

Persuasive Writing – Controversial Issue pp 331 – 336 in literature textbook

Assignment: Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper in which you take a stand on a controversial issue.

Aim: To shape your audience’s opinions and feelings; to persuade them to take your position seriously; to urge an audience to take an action or change a stance on an issue.

Audience: Readers in your community who are interested in your issue; your teacher; your classmates.

Steps to follow:

1. **Read** pages 331 through 336 in your textbook. Pay close attention to the “Drafting” sections! **Note: You don’t have to think of a topic, just choose one from this sheet.**
2. **Choose** an issue from the list in this handout.
3. **Write** a position statement. If done correctly, this can become the first sentence in your letter as long as it grabs the reader’s attention and introduces the topic. (see #3 page 332 if you need help)
4. **Create** a pro-con list for your topic. This becomes much of your prewriting!
5. **Choose** a point to concede in your paper. (see top of page 333 if you need help)
6. **Think** of objective and reliable evidence to support your opinions.
7. **Create** an effective introduction. You want to grab the reader’s attention and introduce the topic.
8. **Organize** your prewriting (#4 above) by numbering the items you will talk about in the order you wish. (Least important to most important is usually the most effective.)
9. **Create** a rough draft with support and an effective introduction and conclusion. Be sure to include both a logical and an emotional appeal in your paper.
10. **Read** the grading rubric below. These are the things on which you will be graded, so it will help to be sure to include them in your paper.

Grading Rubric:

Required length = 300 words (-10 for each 50 words short)

Prewriting pro & con list	<u> </u>	/10
Surface features & format	<u> </u>	/10
Effective introduction with clear position	<u> </u>	/10
Issue is well defined	<u> </u>	/10
Use of logical appeal	<u> </u>	/10
Use of emotional appeal	<u> </u>	/10
Effective order of reasons	<u> </u>	/10
Relevant and credible evidence	<u> </u>	/10
Effective concession (see top of p 333)	<u> </u>	/10
Effective summary	<u> </u>	/10
Total score	<u> </u>	/100

Letter to the Editor Tips

- Letters with a personal angle are always compelling. Ask yourself how this issue affects you and your family. This might also become the emotional appeal to your readers.
- Keep it brief and to the point. Letters under 400 words are more likely to be published. Arrange your letter into several paragraphs.
- Focus. The first sentence of your letter should explain why you are writing as well as grabbing the reader’s attention.. Make it as easy as possible for the reader to understand the purpose of your letter.
- Make your point. Following your opening sentence, the next sentence should state your issue/argument, correction, or additional information.
- Relate your letter to the newspaper’s readers. Make it local. Include something that appeals to their emotions.
- Use simple language. Easy-to-understand language is best and ensures that your message will not be misunderstood.
- Positive language makes positive points. People like other people who are positive - an important point to remember when you are writing a letter to the editor. After all, you are writing to express your opinion and to persuade others to believe as you do.
- Avoid negative “insult” language. It is much more difficult to persuade people with a negative argument using negative language. By trying to make a negative point, the reader may feel insulted or irritated.