

Essay No. 3: Formal Argumentative Essay

- Written in the Third Person
- Three academic sources required
- Thesis statement is your main argument
- Two pages, Times New Roman, 12 pt., double-spaced

A formal argument is not about criticizing a point of view; rather, it represents arguing *one side* of a complex issue. Rooted in facts and statistics, **a formal argument presents evidence to defend a claim or provide support for one side of a multi-sided debate.** It is likely that evidence exists for the opposing sides, which is why formal arguments can be challenging. **The goal is to present concrete points and facts rather than rely on emotion and personal anecdotes alone.**

Choose from one of the following topics and craft an argument defending your position:

1. Bullying
2. Environmentalism/Conservation (This is an umbrella topic. You'll need to pick something more specific, such as gas versus electric cars, recycling, etc.)

Formal arguments are reasonable and logically sound, and **thesis statements should be arguable.** That is, they *make assertions that could be challenged.* Using words such as *must* and *should* help create an arguable thesis. When drafting your arguable thesis, ask yourself these questions: Is this a logical argument? Am I making a claim that I can defend?

What does it mean to craft a defensible argument? It would be easy to defend a statement such as “Bullying is bad” because it is generally accepted by most people that bullying has negative effects. There isn’t much to debate. Likewise, if you argued, “Bullies should be punched in the face,” you are arguing an emotional stance, not a logical one. However, if you said “Bullying should be punishable by law,” then that’s a different argument altogether.

Saying “Everyone should do his or her part to help the Earth” lacks detail and, again, presents a widely accepted truth. Likewise, saying “The Earth will die if we don’t do something” is an exaggerated emotional response and doesn’t sound serious. Saying “People who don’t recycle should pay an environmental tax” offers an argument that not everyone will agree with.

What is an academic source? While it’s tempting to ask Siri her thoughts on bullying or type “electric cars” into Google, you will have to do more work than that to find proof that backs your argument. Official nonprofits, government agencies, national organizations - these are reputable sources. Wikipedia is not.

So how do you do research? Where do you start? You must start with your main argument, which is what your thesis will be. After choosing a topic you personally want to defend, start building your case. For example, let’s say I wanted to make the argument that bullying should be punishable by law. First I

need some statistics. How many kids are bullied each year? How much of a problem is bullying? I need to know this before I move forward. National statistics on bullying can be found at StopBullying.gov (.gov means it's a government-funding/supported website). Whatever information I pull from that site to use in my paper must be cited in the text and included in the Works Cited list.

Please get help from a parent if necessary!

Structure of a Formal Argument

- A. Hook/Introduction of topic
 - a. Statistics or attention-grabbing facts that set up the reader to hear the argument
 - b. Thesis: Therefore, bullying should be punishable by law.
- B. Topic Sentence: First main reason why bullying should be punishable by law.
 - a. Offer factual reasons about how bullying is on the rise (or whatever the facts show)
 - b. Show why this is a problem.
 - c. End paragraph by connecting your first reason why bullying should be punishable by law and how it will help the problems you listed above.
- C. Topic Sentence: Second reason why bullying should be punishable by law.
 - a. Facts/Reasons
 - b. Why it's a problem
 - c. Connect the facts to your argument as a solution
- D. Topic Sentence: Third reason
 - a. Facts
 - b. Why it's a problem
 - c. Connect the facts to your argument as a solution
- E. Conclusion
 - a. Reiterate your main points without repeating yourself
 - b. Leave the reader with the impression that your argument is sound and reasonable