Counter-argument/Rebuttal paragraph

How to disagree with opponents in an argumentative essay

In writing an argumentative essay to convince your reader that you have thoroughly and fairly considered the issues at hand, you should consider including a counter-argument, also called a rebuttal, in your paper. You may even decide to include more than one. Since your opponents could dispute your thesis, you should be ready with a response. This means, as you research your topic, you need to be on the lookout for the opposite viewpoints that others may have. If you have a strong argument, you should be able to disagree completely or partially with your opponents’ views, using solid reasoning. According to the Purdue Online Writing Lab resource guide…

It is important to consider other positions because in most cases, your primary audience will be fence-sitters. Fence-sitters are people who have not decided which side of the argument to support. People who are on your side of the argument will not need a lot of information to align with your position. People who are completely against your argument…will probably never align with your position no matter how much information you provide. Therefore, the audience you should consider most important are those people who haven’t decided which side of the argument they will support—the fence-sitters. (“Rebuttal Section”)

One way to organize your rebuttal paragraph is by using a 3-part organizational plan.

**Transition:** Move from the body paragraphs that explain your argument into the rebuttal paragraph using words that show you are transitioning from your position to the opponent’s. There are many nouns and verbs to use that indicate someone is “for” or “against” a position (**proponents assert** vs. **challengers question**). See last section in this tip sheet, “Choosing the Right Words to Argue Well.”

**The Opponent’s Argument:** You will want to state accurately and fairly the main points of your opponent’s position. You can even use information from your research to add facts about their viewpoints to validate their position.

**Your Position:** After making the opponent’s claims clear, it is your turn to make the nature of your disagreement evident. You may want to **disagree totally** with your opponent, or you may want to **partially disagree**, or you may want to **weigh the value** of your opponent’s claims against your own. Be sure to give solid reasoning. If you challenge your opponent’s evidence, you must give more compelling evidence. If you challenge the assumptions, then you must explain why they are not valid.

# Sample Rebuttal Paragraph

While proponents of body cameras for police officers point out the value of the equipment, challengers question the cost of outfitting an entire force with these devices.

[Transition: The writer is moving from his own position as a “proponent” of body cameras to the “challenger’s” viewpoint that body cameras are too costly. Notice verbs “point out” and “question.”]

Admittedly, costs of cameras can be a factor in the budget of a police department. The costs of one camera can range from $400 to $1,000 (Kotowski). In addition, the cost of the camera is not the only expense. Storage for the camera footage can be even more expensive. According to a recent Times article online, “departments in larger cities can generate more than 10,000 hours of video a week, requiring some agencies to turn to cloud-based high-volume storage facilities (qtd. in Kotowski). That can get very expensive for a large police force. “The New Orleans Police Department plans to pay $1.2 million for body cameras, with much of the cost going to storage” (Kotowski).

[Opponent’s Argument: Notice that the writer is “admitting” that the opponent has a valid point about costs and cites facts from research that supports the claim.]

It is true that the initial start-up costs and storage of evidence can be expensive; however, smaller police forces can often store their video footage in-house rather than using the cloud, and the benefits of better community relationships and fewer controversial cases reaching the courtroom due to compelling video evidence far outweigh the claim that cameras are too expensive. Those officers out in the field are less likely to engage in the use of excessive force and more likely to act appropriately when the situation is being filmed. Additionally, those arrested for crimes are less likely to charge police brutality if they know the entire altercation with a police officer has been filmed by the body camera. In Kern County, CA, citizen complaints have decreased with the use of the new cameras. “[Kern County sheriff’s Sgt. Ian Chandler] said there have been several instances where people came to the substation to file a complaint, but upon watching footage taken from a body-camera admitted they were mistaken in how they remembered what occurred” (Kotowski). By outfitting only patrol officers in the field with cameras, turning on the cameras only during a call for service, and storing the video footage for a limited amount of time, police departments can minimize costs and reap the benefits of body cameras.

[Your position: The writer is agreeing with his opponent that costs can be expensive but qualifies that this is in the beginning of the process of acquiring cameras. Then, the writer uses the transitional word “however” to show that he is now going to refute his opponent’s claim. He gives an example to show how some police departments can cut costs and gives a compelling reason to show that money can be saved in the long run through avoiding costly court cases involving police misconduct. In the last sentence, the writer restates his position that body cameras are beneficial and suggests ways to cut down on costs in order to minimize the claim of the opponent.]

Works cited:

Kotowski, Jason. “Body-cameras a worthwhile but expensive tool, law enforcement says.” The Bakersfield Californian, 5 March 2016, [www.bakersfield.com/news/breaking/body-cameras-a-worthwhile-but-expensive-tool-law-enforcement-says/article\_ bbeec64f-4ab1-5765-be61-4549c846344e.html](http://www.bakersfield.com/news/breaking/body-cameras-a-worthwhile-but-expensive-tool-law-enforcement-says/article_%20bbeec64f-4ab1-5765-be61-4549c846344e.html)

“Rebuttal Sections.” Purdue Online Writing Lab. 11 March 2013, [www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/724/3](http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/724/3)

Choosing the right words to argue well

# Nouns “in favor of” or “against” an argument

Choosing a powerful word only accomplishes its purpose to deliver a punch if it isn’t repeated over and over again. Try a variety of synonyms in order to avoid sounding monotonous.

#### Pro Words Con Words

Proponents Opponents

Advocates Challengers

Backers Contenders

Defenders Rivals

Supporters Critics

# Verbs to argue for or against

#### Pro Verbs Con Verbs

Argue Challenge

Assert Deny

Claim Dispute

Contend Doubt

Insist Question

Reason Refute

Say Reject

Show

State

Suggest

**Proponents** of the Earl Grey laws **argue** in favor of banning Starbucks coffee in the United States.

**Opponents** of the Earl Grey laws **deny** that banning Starbucks would prevent Americans from drinking coffee.

Dr. Roberts **asserts** that Starbucks should be closed down because “the coffee Americans drink at breakfast disturbs their sleep and makes them less productive.”

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