Argument Writing
Unit

Name: ___________________________
Argumentative Essay Terminology

What is argumentative writing?
Argumentative writing is writing in which a writer makes a claim about a topic and then supports it with logic and evidence. Learning how to write an effective argument is key to learning critical thinking skills and is an important part of "school" writing and real life.

How does it differ from persuasive writing?
Persuasive writing also involves making a claim. However, the supporting details are based on feelings and emotions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>argument</td>
<td>Making a claim and supporting it using logic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persuasion</td>
<td>Making a claim and supporting it using feelings and emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>claim</td>
<td>The point that you are trying to get your readers to accept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evidence</td>
<td>Facts that support your claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bridge/warrant</td>
<td>Statement that explains how the evidence supports and connects to the claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counter-argument/concession</td>
<td>Challenging the argument by addressing the position of someone who may not agree with the argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turn-back/refutation</td>
<td>Demonstrating why the counter-argument is wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>audience</td>
<td>Who will be affected by the topic? Who will read the essay?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organizing the Argument Essay

For an argument essay to be effective, you must organize your ideas, provide solid supporting evidence, and present the information clearly. Let’s take a look at how that’s done.

An argument essay is usually at least 5 paragraphs. It requires an introductory paragraph, at least 3 body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.

**Introduction**
The first paragraph is where you will hook the reader and state your claim. The claim is the thesis statement.

**Body Paragraph #1**
This paragraph includes the first reason that your claim is valid. Support it with evidence, such as facts, examples, and data.

**Body Paragraph #2**
This paragraph includes the second reason that your claim is valid. Support it with evidence, such as facts, examples, and data.

**Body Paragraph #3**
The paragraph should introduce an opposing claim, which is the counter-argument or concession. It also contains the turn-back, which takes the reader back to your claim and position.

**Conclusion**
The last paragraph restates the thesis statement and summarizes the main idea of the argument. It also contains a strong concluding statement.
Writing the Introductory Paragraph

The introduction to your essay has three parts and purposes.

1) Lead: The lead "hooks" readers and encourages them to keep reading. Try one of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quote (by a famous person)</td>
<td>President Obama once said, “During the summer, students are losing a lot of what they learn. A longer school year makes sense.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusual Detail</td>
<td>According to historians, American farm children once attended school from December to March and mid-May to August.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistic or Fact</td>
<td>Experts say that during the summer, students lose approximately 22 percent of what they learned during the school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Statement</td>
<td>Students must attend school; a shorter school year is comparable to child neglect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Are most Americans satisfied that compared to their peers in Europe and Asia, American students score lower on achievement tests?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdote</td>
<td>There was a time when summer vacation meant endless lazy days, sitting on the porch, and watching the bees pollinate the flowers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Introduce the issue: Briefly explain the issue and the controversy surrounding the argument. Give background information.

Ex. Much to the public's dismay, summer vacations are in jeopardy in America, as the Secretary of Education pushes forward with a movement to extend the school year.

3) State your claim: This is the thesis statement. It is a promise to the reader that the essay will address the argument and prove the claim. Use one of these key words to form the thesis:

*Reasons  *Benefits  *Advantages or Disadvantages

Ex. There are definite advantages associated with switching to a year round school schedule in the United States.
Writing the Body Paragraphs

Body paragraphs #1&2: Support the thesis statement/claim.

1) Start with a **topic sentence** that includes a **reason** people should be convinced by the argument.

   Ex. In order for students to improve academically, and avoid "summer slide," American students should attend school year round.

2) Then include specific **evidence** to support the **thesis statement** (the claim). Use **facts, examples and statistics** to back up the claim.

   Ex. For example, Balsz, a district in Arizona, saw reading test scores go up from 51 percent to 65 percent after extending the school year by 20 days.

3) Follow each piece of evidence with a **bridge** to explain how the evidence supports the claim.

   Ex. This significant increase proves that students benefit by having more time in school.

4) Close with a **concluding sentence**.

   Ex. It is possible to improve student test scores by requiring more days in school.

**Text-reference and transition words and phrases to use in the body paragraphs:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First,</th>
<th>Also,</th>
<th>Finally,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For example,</td>
<td>Above all,</td>
<td>Particularly,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthermore,</td>
<td>Additionally,</td>
<td>Specifically,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore,</td>
<td>Consequently,</td>
<td>Due to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>According to</td>
<td>For instance,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing the Counter Argument Body Paragraph

Body paragraph #3: Writing the opposing argument.

1) The opposing argument, also called the **counter argument or concession**, proves that you fully understand the topic, and that you are fair minded.

**Transition words and phrases to use in the counter argument:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It might seem that</th>
<th>It’s true that</th>
<th>Admittedly,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of course,</td>
<td>One might object</td>
<td>While</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certainly</td>
<td>At first glance,</td>
<td>Some people claim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) The **turn back** is a return to the original argument. Be sure to refute the opposing claim.

**Transition words and phrases to use in the turn back:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yet,</th>
<th>Despite</th>
<th>However,</th>
<th>Nevertheless,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Still</td>
<td>Except</td>
<td>Conversely,</td>
<td>Even so,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ex. Some critics of year round school say that the real results of studies that seem to show score increases in year round schools are inconclusive, and it is difficult to pinpoint the real reason for the increases. However, there is no doubt that students in Europe, where there is year round school, outperform American students on achievement tests.
Writing the Concluding Paragraph

The **concluding** paragraph is important, as it must close the issue by showing that the topic has been covered thoroughly. It should also provide an idea as to how people should be warned about the topic, or how they can benefit from the position argued.

1) Begin by restating the thesis statement or claim.

   Ex. Year round school is the answer to the economic and educational problems in the United States.

2) Then, present one or two sentences that summarize the reasons and evidence.

   Ex. A year round schedule will prevent students from losing the hard earned knowledge gained during the school year.

3) Finally, provide a benefit that will result from complying with or heeding the argument. Or provide a call to action to move the audience into wanting to make a change.

   Ex. The nation’s future depends upon having intelligent citizens. Schools must be year round in order to graduate such citizens.

### General Tips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Do</strong></th>
<th><strong>Do Not</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use strong, convincing language.</td>
<td>Weaken your argument by using “I believe” or “I think.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use reliable websites for research.</td>
<td>Make up “facts” or statistics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use 2-3 facts, examples, and/or statistics per body paragraph.</td>
<td>Rely on personal experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be respectful of those who disagree with your position.</td>
<td>Insult those who disagree.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Argument Essay Example

Directions: Read this argument essay that was written by a student. Label the following parts in the right-hand margin:

- Hook
- Thesis Statement/Claim
- 1 Example of Evidence
- 1 Bridge
- Counter-Argument
- Turn Back

Should Metal Bats be Banned in Youth Baseball?

On March 11, 2010, a high school pitcher in California was facing a player using a metal bat, when he was hit in the temple by a line drive travelling 100 mph. His skull was crushed, and he spent weeks in a coma. Fortunately, after surgery and months of rehabilitation, he survived. The accident brought to the forefront an issue that has been a safety concern ever since the 1970s when metal bats began being used instead of wooden bats. Metal bats are dangerous and should be banned by youth sport leagues for several reasons.

Baseballs hit with metal bats travel at a higher rate of speed than those hit with wooden bats. Researcher J.J. Crisco studied aluminum bats and found that they produced a “trampoline” effect, which means the baseball springs off of the bat at a high rate of speed. This happens so fast that pitchers and infielders don’t have time to react, which places them in danger. The New York Times reported that baseballs hit with metal bats travel almost 20 mph faster than baseballs hit with wooden bats. This is a huge difference to a player trying to make a play on a line drive in time. Consequently, the high rate of speed makes using a metal bat dangerous.

In addition, there have been many instances of players getting hurt by baseballs hit with metal bats. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, between 1991 and 2001, 18 players were killed by batted balls, and only two involved wooden bats. This proves that wood bats are safer than metal. Also, The New York Times reports that several lawsuits have been won by parents who sued metal bat makers after their child had been hurt. After being presented with evidence about the dangers of aluminum bats, judges and juries agreed they are responsible for injuries. Therefore, the high rate of injuries proves that metal bats are unsafe.

Some people claim that wooden bats are too expensive to supply to youth leagues because they are not as long lasting. This is true. Even so, a higher cost should not matter when safety is concerned.

Metal bats endanger the lives of young baseball players. First, they make the baseball travel at a high rate of speed, making it difficult to catch. Secondly, they have resulted in many injuries. Banning metal bats is necessary in order to save the lives of young players.
Argument Essay Organization Challenge

Directions: Each of the following boxes contains a small portion of an argumentative essay. Cut out each box, and then assemble the essay on the essay template in an organized, sensible manner.

Introduction

Year-round schooling requires students to attend school for 12 months, with short vacations that occur at varying intervals.

Twelve month programs are not a good idea; the educational benefits do not outweigh the high costs involved, and summer vacation is critical to a child’s learning and development.

There was a time when summer vacation was stress-free; it meant endless lazy days, sitting on the porch and watching the bees pollinate the flowers. It did not mean attending school and having homework.
Argument Essay Organization Challenge

Directions: Each of the following boxes contains a small portion of an argumentative essay. Cut out each box, and then assemble the essay on the essay template in an organized, sensible manner.

Body Paragraph 1

According to *The New York Daily News*, when Jefferson County, Colorado, moved to a year-round schedule, test scores actually declined.

Therefore, year-round schooling was just not worth the expense.

Additionally, one school district in Prince William County, Virginia, saw no educational improvements after nine years with a year-round schedule. According to the Supervisor of Programs in Prince William County, “There were not enough advantages to outweigh the disadvantages.”

First, year-round schooling is expensive, due to air conditioning, maintenance, and staffing; yet it does not lead to significant academic improvement.

The district was then forced to spend an additional 93 million dollars to go back to a traditional calendar.
Argument Essay Organization Challenge

Directions: Each of the following boxes contains a small portion of an argumentative essay. Cut out each box, and then assemble the essay on the essay template in an organized, sensible manner.

Body Paragraph 2

According to Dr. Leo Wisebonder, psychologist for the Los Angeles Unified School Program, “Children learn many things outside of school. It’s a different type of learning, which simply is not tested.”

The ongoing demands of school would interfere with these valuable leisure and work experiences.

Children in year-round programs would be missing out on opportunities to discover talents and interests that are not taught in schools.

Furthermore, younger children would not be able to attend camp programs, and teenagers would miss out on summer employment opportunities.

Summer activities enhance a child’s overall growth and development in a way that school cannot.

Another reason there should not be year-round school is because summer activities are critical to a child’s learning and development.
Nevertheless, summer vacation allows students an opportunity to learn about important topics that are not related to school. Critics of a traditional schedule are not taking into account all of the opportunities young people will be missing out on.

Some people claim that year-round schooling reduces summer learning loss.
Argument Essay Organization Challenge

Directions: Each of the following boxes contains a small portion of an argumentative essay. Cut out each box, and then assemble the essay on the essay template in an organized, sensible manner.

Conclusion

It has been proven that a year-round schedule does not lead to academic improvement, and it does not allow students to develop interests outside of school.

Year-round schooling would not be beneficial in any way.

Children should be our nation’s first priority, and they deserve long periods of stress-free time, as well as the opportunity to explore the world outside of school.
Argument Essay Organization Challenge

Introduction Template

Topic Sentence

Background Information

Claim
Argument Essay Organization Challenge

Body Paragraph 3 Template:
The Counter Argument

Counter Argument

Turn Back
Possible Topics for an Argumentative Essay

- Mandatory curfews for teens
- Common Core curriculum
- School uniforms
- Year-round schools
- Technology dependence
- Cellphones in schools
- Animal testing
- Cheating in schools
- Cyberbullying
- Salaries of professional athletes and actors
- Testing in schools
- Longer school day
- Homework policies
- Government health care
- Mandatory preschool
- Book banning
Choosing a Topic

Choosing a topic can be difficult. When you begin considering a topic, remember that it is the topic that is important, not the claim. Your position on the claim can come later, after you do some research. So begin thinking about possible issues by answering the following questions.

I. Current Controversial Topics: People sometimes have strong feelings about topics currently in the news.
   a) Have you ever argued with someone about a controversial topic? If so, which one?
   b) Have you recently read or heard about something in the news that you either strongly agreed or disagreed with? If so, which one?
   c) Which school related issue do you feel strongly about?

Now choose a topic from the answers you wrote above. Write the topic and the controversy below.
Topic: _______________________________________________________
Controversy: ____________________________________________

II. Your Interests: Another approach is to think of a subject you already know a lot about, or think of a subject in which you are already interested.
   a) Is there anything controversial about something you’ve learned in school, or a sport or hobby you’re interested in?
   b) List some of your favorite hobbies and activities.
      _______________________________________________________
      _______________________________________________________
      _______________________________________________________
      _______________________________________________________
      _______________________________________________________

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c) Is there anything unfair involving one of the your hobbies or activities?

__________________________

d) Are there any laws that seem unfair or controversial about one of your interests?

__________________________

Now choose a topic from the answers you wrote above. Write your interest and the controversy below.

Interest: ________________________________

Controversy: ___________________________

III. Something You Want to Learn About: Another way to find a topic is to research something you’ve wanted to know more about, but never had the time to pursue.

a) What are you curious to learn about?

__________________________

b) Are there any controversies involving that topic of interest?

__________________________

Now choose a topic you are curious about from the answers you wrote above. Write your interest and the controversy below.

Interest: ________________________________

Controversy: ___________________________

Important to Remember!
Once you have chosen your topic, be open-minded and flexible about your claim. You may have a position in mind already, but that may change after you begin your research. That is fine. You must gather facts in order to have a valid opinion.
Topic Proposal Form

Directions: Fill out the following information in order to get approval from the teacher. If your position changes during the course of your research, fill out the bottom of the sheet and resubmit for approval.

Name: ____________________________________________

Topic: ____________________________________________

Argument: _________________________________________

Claim: _____________________________________________

Why are you interested in this topic?

____________________________________________________________________________

Your Signature: ____________________________________________

Teacher’s Signature: ________________________________________

Comments: ________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Position Switch
Explain your new position and why you changed your mind.

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Reapproval: _____________________________________________
Gathering Evidence Through Research

Source: ___________________________________________________________________
Title: ___________________________________________________________________
Evidence/Information: ___________________________________________________________________

Source: ___________________________________________________________________
Title: ___________________________________________________________________
Evidence/Information: ___________________________________________________________________

Source: ___________________________________________________________________
Title: ___________________________________________________________________
Evidence/Information: ___________________________________________________________________

Source: ___________________________________________________________________
Title: ___________________________________________________________________
Evidence/Information: ___________________________________________________________________
Organization and Planning

Introduction

Hook: 

Background Information: 

Claim: 

Body Paragraph 1

Topic Sentence- Reason: 

Evidence: 

Bridge: 

Evidence: 

Bridge: 

Conclusion: 
**Body Paragraph 2**

**Topic Sentence - Reason:**

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

**Evidence:**

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

**Bridge:**

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

**Evidence:**

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

**Bridge:**

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

**Conclusion:**

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
Body Paragraph #3

Counter Argument/Concession:

Turn Back:

Conclusion

Restate Claim/ Thesis Statement:

Summarize the evidence:

Final Statement:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Absolutely</th>
<th>Mostly</th>
<th>Partially</th>
<th>Not Really</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Have you provided an</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>interesting hook?</td>
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<td>➢ Have you given</td>
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<tr>
<td>background information?</td>
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<td>➢ Have you stated a claim</td>
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<td>in the thesis statement?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Body Paragraphs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Have you used statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>or facts to provide</td>
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<tr>
<td>evidence?</td>
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<td>➢ Have you explained by</td>
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<tr>
<td>using a bridge?</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Have you included a</td>
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<tr>
<td>concession and a turn</td>
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<td>back?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Have you restated the</td>
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<tr>
<td>claim, summarized, and</td>
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<tr>
<td>ended strongly?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization &amp; Style</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Have you organized the</td>
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<tr>
<td>response and used</td>
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<tr>
<td>transitions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Have you written for your</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>audience?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Have you reviewed for</td>
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<tr>
<td>grammar, spelling,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>punctuation, and</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capitalization errors?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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# Argumentative Essay Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>4 Clear, interesting introduction of topic.</td>
<td>3 Clear introduction of topic.</td>
<td>2 Introduction of topic is unclear.</td>
<td>1 Introduction does not address task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Demonstrates understanding of topic and claim.</td>
<td>3 Demonstrates grade level understanding of topic and claim.</td>
<td>2 Demonstrates limited understanding of topic and claim.</td>
<td>1 Demonstrates little understanding of topic and claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
<td>4 Facts are well-chosen and support argument.</td>
<td>3 Facts are relevant to argument.</td>
<td>2 Partial use of evidence.</td>
<td>1 No evidence is provided, or evidence is irrelevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Evidence is fully explained by use of a bridge.</td>
<td>3 Evidence is explained by use of a bridge.</td>
<td>2 Use of evidence that may not be accurate</td>
<td>1 Concession and turn back are missing or irrelevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Concession and turn back are convincing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization, Clarity, and Style</strong></td>
<td>4 Skillful organization and use of transitions enhance meaning.</td>
<td>3 Clear organization and use of transitions.</td>
<td>2 Partially organized, with little use of transitions.</td>
<td>1 Little attempt at organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Includes style, sophisticated vocabulary, and voice.</td>
<td>3 Includes style and grade-level vocabulary.</td>
<td>2 Some attempt at style, with basic vocabulary.</td>
<td>1 No use of transitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Interesting concluding statement that clearly stems from the topic.</td>
<td>3 Concluding statement relates to topic.</td>
<td>2 Some attempt is made to conclude.</td>
<td>1 Lacks style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics:</strong> grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.</td>
<td>4 There is clear evidence that the response has been reviewed, revised and edited.</td>
<td>3 There is some evidence that the response has been reviewed, revised, and edited.</td>
<td>2 There is little evidence that the response has been reviewed, revised, and edited.</td>
<td>1 There is no evidence that the response has been reviewed, revised, and edited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 There are few errors.</td>
<td>3 There are some errors, but they do not interfere with understanding.</td>
<td>2 Frequent errors interfere with understanding.</td>
<td>1 Frequent errors hinder understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Argument Writing Rubric
Scoring Guide

16    100
15    94
14    88
13    81
12    75
11    69
10    63
 9    56
 8    50
 7    44
 6    38
 5    31
 4    25