

Writing Center

Workshop Lesson Plan

Using Counterarguments

<p>Lesson Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To introduce students to the concept of a counterargument2. To demonstrate for students the benefit of incorporating counterarguments into their papers3. To give students the opportunity to apply counterarguments to their own and other arguments
<p>Handouts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student Notes
<p>Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Projector for group activity or give as a separate handout
<p>Introductory Activity: 5 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce yourself and the lesson.• Student introductions – name and class• Write on the board: “Should students who get better grades receive more financial aid?” Ask students to write down <i>one</i> plausible or believable reason a person might use to support each side of the argument
<p>Lecture Notes: 20-25 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the concept of argument using the Student Notes handout – write each <u>bolded and underlined</u> term up on the board so students can copy them down as you go
<p>Practice Activities: 25-30 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project the adapted version of “Want to Smoke? Go to Hamburg” or give it to them as a handout. Read through the passage with the students and review the questions at the top of the passage with them• Have the students return to the introductory activity. Ask them to write their own short counterargument paragraph based on the plausible reasons they listed earlier. After 20 minutes, ask for volunteers to read their counterarguments
<p>Closing Notes: 5 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review main ideas of lesson• Take any last questions• Encourage students to come back to the Writing Center

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Workshop Lesson: Using Counterargument

Lecture Notes

(Note: Answers to student notes are **bolded AND underlined**.)

- **Argument**

- An argument is the **main claim** made by an author or text. The goal of an argumentative paper is to **convince** the audience that the **main claim** is true by providing **evidence**.

- **Example of a bad argument:** Pollution is bad for the environment.

- ◆ **Why is this a bad example?**

- ✓ It is too **broad**.

- ✓ It is a **fact**. Therefore, it cannot be **debated**.

- **Example of a good argument:** Thirty percent of the U.S. federal budget should be spent on combating pollution.

- ◆ **Why is this a good example?**

- ✓ It makes a specific **claim** (not too **broad or vague**).

- ✓ It can be **debated**.

- ✓ **Evidence** can be provided to support it or refute it.

- **Counterargument**

- A counterargument is an **objection** to an argument. Using counterarguments in your own writing requires you to understand, and sometimes temporarily adopt, the **perspective** of someone who **disagrees** with your argument. Addressing and refuting counterarguments can improve the **persuasiveness** of your particular argument.

- **The importance of counterarguments**

- Counterarguments are important because they show that you are taking other **viewpoints** into consideration. In addition, identifying problems in your own thought can be a good persuasive strategy, which shows respect for your reader and demonstrates to them that you are an open-minded thinker.

- **Using a counterargument**

- Where should counterarguments be introduced?
 - As a **separate** paragraph before your **conclusion**.
 - Toward the end of a **body** paragraph, after you have made your **main point** but before your **concluding** or **transition** sentence.

- There are several ways to introduce counterarguments into your paper. The most basic strategy is:
 - **Introduce** and **explain** the counterargument. [*TEACHER'S NOTE: Who said it? Are you using a direct quote or paraphrase? Are you using a boogeyman phrase (ex. Some might say, Others might claim, One could object)?*]
 - **Understand** and **acknowledge** the **validity** of the counterargument. [*TEACHER'S NOTE: Never bring up a counterargument unless you are able to refute it. It will weaken your argument.*]
 - **Refute** the counterargument by **explaining** how your main argument is still true despite what the counterargument is saying.
- Use this template as a guide for writing a counterargument paragraph.
 - First sentence: **“Some might say...”** [Explain counterargument].
 - Second sentence: **“This is valid because...”** [Explain good points of counterargument].
 - Third Sentence: **“I still think the way I do because...”** [Refute counterargument and explain why your main argument is still valid].
 - **Example:** Some might say that the government should not contribute to combating pollution. This is valid because the government has lots of budget challenges. I still think the way I do because the government could cut money from something else in order to battle pollution.
- Strategies for using counterarguments inside a body paragraph:
 - Ways to introduce counter-arguments:
 - Many people [believe/argue/feel/think/etc.] that [state the counter-argument here].
 - It is often [thought/imagined/etc.] that [state the counter-argument here].
 - Supporters of this view might [believe/argue/feel/think/etc.] that [state the counter-argument here].
 - Ways to respond to counter-arguments:
 - What this argument [overlooks/fails to consider/does not take into account] is [refute counterargument].
 - This view [seems/looks/sounds/etc.] [convincing/plausible/persuasive/etc.] at first, but ... [refute counterargument].
 - While I concede that [acknowledge valid points of counterargument], I would still argue that [refute counterargument].

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Workshop Lesson: Using Counterargument
Student Notes

- **Argument**

- An argument is the _____ made by an author or text. The goal of an argumentative paper is to _____ the audience that the _____ is true by providing _____.
- **Example of a bad argument:** Pollution is bad for the environment.
 - ◆ **Why is this a bad example?**
 - ✓ It is too _____.
 - ✓ It is a _____. Therefore, it cannot be _____.
 - **Example of a good argument:** Thirty percent of the U.S. federal budget should be spent on combating pollution.
 - ◆ **Why is this a good example?**
 - ✓ It makes a specific _____ (not too _____).
 - ✓ It can be _____.
 - ✓ _____ can be provided to support it or refute it.

- **Counterargument**

- A counterargument is an _____ to an argument. Using counterarguments in your own writing requires you to understand, and sometimes temporarily adopt, the _____ of someone who _____ with your argument. Addressing a counterargument can improve the _____ of your particular argument.

- **The importance of counterarguments**

- Counterarguments are important because they show that you are taking other _____ into consideration. In addition, identifying problems in your own thought can be a good persuasive strategy, which shows respect for your reader and shows them that you are an open-minded thinker.

- **Using a counterargument**

- Where should counterarguments be introduced?
 - As a _____ paragraph before your _____.
 - Toward the end of a _____ paragraph, after you have made your _____ but before your _____ or _____ sentence.

- There are several ways to introduce counterarguments into your paper. The most basic strategy is:
 - _____ and _____ counterargument.
 - _____ and _____ the _____ of the counterargument.
 - _____ the counterargument by _____ how your main argument is still true despite what the counterargument is saying.
- Use this template as a guide for writing a counterargument paragraph.
 - First sentence: _____ [explain counterargument]
 - Second sentence: _____ [explain good points of counterargument]
 - Third Sentence: _____ [refute counterargument and explain why your main argument is still valid]
 - **Example:** Some might say that the government should not contribute to combating pollution. This is valid because the government has lots of budget challenges. I still think the way I do because the government could cut money from something else in order to battle pollution.
- Strategies for using counterarguments inside a body paragraph:
 - Ways to introduce counter-arguments:
 - Many people [believe/argue/feel/think/etc.] that [state the counter-argument here].
 - It is often [thought/imagined/etc.] that [state the counter-argument here].
 - Supporters of this view might [believe/argue/feel/think/etc.] that [state the counter-argument here].
 - Ways to respond to counter-arguments:
 - What this argument [overlooks/fails to consider/does not take into account] is [refute counterargument].
 - This view [seems/looks/sounds/etc.] [convincing/plausible/persuasive/etc.] at first, but ... [refute counterargument].
 - While I concede that [acknowledge valid points of counterargument], I would still argue that [refute counterargument].

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Group Activity

- 1. What is the main argument of the passage?**
- 2. Identify the passage's counterarguments.**
- 3. Is the main argument more persuasive due to the addition of counterarguments?**
- 4. In what ways could the author have better refuted the counterarguments?**

I like a couple of cigarettes or a cigar with a drink, and like many other people, I only smoke in bars or nightclubs. Now I can't enjoy any of my old haunts. Bartenders who used to be friends of mine have turned into cops, forcing me outside to shiver in the cold and curse under my breath. It's not fair! Smokers are being demonized and victimized.

Anita Smith, of the Cleaner Indoor Air organization, claims that people like me should just "get over it," because we "are in the minority." While it is true that 70% of Chicagoans are non-smokers, I thought this great city was a place where all kinds of minorities could thrive. Others who disagree with me might argue that "Smoking kills." As an occasional smoker with otherwise healthy habits, I'll take my chances. Health consciousness is important, but so is freedom of choice.

Heavily adapted from Joe Jackson's "Want to Smoke? Go to Hamburg" (from *They Say, I Say*)