

Argumentative Writing

Learning Targets

- Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading or listening.
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing your own clearly.

Writing an Argumentative Essay

Argumentation is an important skill used by writers to influence the thoughts or actions of others. To be effective, an argument must clearly present a position, identify the issues related to that position, present support for the position, anticipate and respond to other positions that may be different, and use sound reasoning to convince an audience.

To complete this workshop on writing effective arguments, you will work with your teacher and your classmates to construct two model argumentative essays. You will then use these models to write your own argumentative essay.

ACTIVITY 1

Discovering the Elements of an Argumentative Essay

Before Reading

1. You may have experienced an argument as an angry quarrel or disagreement. A formal argument, however, is a well-reasoned presentation of facts and details to support a claim with the goal of persuading others to accept a stated point of view. Think about a time when you “argued” or made a claim to be allowed to do something. What was your claim, and what reasons did you use to support it?

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Brainstorming, Think-Pair-Share, Discussion Groups, Sharing and Responding, Marking the Text, Close Reading, Graphic Organizer, Outlining, Drafting, Adding, Deleting, Rearranging, Substituting, Revising Prior Work, Self-Editing/Peer-Editing

ACTIVITY 1

Discovering the Elements of an Argumentative Essay

PLAN

Materials: Pens and highlighters for marking the text

Pacing: 1–2 class periods

TEACH

1 Preview the learning targets and the introduction to argumentative writing for this writing workshop.

2 This sequence of activities is designed to provide direct writing instruction for the composition of an argumentative essay. Students will create three separate essays through this process: one that is co-constructed as a class with direct guidance from the teacher, one that is peer-constructed, and one that is written independently.

3 **Before Reading** is intended to **access prior knowledge** about the definition and connotation of the word argument. Discuss the significant elements of *argument*—a presentation of reasoning and evidence to persuasively support a viewpoint.

This sample essay was chosen to model an argumentative essay. You may opt to select a different essay that meets this same criterion.

4 During Reading instructions require students to interact with the text as they read. Lead a shared reading of “To Chew or Not to Chew,” or an alternate text of your choosing. You may choose to have students first read the essay silently, following the directions about **marking the text**.

Writing Workshop 2 (continued)

During Reading

- The following essay makes a bold claim about chewing gum in school. Read the essay, and identify the **main idea(s)** being argued as well as the **opposing viewpoints** the writer acknowledges. Remember that when writing an argument, the writer must present both sides of an issue by anticipating and responding to opposing views.
- As you read this text, identify the writer’s viewpoint and highlight the claim being made. Underline the evidence that supports that claim. Circle anything that suggests ideas that are opposed to the writer’s viewpoint.

My Notes

To Chew or Not to Chew

Is it right to ban gum in school? Many people would agree that gum should be banned. Nasty gum stuck in unlikely places is a nuisance for both teachers and students. Teachers and administrators alike say it is distracting, and it creates a janitorial nightmare. But wait—if schools are interested in improving student achievement, they will rethink their policy against chewing gum. Research shows that chewing gum actually improves learning by increasing brain activity and focus.

Gum chewing helps students stay alert and ready to learn. Students in my classes sometimes have trouble staying awake, much less keeping alert. If they chew gum, the movement of the jaw can help keep students awake. Even better, research done by Kathleen Melanson, from the University of Rhode Island, has shown that chewing gum raises your metabolism by 20 percent (www.medicalnewstoday.com). This increase in metabolism shows a direct link between physical alertness and chewing gum.

Some people think that gum is an unhealthy habit, but when examined closely this idea is not supported by research. As a matter of fact, gum is a healthy option to avoid overeating. Others say that chewing sweet gum causes tooth decay. However, many gums contain xylitol, which makes them sugar free. Research by the Trident Company, a chewing gum manufacturer, shows that chewing sugar-free gum can reduce cavities by 70 percent. According to Trident, chewing gum is like chewing fluoride in its cavity-prevention power.

Most importantly, gum promotes learning by helping students work better and longer. The Wrigley Company, which has produced chewing gum for decades, claims that soldiers have chewed gum since World War I to improve concentration during stressful situations. In addition, research conducted by the American Society for Nutrition found that students who chewed gum during class over a 14-week period had a significant increase in test scores and received a better final grade compared to those who had not chewed gum. By now it should be clear that chewing gum has real benefits. One last piece of evidence indicates chewing gum increases brain power and the ability to concentrate. Chewing gum makes the brain think it is going to get food. As a result of this chewing motion, research has shown that insulin, which enhances learning and memory, is released to the brain and helps it to concentrate and focus (Andrew Scholey, Swinburne University, www.medicalnewstoday.com).

Students do not have to chew gum to do well in school, but the evidence clearly shows that chewing gum may help students do better in school. Schools should do all they can to support student learning. Please urge our school administration to change its thinking on banning gum in school.

After Reading

4. When you have finished reading, respond to the questions below in the space provided. Be prepared to discuss your answers with your classmates.
- a. **Purpose:** What is the writer’s purpose for writing this argument? (Refer to the sentence in the first paragraph that you highlighted for the claim or thesis of the essay.)
The purpose is to convince the audience to reconsider the assumption that chewing gum in school distracts from student achievement and effective learning.
- b. **Audience:** Who do you think the writer had in mind as an audience for this argument? To whom do the reasons and evidence seem addressed? How do you know?
The target audience seems to be school policy makers, as suggested by “Teachers and administrators alike say it is distracting . . .”; “. . . if schools are interested in improving student achievement, they will rethink their policy”; “. . . urge our school administration to change its thinking.”
- c. **Support:** What facts, examples, and personal experiences does the writer present as evidence to support the argument? What evidence is most relevant and effective, and why?
Facts, examples, personal experiences presented as evidence:
“movement of the jaw can help keep students awake”
“soldiers have chewed gum since World War I to improve concentration”
“insulin, which enhances learning and memory, is released to the brain and helps it to concentrate and focus”

Most effective support includes (1) “a direct link between physical alertness and chewing gum,” (2) “Soldiers have chewed gum . . . to improve concentration.” (3) “insulin, which enhances learning and memory, is released to the brain and helps it to concentrate and focus”

Most relevant support includes (1) “chewing gum raises your metabolism by 20 percent”; (2) “As a result of this chewing motion, research has shown that insulin, which enhances learning and memory, is released to the brain and helps it to concentrate and focus.” (3) “. . . students who chewed gum during class over a 14-week period had a significant increase in test scores and received a better final grade compared to those who had not chewed gum.”
- d. **Opposing Viewpoints:** What opposing viewpoints does the writer offer? The writer introduces opposing points of view in the introduction and in the second paragraph (“Teachers and administrators alike say it is distracting, and it creates a janitorial nightmare.” and “. . . gum is an unhealthy habit . . .”).
The introductory opposing points of view are balanced against the more important function of school, which is to encourage

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5 Use the **After Reading** question about purpose to engage in a discussion about students’ understanding of the claim. Once they are clear about the claim, arrange for them to work in pairs or small groups to respond to questions b, c, and d. Emphasize the importance of citing textual evidence from the essay.

6 After students have found textual evidence for questions b, c, and d, conduct a whole-class discussion exploring the effectiveness of the evidence used in support of the claim.

7 Review the essay’s organization with the class and discuss how the thesis helps identify the focus and organization. Point out to students that textual evidence is fact-based and uses logic to support a claim.

8 Ask students to reread the essay, looking specifically for transitional phrases and sentences. It will be important to note the instances where transitions move beyond single words.

9 Review the meanings of the words *relevant* and *credible* and ask students to give examples of how they would use those words in describing evidence and research sources.

10 Have students scan the sample essay for evidence cited in support of chewing gum. Ask them to choose the sources that are most relevant in supporting the argument that chewing gum helps students do better in school.

11 The sources cited in the essay include both manufacturers of chewing gum and medical websites. Have students discuss the differences between the sources and which ones are most credible.

ASSESS

Students have worked to show their understanding of the elements of an argument, as well as how these concepts apply to the sample essay. Use the **Check Your Understanding** to evaluate their understanding of the connection between evidence and support for a claim.

ADAPT

Consider leading students in a close reading of the sample essay to focus on the use of logos (logic) versus pathos (emotion) in an argument. Logical appeals should take precedence in an argument. You may also differentiate by selecting a different text that has fewer facts and details but still provides a convincing argument.

Writing Workshop 2 (continued)

student achievement (“... schools are interested in improving student achievement ...”).

The idea that chewing gum is unhealthy is countered with evidence supporting the health benefits (“chewing sugar-free gum can reduce cavities by 70 percent”).

- e. **Organization:** How does the thesis statement set up the organization of the essay?
Introduction: Begins with a rhetorical question and then introduces the rationale for banning gum chewing.
Body paragraph 1: Effective topic sentence introduces the writer’s first point.
Body paragraph 2: Presents a counterclaim and addresses it.
Body paragraph 3: Presents the writer’s most effective argument.
Conclusion: Ends with a restatement of the claim and a call to action.
- f. **Transitions:** What words does the writer use to connect thoughts and guide the reader through the essay?
Transitions include: “Even better, . . .” “As a matter of fact, . . .” “However, . . .” “By now it should be clear that chewing gum has real benefits.” “One last piece of evidence ...”
- g. **Sources:** What sources does the writer cite? How do those sources support the writer’s claim with relevant evidence? Do the sources appear credible? How does the source of the evidence affect its relevance?

Check Your Understanding

The most effective form of evidence in an argument combines logic, or clear reasoning, and relevant information. For example, to say that “chewing sugar-free gum can reduce cavities by 70 percent” is a fact that logically supports the idea that chewing gum is healthy. However, reducing cavities does not necessarily lead to better performance in school, so this fact may not be as relevant to the claim as other evidence. Which evidence cited do you think is the most logical while also being relevant to the writer’s claim?

ACTIVITY 2

Writing an Argumentative Class Essay

WRITING PROMPT: Consider a decision that young people are asked to make between two potential options (such as whether to eat fast food or choose a healthier option). As a class, write an essay that discusses the opposing sides of that issue and convinces other seventh graders that one option is better than the other. Be sure to:

- Establish a clear position – the claim
- Use formal language appropriate for the purpose and audience
- Include **relevant** evidence that is logically organized and supports the writer’s viewpoint
- Include a variety of **credible** evidence based on fact rather than opinion
- Anticipate and address potential audience concerns and/or questions
- Anticipate and answer counterarguments
- Use an appropriate blend of simple, compound, complex, and compound/ complex sentences

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Evidence is said to be **relevant** if it is closely related to the issue or topic.

A **credible** source is one that is convincing or believable because it is reliable, accurate, and trustworthy.

Refer to the Scoring Guide for this writing task to help you understand where to focus your attention and efforts.

Prewriting

1. Reread and mark the writing prompt above to clarify the task.
2. As a class, brainstorm ideas for the class-generated essay, and create a list of possible topics for which two equally strong and reasonable claims can be made.
3. With your class, choose a topic for the essay and write it here.
4. To present a convincing argument, a writer must develop an opinion about an issue and make a claim based on that opinion. The claim states the writer's thesis, or the point the writer is making about the issue. One way to state a claim is to include the opposing argument in the same sentence. For example:

While it is true that the school day should be the same length as it is now to provide time for required classes (*side B*), starting and ending school one hour later would improve alertness (*side A*) because it would allow students to get more sleep and improve their ability to concentrate (*explanation*).

Use the sentence stem below to write the claim for the sample argumentative essay.

While it is true that chewing gum _____
_____ (side B), _____
_____ (side A) _____
_____ (explanation).

5. Choose two essay topics from the list generated in item 2. With your class, brainstorm the opposing sides of each issue. Record these in the left column of the graphic organizer on the next page. Then write a thesis statement for each issue; include both a claim and an opposing argument in the thesis. An example is provided, using the model in item 4.

ACTIVITY 2 Writing an Argumentative Class Essay

PLAN

Materials: Overhead or whiteboard to display group work; materials from Activity 1 to use as models; paper, markers, and tape for displaying potential thesis statements

Pacing: 1–2 class periods

TEACHER TO TEACHER

This activity is intended to be a whole-class guided writing activity. However, you may want to use small groups for specific parts of the activity. If so, writing groups should be organized so that specific roles are assigned to each member of the groups of four (e.g., 2 recorders, a manager, and a presenter).

TEACH

1 Analyze the prompt for Activity 2 either in pairs or with the whole class. Be sure to review and clarify the elements that must be incorporated into the class-generated essay. You may want to refer to the Scoring Guide to inform areas to emphasize.

2 Prewriting: Lead the class in a brainstorming session about potential topics for the class-generated argumentative essay. Record suggestions on the whiteboard or overhead as students make notes of ideas on their student pages.

3 You will need to guide students to select a topic that can be easily navigated by your class.

4 Once a topic has been selected, review the terms *opposing viewpoint* and *thesis* as well as the sentence stem that can be used as a model for a thesis. Here is another example of a thesis using the sentence stem: **While it is true that fast food is inexpensive, tasty, and convenient, eating a healthy meal is a better decision because it makes the body stronger and leads to a healthier, longer life.**

TEACHER TO TEACHER

This activity will work best if you can show the co-constructed work as it is created in class. Using an overhead projector or SmartBoard (or even sentence strips) will allow you to guide the writing and clearly demonstrate how to incorporate the elements of an argument.

5 Students can use the thesis in Step 4 to practice evaluating opposing viewpoints and writing thesis statements to acknowledge different points of view. If students need additional space to record opposing viewpoints and to practice writing thesis statements, have them create a similar [graphic organizer](#) in their Reader/Writer Notebooks.

6 At this point you may want to place students in writing groups, have them share ideas and viewpoints with one another, and draft/revise a thesis to be shared with the class.

7 Give each group a marker, a piece of paper, and a strip of tape. Ask the presenter to write the group's chosen thesis statement on the paper and post it in the room.

8 Lead the class in a discussion of the merits of the various thesis statements that are posted. Allow the class to select one thesis statement to be used in the class-constructed essay. Post this claim in the room and ask students to copy it onto their pages.

9 Students may work in groups or individually to generate a list of reasons why the chosen claim is valid. Then, ask them to share their work with the entire class while you record their ideas on the whiteboard or overhead.

10 Either as a class or in [writing groups](#), have students complete the section of the [graphic organizer](#) that discusses the intended audience of the class-constructed essay.

Writing Workshop 2 (continued)

Opposing Viewpoints	Thesis Statement
(Side A) School should start one hour later so students can get more sleep and be more alert.	While it is true that the school day should be the same length as it is now to provide time for required classes, starting and ending school one hour later would improve alertness because it would allow students to get more sleep and be able to concentrate better.
(Side B) School should start at the same time as now so that there is enough time to fit in all required classes.	
Opposing Viewpoints	Class Topic and Thesis

6. Review the topic selected for your class-constructed essay. As a class, identify and record the position that will be the basis of your thesis. Then, on your own, write down as many reasons as you can to support that position. In other words, what reasons can you offer for choosing this option? Prepare to share your ideas with the class.

7. To write an effective argument, you need a clear understanding of the target audience. By definition, the audience will have an opinion that is either undecided or opposed to the thesis of the essay. A thorough understanding of your audience will help you understand their possible concerns and objections (counterarguments) to your claim. Working in groups, complete the graphic organizer on the next page. Prepare to share your ideas with the class.

20 SpringBoard® Writing Workshop with Grammar Activities Grade 7

Who is your audience? What do you know about your audience? How will this additional information help you revise your thesis?	
What is one potential concern or question you can anticipate from your audience?	How will you respond to that concern or question?
What is another potential concern or question you can anticipate from your audience?	How will you respond to that concern or question?
What is another potential concern or question you can anticipate from your audience?	How will you respond to that concern or question?

8. Now that you have listed some objections to your position, it is time to start building your bank of evidence. For each reason under item 6 (your support), and each response in the chart above, identify evidence you could use to back up your position. Create a graphic organizer to record the following information:

Your Reasons	Evidence to Support Reasoning
Opposing Position	Evidence to Refute

9. Effective argumentative writing uses evidence that appeals to both logic and emotion (**logos** and **pathos**). Review the evidence list that you generated above. Which points of reasoning can best be supported with evidence that appeals to logic? Which points can best be supported with evidence that relies on emotion? Label each piece of evidence as logos, pathos, or both.
10. You have identified your claims and responses to counterarguments, as well as the evidence to support your opinions. Next, as a class, you must decide the order in which to present these points. Working with your teacher, generate a class-constructed outline of the organizational plan for your argumentative writing.

Drafting the Essay

11. Working with your teacher and classmates, draft the introduction to your argumentative essay. Be sure to include the following elements:
- Lead (the attention grabber)
 - Context (the situation that establishes the topic and its importance)
 - Thesis (the position of the class on the topic)

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Logos refers to the Greek word for logic. In writing, it is used to describe a writer's use of logic and reason to support an argument.

Pathos refers to the Greek word for emotion. In writing, pathos is used to describe a writer's use of emotion to support an argument.

11 Have groups report their ideas and record quality examples of counterarguments and audience concerns on the overhead or whiteboard. This is an excellent time to discuss the importance of considering the intended audience of the essay in order to predict and respond to their concerns and questions.

12 Although *logos* (logic) and *pathos* (emotion) are both important parts of argumentative writing, reinforce that the emphasis should be placed on *logos* more than on *pathos* (convincing with logic rather than emotion). If students do not know these terms well, you may need to provide additional examples such as the following:

Logos: "Chewing gum increases the metabolism."

Pathos: "No one can deny me the right to chew gum when I want to."
"My parents let me chew gum at home."

"Chewing gum makes me happy."

13 Once students understand these terms, ask them to identify potential evidence to support claims and the responses to counterarguments. Lead the students in an activity that allows them to identify whether this evidence involves an appeal to pathos, logos, or both.

TEACHER TO TEACHER

It is important to emphasize that while emotional appeals can be powerful in many ways, logical appeals are preferred in more formal, academic writing. Some evidence can provide opportunities to appeal to both logic and emotion, but evidence that allows only for an emotional appeal is not as compelling as evidence that prioritizes logic.

14 When students have completed their analysis of logos and pathos, have groups report their ideas to the class while you record quality examples of evidence and corresponding appeals on the overhead or whiteboard.

Note: If evidence is needed for the class essay, either give students time to conduct research or provide relevant research for them.

15 Lead the class in creating an outline, specifically focusing on an order that can be used to present the claims and responses to counterarguments. Ask students to articulate why they are choosing a specific order. Should the strongest point be made first or saved for the end? Should counterarguments be placed after the claims are established, or is it better to first entertain the other side of the discussion?

16 Drafting the Essay: When the group outline is completed, begin drafting. Point out the elements of an introduction (lead, context, and thesis) in the sample text.

17 Lead the group in a **guided writing** of the introduction. **Think aloud** from the perspective of a writer as you draft this first paragraph. Ask students to record copies of the introduction on their own paper, making revisions as necessary. Review the final product with the class, explaining the lead, context, and thesis and why these elements should be present.

18 Instruct students to craft a paragraph that will support the class-constructed claim. Assign a unique claim or counterargument from the outline to each group. When you run out of claims and counterarguments, assign claims/counterarguments already being written to a second group.

19 When all groups are finished, ask each group's presenter to read the paragraph aloud and/or write the paragraph on the overhead or whiteboard. Ask for peer feedback, then allow students to make revisions to their paragraphs.

20 Lead students in constructing the conclusion of the essay as a class. Be sure that your conclusion includes a call to action and highlights the urgency or importance of the issue at hand, as well as offering closure without introducing new ideas or unnecessary repetition.

21 Use the **Check Your Understanding** questions to guide students' ideas for revising the essay for content and organization.

Writing Workshop 2 (continued)

12. You have learned that a well-organized body paragraph includes the following elements:

- **Topic sentence** that includes a reason for supporting your thesis
- **Evidence**, which includes facts, stories, etc., to support your reasoning
- **Transitions**, which are words or phrases that make the relationship between ideas obvious for the reader
- **Commentary**, which includes an explanation of the significance of the evidence or the connection to the topic sentence.

With your class, use these elements to draft the body paragraphs for your class essay.

13. Working with your teacher, draft the conclusion to your argument. In this last paragraph, provide a call to action (encouragement to the audience to take action based on your claim), and highlight the urgency or importance of the issue you are presenting. The conclusion should offer closure to the topic without introducing ideas not addressed in the essay.

Check Your Understanding

Once the class argumentative essay has been drafted, refer to the Scoring Guide to help determine how well the essay meets the expectations. After looking at the Scoring Guide, consider the following in the evaluation:

- Underline the topic and the claim or thesis in the introduction.
- Identify the reasons in each paragraph that prove the thesis is correct.
- What audience concerns and opposing viewpoints are addressed?
- Is there a strong connection (relevance) between the evidence and the claim in each body paragraph?
- Are the body paragraphs placed in an order that is logical and clearly supports the argument?
- Does the essay contain examples of logos and /or pathos? Pathos should be used sparingly to avoid too many emotional appeals.
- Does the conclusion include a call to action and offer closure?
- What transitions have you used?

Revising for Language and Writer's Craft

Writers add interest to their arguments by varying their sentence structures. An argumentative essay with only simple sentences would be somewhat dull to read, while an essay with a variety of sentences would add interest. Working in groups, you will be evaluating an assigned body paragraph and revising the sentences to add complexity.

Sentence Complexity: The complexity of a sentence can suggest the importance of the content within that sentence. How a sentence is constructed can communicate the relationship between the ideas it expresses. There are four types of sentence complexity: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex.

14. Each of the sentences below was taken from the sample essay. Read each sentence and underline the independent subject and circle the simple predicate in each set. Then, in the space provided to the right of each sentence, explain how the complexity of the sentence helps clarify the content.

Simple sentence: A sentence that contains a single, independent subject/predicate set. A simple sentence expresses one idea.	
Gum-chewing helps students stay alert and ready to learn.	
Compound Sentence: A sentence that links two or more independent subject/predicate sets with a coordinating conjunction. This sentence expresses two or more ideas of equal importance.	
Students do not have to chew gum to do well in school, but the evidence clearly shows that chewing gum may help students do better in school.	
Complex Sentence: A sentence that links a single, independent subject/predicate set with a subordinate clause. This sentence expresses one idea that is more important than the others.	
If they chew gum, the movement of the jaw can help keep students awake.	
Compound-Complex Sentence: A sentence that links two or more independent subject/predicate sets with a coordinating conjunction AND links one or both sets with a subordinate clause.	
Some people think that gum is an unhealthy habit, but when examined closely this idea is not supported by research	

15. Once you understand the way sentences communicate simple and complex ideas, work in groups to revise an assigned body paragraph of the class essay. Consider following complex sentences with more simple sentences in order to create a contrast and to emphasize a point with the short sentence. However, if you have many short sentences, consider combining two or more into a more complex sentence.

Editing

16. After presenting your revisions to the class and hearing the revisions of others, it's time to polish the final draft of the argumentative essay by editing for mistakes. Consider all of the elements listed in the Language category of the Scoring Guide.

22 Pay special attention to adding transitions from one topic to the next. Model this process while adding suggestions from the class when appropriate. Add these transitions to the class-constructed essay.

23 Revising: After checking and revising for content and organization, the next set of tasks focuses on revising for language. This language activity explicitly addresses using different kinds of sentence structure to enhance the clarity and complexity of their thinking.

24 Guide students through a discussion of how sentences communicate the importance and relationship of ideas.

25 Ask students to explain why it is appropriate that the first sentence is expressed in a simple sentence (see TE annotation on reduced SE page).

26 As a class, re-examine selected sentences to determine if they are the most appropriate for meaning and effect. You may want to revise a complex sentence into a more simplified form or combine two simple sentences to increase their effectiveness.

27 Editing: When producing the final draft of the essay, be sure to check for formal style and model editing skills to eliminate mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. Each student should create an individual copy of the complete essay to serve as an example for future exercises.

ASSESS

Observe students as they work to revise and edit the class-constructed essay to determine which ones may need additional support with writing the elements of an argumentative essay or with revising for varied sentence structure.

ADAPT

Support students by providing sentence stems as needed to help them present evidence and address counterclaims. Model the use of appropriate language (logical versus emotional or inflammatory).

ACTIVITY 3

Writing an Argumentative Essay with Peers

PLAN

Materials: Materials from Activities 1 and 2 to use as models

Pacing: 2 class periods

TEACH

1 Consider putting students in groups of no more than three for the peer-writing experience. Trios could then combine to form groups for **sharing and responding** to the drafts.

2 Monitor groups as they analyze the prompt to ensure they understand the purpose for writing. Remind students to review the organizational elements to incorporate into their group essay. Refer to the Scoring Guide to review areas of emphasis.

3 Prewriting/Drafting: Remind students of the process that was just followed in writing the class-constructed essay. Students should now follow that same prewriting and drafting process to generate a new essay in their small groups or trios.

4 Assign each group a topic and perspective if you prefer, or give them the option of choosing for themselves.

5 Monitor group work and assist as needed to keep students on track.

6 Peer Review: When groups have completed their drafts, guide them through the peer review process. Ask teams to trade papers and use the Revision Checklist to review the work of their peers. Encourage students to provide written feedback on the essay they are reviewing.

Writing Workshop 2 (continued)

ACTIVITY 3

Writing an Argumentative Essay with Peers

WRITING PROMPT: Within discussion groups, your task is to choose one of the following:

- Adopt the opposing viewpoint of your class-constructed essay and persuade the same audience of your new point of view.
- Choose an entirely new argumentative topic that is important to your group (e.g., using cell phones in the classroom, convincing the adults in your life to take you to a place that you really want to visit, or anything else that you care about). The point is to write an effective argument that would persuade an audience to your point of view about the topic.

Refer to the Scoring Guide for this writing task. It will help you understand where to focus your attention and efforts. Also refer to the criteria for writing an argumentative essay on page 4.

Prewriting/Drafting

1. With your writing group, review the writing steps from the class-constructed argumentative essay and apply them to your group-constructed essay.
 - a. Brainstorm and choose a topic.
 - b. Generate reasons that support your thesis.
 - c. Anticipate audience concerns and counterarguments.
 - d. Build a bank of evidence. Identify opportunities for pathos and logos.
 - e. Generate an outline for the essay.
 - f. Draft an introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.

Revising/Editing

2. After rereading your group's draft, use the following strategies for revision:

Adding: Are there changes you could make to strengthen the argument? Does anything need to be reorganized or explained more clearly?

Rearranging: What revisions should be made to the structure of paragraphs or sentences?

Deleting: Are there redundancies that could be eliminated? Is there information that does not directly support the central argument?

Editing: Are there mistakes in conventions that should be corrected before the draft can be considered polished?

3. As you revise, also consider the sentence complexity in your draft. When appropriate, vary the sentence complexity to reflect the complexity of the ideas being expressed in the sentences themselves.

Peer Review

4. You will evaluate and provide feedback for another group's essay, based on criteria established in the writing prompt and the Scoring Guide. Another group will review the work your group has done. Use the revision checklist that follows to guide your peer review.

Argumentative Essay Revision Checklist	
Issue/Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the topic clearly stated in the introduction? Does it have importance or urgency?
Thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the thesis combine the topic and an opinion? Does the writer give reasons for taking this position?
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What facts, statistics, examples, and personal experiences does the writer use to support the thesis? Does the writer use sound reasoning and relevant details? Is the evidence accurate, current, and relevant to the topic?
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is the target audience? Are the thesis, topic, and supporting ideas appropriate for the target audience?
Opposing Viewpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the writer address opposing viewpoints clearly and fairly? Does the writer acknowledge and refute opposing viewpoints with logic and relevant evidence?
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the writer conclude the essay in a way that convinces the audience to support the position and take action?

ACTIVITY 4

Independent Writing

WRITING PROMPT: Your task is to focus on another decision that young people are asked to make between two possible options. You may choose a topic from your brainstormed list (other than the topic used in Activity 2 or Activity 3) or another topic of interest to you. Write an essay that discusses the two sides of the issue and persuades other 7th graders that one option is better than the other. Refer to the Scoring Guide for this writing task—it will help you understand where to focus your attention and efforts. Be sure to:

- Establish a clear thesis or position.
- Include sound evidence that is logically organized and supports your viewpoint.
- Include a variety of evidence that is based on fact rather than opinion.
- Consider and respond to the values and priorities of the audience.
- Anticipate and address potential audience concerns and/or questions.
- Anticipate and answer counterarguments.
- Employ an appropriate blend of simple, compound, complex, and compound/complex sentences.

Use the examples, process, goal, and revision steps from your previous activities to accomplish your task.

7 When groups have finished the peer review and provided written feedback, combine two groups for sharing and responding. Each group should present verbal feedback at this time, as well as explain the written feedback they provided. Each group should take careful notes of the peer feedback they receive to aid their revisions in the next step.

8 After the combined groups have reviewed both essays, have students revise and edit their work to produce a final, polished draft.

ASSESS

Collect students' drafts and review student work before having them proceed to Activity 4. Use the Scoring Guide to provide written and/or verbal feedback on the essays.

ADAPT

Because counterarguments and opposing viewpoints are so important to argumentation, consider using a debate or fishbowl discussion after Activity 3 if students need additional support. Students can see multiple sides to an issue, generate a wider variety of evidence, and use ideas from the fishbowl or debate for their independent essay.

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PLAN

Materials: Materials from Activities 1 and 2 to use as models

Pacing: 1 class period or homework

TEACH

1 Students should plan and draft this essay independently. This prompt could be used as homework, as a timed writing, or simply as formative assessment.

2 Assign the independent writing prompt, being responsive to students' needs during the writing process. Remind them of the steps they've practiced in class.

3 You may want to monitor how students analyze the prompt (allowing 5–7 minutes) to ensure that they understand the requirements.

ASSESS

Use the Scoring Guide to assess each student’s independent essay, looking at whether the essay includes the elements of an argument and incorporates the transitions and language that create coherence.

ADAPT

For the independent essays, the selection of topic and position can affect the level of challenge the task poses for a student. To differentiate, you might assign specific topics or positions, or expand or limit options based on the level of challenge you believe the students need.

SCORING GUIDE

Use the Scoring Guide throughout this workshop to remind students of the elements expected to be included in their essays.

Writing Workshop 2 (continued)

SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Incomplete
Ideas	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> asserts an insightful thesis and position statements supports reasons with convincing evidence based on fact (not opinion) and effective commentary convincingly anticipates and respond to possible counterarguments. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> presents a clear thesis and position statements supports reasons with relevant evidence based on fact (not opinion) and commentary recognizes possible counterarguments. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> presents a limited thesis and/or unfocused position statements contains reasons with insufficient evidence and confuses fact with opinion; uses vague commentary does not recognize possible counterarguments. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks a clear claim to be proven contains irrelevant or insufficient reasoning does not present or address counterarguments.
Structure	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> leads with a convincing and engaging introduction uses meaningful transitions logically organizes sound evidence effectively sequences ideas to support the argument provides a thoughtful conclusion that follows from the position to extend thinking. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> presents a clear and focused introduction uses transitions to create coherence orders evidence in a way that generally supports the argument sequences ideas to generally support the argument provides a conclusion that connects the larger ideas presented. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains an underdeveloped and/or unfocused introduction makes limited use of transitions does not present evidence in a logical order presents ideas in an unorganized way contains an underdeveloped or unfocused conclusion. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains a minimal or incomplete introduction uses few or no meaningful transitions uses a confusing organization for evidence and ideas provides a minimal conclusion or none at all.
Use of Language	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a variety of sentence structures to enhance the effect uses diction that is deliberately chosen for the topic, audience, and purpose incorporates rhetorical appeals of logos and pathos effectively demonstrates technical command of conventions of standard English. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a variety of sentence structures uses diction that is appropriate to the topic, audience, and purpose incorporates some rhetorical appeals for logos and pathos demonstrates general command of standard English conventions; minor errors do not interfere with meaning. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows little or no variety in sentence structure uses inappropriate diction for the topic, audience, and purpose uses few or no rhetorical appeals for ethos or pathos demonstrates limited command of standard English conventions; errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, or spelling interfere with meaning. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows little or no variety in sentence structure uses diction that is inappropriate for the topic, audience, and purpose uses no rhetorical appeals demonstrates limited command of standard English conventions; multiple serious errors interfere with meaning.