

EAP 1850UG Argumentative Research Paper Instructions and Guidelines

The purpose of your final essay is to develop an articulate, persuasive argument on the topic of social responsibility. You will apply critical thought and research skills in support of your argument to substantiate any and all claims made, providing all necessary contextual information and background. You must, in short, prove to the audience that you actually know what you are writing about, that you know your subject, as you proceed to take, explain, and defend the position you have put forth. For that reason, you will need to read as much as you can about your topic.

The final essay has three main components:

1. Thesis

Your thesis should open the paper and introduce the main claim you are making as your argument. The thesis is crucial because it serves as the foundation on which you will build the rest of your paper. A strong thesis is one that has a strong, articulate, and well-developed claim. Your paper's claim should be the most concise formulation of your argument and should very clearly make a case and argue a point. This can be difficult though, and you must strike a balance between hyper-specificity and vagueness. You will be able to flesh your arguments out in the argument's body paragraphs, so you shouldn't go into extreme detail, but should also avoid vague, directionless language.

In providing this concise, not-too-specific and not-too-vague statement of your argument, you also provide a quick summary of the scope of your paper, the ground it will cover. In this capacity, the thesis statement is a *roadmap* that tells your reader not only the points that you will make, but also the order in which you will make them. You must also identify your **target audience**—who you are directly arguing to, and so trying to persuade—in the thesis.

2. Research and Supporting Paragraphs

There are many ways to write and structure the paragraphs that will support the thesis, but here are some general tips.

Keep one idea to one paragraph. If you begin to transition into a new idea, it belongs in a new paragraph. There are some simple ways to tell if you are on the same topic or a new one. You can have one idea and several bits of supporting evidence within a single paragraph. You can also have several points in a single paragraph as long as they relate to the overall topic of the paragraph. If the single points start to get long, then perhaps elaborating on each of them and placing them in their own paragraphs is the route to go.

Keep in mind the general structure of arranging support for your thesis:

Claim: The overall thesis the writer will argue for.

Data: Evidence gathered to support the claim.

Warrant (also referred to as a bridge): Explanation of why or how the data supports the claim, the underlying assumption that connects your data to your claim.

Backing (also referred to as the foundation): Additional logic or reasoning that may be necessary to support the warrant.

Counterclaim: A claim that negates or disagrees with the thesis/claim.

Rebuttal: Evidence that negates or disagrees with the counterclaim.

Including a well-thought-out warrant or bridge is essential to writing a good argumentative essay or paper. If you present data to your audience without explaining how it supports your thesis your readers may not make a connection between the two or they may draw different conclusions.

Don't avoid the opposing side of an argument. Instead, include the opposing side as a counterclaim. Find out what the other side is saying and respond to it within your own argument. This is important so that the audience is not swayed by weak, but unrefuted, arguments. Including counterclaims allows you to find common ground with more of your readers. It also makes you look more credible because you appear to be knowledgeable about the entirety of the debate rather than just being biased or uninformed. You may want to include several counterclaims to show that you have thoroughly researched the topic.

3. Conclusion

An effective conclusion goes beyond simply restating or summarizing the argument. The goal is to synthesize, rather than repeat, an insight that derives from the points you made and the support and examples you used that fits everything together. You should indicate what the broader implications of your argument are, or in what ways the problem your argument seeks to address can/should/will/will not change. Doing this can be tricky, so don't be afraid to tinker with a couple of drafts of your conclusion before making a final decision.