# Prewriting

## **Understand the assignment**

In your essay, you will state an opinion about an academic topic and persuade readers to agree with your opinion.

## **Research**

Remember that after you do enough preliminary research to brainstorm and choose your focus, you should do more detailed research about your topic so that you can make your outline.

When you research for a persuasive essay, look for the opinions of the supporters, but also look for the opinions of the opponents. To best support your opinion, you will need to consider all of your audience, even those who have different opinions. Strong support often acknowledges the opposite point of view.

## **Brainstorm**

You can use a mind map, a free write, general internet search, or a discussion group if you are having a difficult time thinking of things to write about.

### Example topics could include the following:

* Should the government censor what people do online?
* Should scientists spend time and money exploring space?
* Does establishing a minimum wage benefit the economy?
* Should men be given time off for paternity leave?
* What kinds of renewable energy are worth it?

### Brainstorming Guiding Questions

As you brainstorm, you may want to consider the following questions:

1. Opinion: What do I think?

2. Reason: Why do I think it?

3. Evidence: How do I know?

4. Appeal: How can I convince my reader of my opinion?

Questions 1-3 adapted from (Sedita, 2017, para. 7)

### Note: Switching Topics

While it is okay to choose a personally difficult or sensitive topic to write your essay on if given the choice of choosing your own topic, you may find it more difficult as you continue researching, writing, and revising. It is okay in those situations to talk with your teacher and switch your essay topic to a different one. If you feel comfortable writing about the topic, feel free to continue to do so, but if dealing with that topic becomes too much, it is okay to change topics.

## **Choose your focus**

Make sure the topic isn't too broad to cover in your essay. If you choose to state a broad opinion, you will need a lot of evidence to support the broad opinion that you have. Furthermore, when you have a broad topic, your readers will likely have more doubts about your opinion because they can think of more exceptions or other reasons that your opinion might not be true. Therefore, it is easier to defend an opinion with a more narrow focus and to do so with the time and word count restraints of a school assignment.

### Find Your Focus

You can use these questions to find the focus of your essay:

* What opinion do you have about the topic in the prompt?
* What reasons do you have for believing that opinion?
* Of those reasons which are the **strongest**reasons that would convince the reader the best?

As you determine your focus, also determine which of the effective rhetoric appeals would best help you support the narrowed topic you choose. Would ethos, pathos, or logos best convince your reader that your opinion is right? You can use one, two, or all three appeals if you think it will help your argument. For more information on effective rhetoric [Purdue OWL's resources](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/establishing_arguments/rhetorical_strategies.html) on this topic.

## **Outline**

Also, begin an outline for your essay. As you research your topic, start organizing your findings. Some people begin an outline by listing topics and quotes. Others write topic sentences and supporting sentences. A persuasive essay follows typical essay organization, but you may find the body paragraphs don't always follow the regular 5-paragraph essay rules. You may need to plan for more or fewer body paragraphs depending on the support you need for your opinion.

## **Introduction**

Your introduction should start by describing any background that will be important for the reader to know.

Here are some questions that can help you think about background information that the reader needs to be able to understand the problem:

* Who typically supports my opinion? What reasons do they have?
* Who typically opposes my opinion? What reasons do they have?

At the end of your introduction paragraph, you should give your thesis. The thesis should clearly state the opinion that you will defend in your essay.

### Example

Requiring high school students to complete a parenting class can help to better prevent teenage pregnancy while also helping the future generations prepare for those responsibilities.

Review the characteristics of an effective thesis as needed. For a persuasive essay, it is especially important that you don't simply state a fact; your thesis should be an opinion. You can tell if it is an opinion by asking if someone else could have a different opinion on the topic. For example, "Soccer is a sport." is a fact, but "Soccer is the best sport ever." is an opinion. Someone else could think that basketball or some other sport is the best sport, so you can tell it is an opinion.

### Effective Thesis Statement Review

An effective thesis statement...

* addresses the **prompt**if there is one\* (i.e., answers the question. Includes an opinion.)
* is usually at the **end**of the 1st paragraph.
* controls the content of **all**of the body paragraphs.
* is a **complete**sentence.
* does **not announce**the topic (e.g., "I'm going to talk about why we should recycle our resources.").
* should **not**simply be a **fact**(e.g., "There are many animals on the endangered species list.").
* should **not**be **too general**(e.g., "Preservation is good.").
* should **not**be **too specific**(e.g., "Animals with limited populations whose habitats are threatened by primarily human actions such as pandas, polar bears, and elephants should be protected at the local, national, and international level in order to preserve these species so that future generations of people will be able to live in a world full of biodiversity.")
* may **state**or **imply**main points (e.g.,  "Certain animals should be protected by multiple levels of government and organizations." vs. "Certain animals, namely endangered animals, should be protected by local, national, and international governments and organizations. ")

## **Body**

Your body paragraphs should give reasons that support your thesis. As you plan your essay, you should think about what type of appeal you will use to convince your reader your opinion is correct. You will need to use effective rhetoric to convince the reader.

**Rhetoric**is "the art of speaking or writing effectively" using principles of composition made by ancient critics to communicate and persuade (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Rhetoric was created by the ancient Greeks to effectively communicate and persuade (Sloane and Perelman, 2022). Aristotle, a famous Greek philosopher, divided rhetorical appeals into what we now call ethos, pathos, and logos (Sloane and Perelman, 2022).

**Ethos**is the appeal to authority. This is where you use experts or show yourself to be an expert in order to get the reader to trust you and believe your opinion.

**Pathos** is the appeal to emotion. This is where you use the emotions of the reader, specifically their emotional response to what you write, to convince them to agree with your opinion

**Logos** is the appeal to logic. This is where you use logical reasoning and evidence to show readers why they should believe your opinion. This is one of the most common appeals you will use in academic writing.

### Examples

Watch this video from Texas A&M University Writing Center.  Can you identify the different examples of ethos, pathos, and logos in the video.

### Examples

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Appeal** | **Example** |
| Ethos | A commercial for basketball shoes that features a celebrity basketball player saying how great the shoes are.  |
| Pathos | Telling a sad story about dogs in animal shelters to convince people not to give dogs as surprise presents.  |
| Logos | Explaining that everyone should drive more carefully in winter weather because accidents increase by X% with snow on the roads.  |

As you try to persuade your reader, you can use these appeals to convince them. You can use one, two, or all of the appeals in the defense of your opinion.

**Optional Opposition Paragraph**

Another way to support your opinion in the body paragraphs is actually to add a **counterargument** that shows how other people may disagree with you. This is optional in a persuasive essay. You follow this counter-argument with your reply or **rebuttal**about why your opinion is still good despite what the other opinion may be. This can be done in its own paragraph(s) or worked into the supporting paragraphs. A counterargument is usually followed by evidence for the counterargument and then a rebuttal with evidence for the rebuttal. When writing the counterargument, make sure you keep a respectful tone in your writing.

**Example Opposition Paragraph:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Counterargument | Some people say that regulations on guns are unwise because.... |
| 2. Evidence | The evidence they offer in opposition to these regulations includes.... |
| 3. Rebuttal | However, ... |
| 4. Evidence | There is evidence to support this such as... |

If you use a counterclaim, you will want your counterclaim to be strong so your rebuttal can stand out and give really good support to your opinion. If you give a good rebuttal to a strong and fairly presented counterclaim, your opinion will be even more convincing to the reader.

## **Conclusion**

Your conclusion paragraph should start by restating your thesis to remind your reader of your main idea, your opinion. Then you should discuss your problem more generally and apply your opinion to the general context you established in your introduction. The middle part of your conclusion could be a summary or it could build on the information from your body paragraphs to apply the ideas of your essay to a bigger community.

You can end with a closing statement that is a suggestion, prediction, or opinion.  For persuasive essays, you might also try using a **call to action**, asking your readers to join you in your cause.

**Call to Action Examples:**

* To continue progressing, humanity should dedicate more resources to space exploration and scientific investigation.
* Let us grow to be more considerate of our neighbors by learning about their culture by trying the traditional foods of their countries.
* This is a serious issue that the government and its citizens should address.
* It is not just people who live near beaches who should be concerned about pollution; everyone should be concerned about the negative effects of polluting waterways, shores, and oceans and do their part to reduce pollution in everyday ways.

## Exercises

### Exercise 1: Make an Outline

Make an outline for the example essay "Does Technology Make Us More Alone?" at the start of this unit.

### Exercise 2: Build an Outline

Make an outline for an essay with the following prompt.

**Prompt:** What is one way students should study? Support your answer with reasons and details.

Your outline could include any of the following parts in the order that you think would be most effective for convincing people of your opinion.

* Thesis Statement
* Topic Sentence(s)
* Supporting Detail(s)
* Restated Thesis Statement
* Call to Action/Conclusion etc.

Optional

* Counterclaim(s)
* Rebuttal(s)

### Exercise 3: Revise Thesis Statements

Revise the thesis statements to be more effective for an argumentative essay.

1. The following paragraphs will talk about the three main negative effects of social media plays: first, how social media is an emerge of a new clinical disorder, second, why there are symptoms such as depression and self-esteem and finally, how social media affects student's mental health.
2. Health and environmental consequences are the issues to discuss.
3. Some students believe that college education does not have benefits. Some people disagree. They think people who earn a college degree make more money, they have better and more employment opportunities, and they are healthier and live longer.
4. The vaccines are been our friends for many years for their many speculate benefits.
5. The chance to make a better choice can increase significantly.
6. For example, streamers become an important influence within young people, use communication platforms as a job to earn money and become fictionally a celebrity for the medium where they present themselves.
7. I will explain why governments should be involved in censoring websites that are used for social media purposes.
8. Human activity contributes to many global problems.

### Exercise 4: Practice Thesis Statements

Read the titles of persuasive essays below.  Consider the topic of the essay, and then write an effective thesis sentence for each one. Your thesis statement should clearly state your opinion.

1. An MBA Does Not Ensure Corporate Success.

      \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why Everyone Should Use Metaverse

      \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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3.  Illegal immigrants are entitled to remain in the US.

      \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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### Exercise 5: Identify the Appeal

Identify which appeal is being used in each sentence. Write **E**for ethos, **P** for pathos, and **L** for logos. If more than one appeal is being used, you can write more than one letter.

1. \_\_\_\_ You should consider another route if you leave later. I heard that that street is far more dangerous and ominous at night than during the daytime.

2. \_\_\_\_ Private demand for the product has tapered off for the past three years, and this year's sales figures are at an all-time low. It's time to research other options.

3. \_\_\_\_ As a doctor, I am qualified to tell you that this course of treatment will likely generate the best results.

4. \_\_\_\_ Based on the dozens of archaeological expeditions I've made all over the world, I am confident that those potsherds are Mesopotamian in origin.

5. \_\_\_\_ It's a matter of common sense that people deserve to be treated equally. The Constitution calls it 'self-evident.' Why, then, should I have been denied a seat because of my disability?

6. \_\_\_\_ There's no price that can be placed on peace of mind. Our advanced security systems will protect the well-being of your family so that you can sleep soundly at night.

### Exercise 6: Appeal to the Audience

Write a topic sentence to answer the prompt below as though you were writing a persuasive paragraph. Then write 1-2 sentences of support for your opinion using ethos, pathos, and logos.

**Prompt:**

Humans are living longer, to the point where we may become immortal in the future. In your opinion, would living forever be good or bad?

Ethos:

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Pathos:

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Logos:

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### Exercise 7: Rebuttal

Write a rebuttal for the counterclaim below.

**Thesis Opinion:** All young adults should be required by law to volunteer in their community once every week.

**Counterclaim:** While there may be many benefits to volunteer activities, forced volunteer work can no longer be defined as "volunteering," which by definition means offering up your own time. Because it should be an activity that is freely chosen, an obligation to volunteer blurs the lines for what it means to volunteer.

**Rebuttal:**

### Exercise 8: Call to Action

Read the titles of essays below and write a call to action for each one.

1. It Is About Time to Consider Plastic Surgery As Socially Acceptable

      \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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2. Healthcare for Everyone

      \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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3. Why Positive Thinking Is a Must Have Skill For Every Person

      \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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4. Ethical Use of Zoos

      \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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### Exercise 9: Evaluate an Outline

Read the outline for an essay about vaccines. Evaluate it. What would make the outine more effective? Work to revise the outline.

* TH: Many people think that vaccines can prevent many deaths and diseases, however, is necessary to evaluate, fatal effects, government intervention, and harmful ingredients.
	+ TS: Vaccines can cause serious and sometimes fatal side effects on children.
	+ TS: People think that vaccines can protect the children's lives which is not true.
	+ TS: Government should not intervene in a personal medical choice to have vaccines.
	+ TS: Some major medical organizations state that vaccines are safe, therefore, they are wrong.
	+ TS: Vaccines can contain harmful ingredients for children.
	+ TS: The ingredients in vaccines for children are safe which is not true.
* RTH: The vaccines are being questioned for their defects more than their benefits. Therefore, is fundamental to look over their fatal effects, government intervention on personal medical choice and harmful ingredients.

TH = thesis statement, TS = topic sentence, RTH = restated thesis statement

### Exercise 10: Complete the Outline

Complete the outline below by filling in the six blanks. You may need to write phrases or sentences to show your ideas. You may also need to fill in the missing cohesive devices to show the relationship between the ideas.

* TH: Young adults are too dependent on their cellphones in their everyday lives.
	+ TS: **1)**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, young adults take their cellphone where ever they go.
	+ TS: **2)**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, most jobs require employees to be easily accessible by instant communication.
	+ TS: **3)**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
	+ CC: Some may say that addicting phone games lead to increased dependency on cellphones.
		- R: **4)**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* RTH: **5)**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, young adults **6)**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

TH = thesis statement, TS = topic sentence, CC = counterclaim, R = rebuttal, RTH = restated thesis statement

### Exercise 11: Make an Outline

Make an outline for a persuasive essay that answers the prompt below.

Prompt: What is the best mode of transportation? Support your opinion with examples and details.

Read this online at <https://edtechbooks.org/up_writing_fall/argumentative_prewriting>