

Argumentative Essay

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From the OWL Purdue Website (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/05/>):

The structure of an argumentative essay should include:

- A Thesis Statement
 - Although this sounds complicated, it really just a statement which explains what the essay will argue. In a persuasive essay, it would be something like:

“The [magazine article/news report/comic/speech/advert] is persuasive and convincing because

(Please note that you DO need to include an **introduction** paragraph (where your thesis statement will go, and a **conclusion** paragraph)
- A body (the essay’s main paragraphs) that contain a **discussion** on the contents — relevant to your argument — and **supported** by direct reference to your primary text (the text you have been asked to analyse).
 - Each paragraph should link to ideas of the previous one. Remember your essay is a short one (max 1200 words). Avoid overly long and complex paragraphs.

Purdue suggests a ‘five paragraph essay’ formula, with the first and last paragraph being your conclusion paragraph.

(See here for another

example: <http://teacherweb.com/FL/PembrokePinesCharterHighSchool/Cabeza/Persuasive-Essay-Outline.pdf>)

As you can see, you do not need to have many paragraphs. When I began writing essays, to keep to my word count I used this structure, and also limited my introduction to 150-200 words, and did the same for my conclusion (150-200 words). That meant I had already used 300 – 400 words, leaving 800 – 900 words. You should be able to imagine now how you can structure a five paragraph essay from this method, as you would then have three ‘body’ paragraphs that would be 250-300 words each.

If you look at it this way, you can understand how re-writing, summarising and/or over quoting/paraphrasing can be problematic. There is just no space!

ALSO

GENERAL TIPS:

- Remember that you must write an argumentative essay, NOT a descriptive one. Therefore, DO NOT describe the plot of the text that you need to analyse.
- You should express your own interpretation of the text. However, this interpretation needs to be supported. Therefore, avoid phrases such as “I believe,” “I think,” or “I feel.” Rather use phrases such as “I argue,” “I contend” and “I suggest.”
- Avoid quotations that are longer than two to three sentences.
- Avoid general statements that are not backed up.
- Avoid colloquial expressions – you should maintain an appropriate academic tone throughout your essay.

COMMON ERRORS:

- Misinterpreting the text.
- Too much paraphrasing – you need to stick to the question asked.
- Not using the appropriate terminology correctly.
- Listing, defining or identifying devices or concepts without explaining the function of the device or concept.