after it has been stated. Secondly, do not tack the negation

onto the end of the sentence which is the opposition's argument. Give the other side its moment, a complete sentence; then, as in our example, state in a separate sentence that the argument just expressed is unacceptable.

Do negations always have to be so black and white? No, they can be subtle, but there must be no question about the stand. Notice that the sentence right after an opposition point also offers an excellent place to express common ground. For example, in our example, the writer might have included an accommodation to the opposition and a subtler negation:

Opposition: Occasionally, some writers react negatively to the idea of rebuttal and making others' positions wrong, saying, "I don't want to hurt anyone."

Common Ground: Of course, no one wants to hurt anyone.

Negation: In fact, rebuttals do not hurt individuals, only fallacious beliefs.

Revealing the Opposition Point's Flaws demands an Analysis.

This analysis develops the negation, the writer's topic sentence, proving why the support for the point of the opposition is unacceptable or inadequate. The more writers think of a rebuttal as a mini-analysis, the more effective their rebuttals will be. In the working example, the reason "I don't want to hurt anyone" is analyzed and shown wanting since it is based on false warrants.

The first warrant examined is that a person and his or her position on an issue are one and the same. Of course, they are not. People are not issues. This is a false assumption. In this detailed way, warrants, reasoning, and evidence must be identified and examined, showing flaws just as an analysis of support does in the Analysis section of this Study Guide.

It is imperative to remember that something must be flawed. If it were not, the opposition's point would be the best one and the writer should logically accept it. A point is not wrong just because one disagrees with it or has another idea. In rebuttal, one must prove it flawed. To do so, it must be broken down into parts until one or more of the parts is shown to have unacceptable warrants, reasoning, or evidence.

A serious mistake in developing a rebuttal is to restate the confirmation or some point from it. Redundant and ineffective, this strategy (or lack of one) does not undermine the opposition. Erring writers also, in lieu of discrediting the other point of view, often develop a point in favor of their contention that they failed to mention earlier. This also misses the mark, again failing to show why the opposition is wrong. Realize that for a writer to merely shout back at an opposition point what he or she thinks is right does not undermine it. In fact, it will undermine the writer's credibility and might make the careful reader, impressed by an argument left whole and not discredited, want to know more about opposing ideas. As a result, instead of dismissing the opposition as less than perfect, the writer has drawn attention to its possibilities.

To make sure an analysis is cohesive, points of analysis must be named and repeated often as key words until a particular analysis is complete. For example, when analyzing warrants, as in our example, the word *warrants* is introduced and either it or a synonym, such as *underlying beliefs, values, or assumptions*, is repeated often to let readers know the topic of analysis and the context in which to hold information. When a section of reasoning follows, the words *reason* and/or *logic* or the *thinking process* must also be introduced to inform the reader of a change in analysis. Also any subcategories such as deductive or inductive reasoning, logical fallacies, or patterns of logic must be stated directly and repeated to ground the examination. In this same way, the word *evidence* must also be introduced when beginning its analysis and repeated, using subcategories of evidence, such as *examples, common knowledge, and personal experience*, also. In this category, evaluative terms such as *accuracy, sufficiency, currency, and relevance* must also be used to show the opposition's failings.

To keep an analysis clear and to prevent it from sounding wooden or too structured, use synonyms and connotative language, creatively working to delight and surprise a reader as in any other form of writing.

How Does One Develop a Rebuttal?

Brainstorm. Brainstorm possible flaws in the warrants, then in the reasoning, then in the evidence that support the opposition's thesis. List all of the ideas that come to mind, then examine them. Again, there must be something that isn't right, something flawed. Ask, "What cannot be agreed with?" "Where is the weakness?"

In the club example, suppose Yin determines Yang's contention to locate the new night club in Hong Kong is based on the fact that he claims three out of four night clubs have thrived there and business is booming. To undermine the evidence behind Yang's argument, Yin must show that their club might well be part of the 25% that fail due to questionable assumptions: the difficulties in managing a property so far away and the cultural differences that may make their club concept unpopular in Hong Kong. She must also show that although business is currently booming (common ground), that's not an assurance that it will continue to do so in the future given other evidence: an unstable currency and the unknown political climate (Chinese Communist management of the once stable and capitalist British city).

So, brainstorm the warrants, reasoning, and evidence behind an opposition point, then, after writing the opposition point and the negation, introduce one of the analysis topics, say warrants. Identify them, then examine them, showing which are acceptable and which are not. Repeat key words. Then, introduce another topic of analysis, say reasoning, in the same paragraph or start a new one, identifying, examining, and evaluating. Do the same for evidence. Depending on the analysis, place these in a simple to complex order, starting with the simplest point to prove or understand, moving to the most complex one.

When Is a Refutation Necessary?

Consider the audience. If supportive, is there need? Rarely. Perhaps, if supporters are restless, an attack on unclear thoughts might be appropriate, but such a tactic would be the exception, not the rule.

Usually, we use concession and rebuttal for wavering and hostile audiences: the former to move them to our camp, and the latter to make them at least question the soundness of their beliefs. In general, refutation of the opposing argument should be presented when the audience:

- * Seems generally opposed to the speaker's stand;
- * Is sophisticated, i.e., knowledgeable or well educated;
- * Is likely to be exposed to opposing arguments;
- * Is confused over what the various arguments mean.

3.4.3. Checklist: Refutation

1. In the concession, how are opposition points accommodated? Give examples? Could more points be accommodated? Which ones?
2. How has concession broadened the common ground between your claim and the oppositions? How has it narrowed the area of disagreement?
3. In the rebuttal, how many points are rebutted? Two? Three? What are they?
4. Are the opposition points chosen in the essay, its best ones? Have any particularly difficult opposition points been avoided? If so, which?
5. Is each opposition point clearly and fairly stated? Do we know
 - * who believes it?
 - * what the point is?
 - * why it's believed?
6. In the rebuttal, is the negation of the opposition point a clear topic sentence? Does it follow the opposition point? Is it direct? Or is it subtle? How so?
7. Does the rebuttal focus on an analysis of flawed assumptions, reasoning, and/or evidence?
8. Are key words of analysis repeated throughout each section of analysis?
9. How is the "why" stated in the opposition point clearly shown to be false or, at least, unacceptable?
10. Does the rebuttal accidentally restate one of the points of contention? Does it develop a new point of contention not mentioned earlier? If so, how can this point of contention be eliminated from the rebuttal and placed in the contention?

11. How is the evidence used in rebuttal? Are these terms used and can they be applied to the analysis?

- * Accurate
- * Specific and detailed
- * Representative
- * Sufficient
- * Relevant
- * Current

12. How does the conclusion give a sense of completion? Of closure?

13. How are all of the threads of evidence and logic wrapped up?

14. Is the claim restated in a new and emphatic manner?