

Topic Sentence Cheat Sheet for Argumentative Essay

Persuasion/Synthesis Essay Prompt

Few Rules to Remember:

1. Topic sentences are always arguments in these kinds of essays.
2. The persuasion and synthesis essays can be addressed in exactly the same way.
3. The three paragraph models here are just for illustration. Your essay can certainly be 2-5 paragraphs.
4. Topic sentences should show relationships/transitions between paragraphs: your goal is an essay that feels like a cohesive whole.
5. There are five basic approaches you can take on these essays.
 - Straight Refutation (2-4 reasons why the idea is a bad one)
 - Straight Support (2-4 reasons why the idea is a good one)
 - Concession/Qualifier (strongly take one side, but concede one point to other side)
 - Boomer (not only present your argument, but attack the other side)
 - Caveat (strongly take a position, but concede that there is an issue to consider)

Straight Refutation/Straight Support Essay

You probably want to avoid these. If you can't write these topic sentences by now, you're DOOMED. Keep them arguments.

Concession/Qualifier Essay

Concession essays include at least one paragraph in which the writer acknowledges that the "other side" of the issue has a good point. A concession should be defended by the writer, not refuted by her.

Thesis: While modern media discourse is often base and even occasionally pointless, such democratic discussion is essential for good governance and to undermine corporate dominance of the debate.

Body Paragraph 1: It would be hard to argue that American discourse has suffered as access to publishing has increased. [CONCESSION]

Body Paragraph 2: Despite the crudeness of much of contemporary discussion free expression of even the most trivial idea is crucial to democracy. [YOUR FIRST ARGUMENT]

Body Paragraph 3: Even more significantly, democratization of discourse offers perhaps the only tool to undermine corporate dominance of the media. [YOUR SECOND ARGUMENT]

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Boomer Essay

A boomer essay contains at least one paragraph in which the writer attacks the position of the other side in addition to presenting her own arguments. While the boomer paragraph can go at the beginning or end, I think it's more effective as the last body paragraph.

Thesis: The democratic discussion generated by new media is not only essential for good governance and to undermine corporate dominance of the debate, but critics who contend that it hurts the national dialogue misunderstand its vital role.

Body Paragraph 1: Free expression of even the most trivial idea is crucial to democracy. [YOUR FIRST ARGUMENT]

Body Paragraph 2: Even more significantly, democratization of discourse offers perhaps the only tool to undermine corporate dominance of the media. [YOUR SECOND ARGUMENT]

Body Paragraph 3: Critics of new media wrongly assert that it debases our national discussion. [CRUSH THIS ARGUMENT]

Caveat Essay

The caveat essay generally argues on one side of the topic, but raises a concern the writer wants the audience to be aware of. It doesn't quite extend to a concession. Caveat paragraphs are most effective as the last body paragraph.

Thesis: The democratic discussion generated by new media is essential for good governance and to undermine corporate dominance of the debate.

Body Paragraph 1: Free expression of even the most trivial idea is crucial to democracy. [YOUR FIRST ARGUMENT]

Body Paragraph 2: Even more significantly, democratization of discourse offers perhaps the only tool to undermine corporate dominance of the media. [YOUR SECOND ARGUMENT]

Body Paragraph 3: Despite all of the benefits of participation in new media, it's imperative that society be watchful lest hateful speech spread unchecked. [YOUR CAVEAT—NOT A FULLY DEVELOPED CONCESSION, BUT AN ISSUE TO CONSIDER}