



The Lantern English Co.  
The Advanced Writer

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## **The Persuasive Essay Fast Track – Syllabus**

**Course Description:** In this class, students learn about the persuasive essay in our standard eight-week format. Persuasive thesis development will be at the forefront of this class, as students learn to persuade, use evidence well, and respond to the counter argument while utilizing research & citation skills. Students will use their growing knowledge and skills to write five persuasive essays (one essay per week, Lessons 4-8).

### **Course Outline:**

**Week One:** The Persuasive Thesis

**Week Two:** Using Sources and Citations

**Week Three:** The Persuasive Essay

**Week Four:** More About the Counter Claim

**Week Five:** Improving Analysis & Interpretation of Evidence

**Week Six:** Combining Methods

**Week Seven:** Responsible, Respectful Argument

**Week Eight:** In Response to the Arguments of Others

**Grading Information:** All assignments will be graded using *The Advanced Writer* Grading Rubric and averaged to receive a final course grade.



## The Persuasive Essay Fast Track

### Lesson Three: The Persuasive Essay

#### SAMPLE LESSON

While the purpose of the expository essay is to inform, explain, define, or describe; the purpose of the persuasive essay is to present a claim to the reader with enough logical evidence to convince or persuade the reader to come to the same conclusion as the writer. **The persuasive essay focuses on laying out facts and evidence to prove a point while telling the reader what he or she should do with those facts.**

The persuasive essay contains four main parts:

- The author's claim
  - The counterclaim(s)
  - Reasons
  - Evidence
1. **The Claim** – This is your main point, your thesis. A claim is not simply your opinion, but what you believe to be true based on your knowledge and your research. Remember, the purpose of a persuasive essay is to convince or persuade your audience to agree with your claim.
  2. **The Counterclaim** – This is the opposite of a claim. As you should know, every argument has two sides, so if you have taken a perspective on a complex and debatable subject, there will certainly be at least one alternative perspective. The counterclaim is an important part of your paper, because your ability to respectfully and logically point out the weaknesses of the counterclaim strengthen your claim. We will focus more on the counterclaim next week.
  3. **Reasons** – These are the support for your claim. Your reasons answer the question *why*. If your claim is that you should be allowed to paint your room lime green, your reasons fill in the because portion. You will also need to include reasons for the counterclaim, to explain why others support the opposite side of the argument.
  4. **Evidence with Analysis/Interpretation** – This is information that supports your reasons. Although reasons are necessary support for any claim, the reasons themselves must be supported.

Evidence is needed to show that your reasons are valid, realistic, and provable by other people and in other situations. You will also need to include evidence for the counterclaim, then demonstrate the weakness(es) in the reason(s) and evidence.

**The claim must always be found in your thesis** and should be referenced and supported throughout the essay. However, the placement of the counterclaim(s), the reason(s), and the evidence is not confined to any particular structure. The structure of a persuasive essay can vary as much as that of an expository essay. The structure can vary based on your topic or the type of paper you are writing. Still, everything that you have learned thus far about writing essays applies very much to writing persuasive pieces, with the addition of the counter claim.

When writing the body paragraphs of a persuasive essay, though, it is important to understand the structure. Many students can construct a topic sentence, supplying a reason; but then they rely too much on evidence without analysis of the evidence. Instead, a strong body paragraph contains the following:

- **Topic Sentence** – states the main idea of the paragraph, whether this is a reason or a counterclaim. In addition, this sentence should help link back to support the thesis.
- **Additional Supporting Sentences** – you may need to add a few sentences which expand upon the reason/main idea presented in the topic sentence.
- **Evidence** – this is information from a primary or secondary source that supports the main idea of the paragraph. Evidence never comes from your own opinion. You need sources to back your opinions.
- **Analysis** – finally, you must explain/demonstrate how the evidence supports your claim and your argument.

Too many students write the topic sentence and perhaps an additional supporting sentence, add a (sometimes too large) quotation as evidence, then move on to the next paragraph. This leaves the reader to figure out the purpose behind the evidence and how it supports the claim. Sometimes the evidence is self-explanatory, but usually, it is not. **All paragraphs must contain an analysis of the evidence.**

**NOTE:** we will discuss analysis of evidence and structure of body paragraphs more in Lesson 5, but keep these ideas in mind!

Understanding what goes into a persuasive essay is the first step to writing one well. This week, we will focus our assignments on practically locating the parts of a persuasive essay and writing a rough draft.

**Assignment 3A:** Read the example persuasive essay attached with this week's lesson. Locate and write down the following elements: (1) the thesis/claim; (2) the three supporting reason(s) for the claim; (3) at least one piece of evidence for each reason; (4) at least one counterclaim.

**Assignment 3B:** Using the thesis you chose and the list of sources you developed for Lesson 2, write a rough draft for your first persuasive essay. Your essay should be **three (3) to five (5) pages** in length and include sections for reasons and supporting evidence with analysis along with sections for counterclaims. Again, there is not a single correct structure for a persuasive essay, so write your rough draft based on what you feel is most beneficial to the topic and supportive for the thesis.

Make sure that the introduction contains your thesis statement. In the introduction, you may also present a counterclaim. The body of your essay should be comprised of reasons and evidence with analysis and interpretation to support your claim, in addition to at least one appropriately added counterclaim. Remember to provide reason and evidence for the counterclaim, but remember also to clearly turn again to your own argument. Finally, bring the essay to a clear and strong ending that will leave a lasting impression on your reader, to embrace the call to action you have presented.

(If you are having trouble with the counterclaim(s), do not get too bogged down this week. We will discuss the counterclaim more in Lesson 4, so you will have time to touch up these sections before handing in your final draft.)

**Ensure that the essay is formatted properly.** Write your name and the date in the upper left-hand corner. Add a title centered above the essay. Properly format the paragraphs with an indented first line or a full space between each paragraph, and left-align the text. Justified text is optional but not required. Content should be double spaced and typed in one of the standard fonts, size 12, double spaced.

**Essay requirements:**

- three to five pages
- standard font, size 12
- double spacing
- at least **five primary** or **secondary sources** for citation
- works cited list, MLA style
- proper use of either in-text or parenthetical citations, MLA style