



The Argument Essay

Breaking Larger Assignments into Multiple Type Threes

One of the biggest challenges for teachers is managing longer pieces of writing. How to choose only three Focus Correction Areas (FCAs)? How to keep students motivated? How to provide useful feedback to students before it's time to move on to the next project? For longer assignments, such as the argument essay, try chunking; each section of the paper becomes a short Type Three.

Chunking makes longer assignments more manageable, narrows the focus for each section while increasing the total number of FCAs, and allows teachers to provide feedback on earlier parts of the paper so students can apply suggestions to future paragraphs.

Following this scaffolded method, we recommend breaking the argument essay into five or more smaller parts. The “Core Five” parts for chunking an argument essay are listed below with possible FCAs for each. They are followed by additional optional assignments that take students further in the writing process while continuing the use of FCAs to set expectations and provide feedback.

As student needs vary greatly from grade to grade and even class to class, the list of FCAs below is designed to provide choices for each teacher. Remember that we recommend limiting the number of FCAs to three per assignment, so choose those that best meet the needs of your current learners. Feel free to differentiate as needed.

Assignment One: Body Paragraph 1/Reason #1

- Topic sentence stating reason to be developed
- n pieces of evidence (quoted, paraphrased, or summarized), where n represents a number of your choice
- Correct citation
- n transitional phrases
- n “expert” vocabulary, underlined
- Formal tone

Assignment Two: Body Paragraph 2/Reason #2

- Same as above
- Consider building on previous FCAs if students have demonstrated proficiency in the previous paragraph:
 - Increase the number of pieces of evidence.
 - Add additional citation requirements.
 - Replace transitional phrases with *set context* or *wrap-up sentence*.

Assignment Three: Body Paragraph 3/Reason #3

- Same as Body Paragraph 2/Reason #2

Assignment Four: Introduction

- A hook to get the reader’s attention (surprising statistic, anecdote, intriguing fact, etc.)
- Clear claim statement
- Preview (sets context, provides an overview of organizational structure, or establishes author’s credibility)

Assignment Five: Conclusion

- Restate claim (paraphrased)
- Sum up reasoning
- Leave a positive impact on the reader (call to action, powerful image, authoritative quote, etc.)



FCAs can also be applied to other parts of the argument essay to build consistency, set clear criteria, and maintain focus. Some of the most common assignment options and FCA choices are listed below.

Writing the Claim

- Topic/position/no “I”
- “Although” counterclaim with comma
- *n* reasons, clearly stated without details

Developing an Outline

- *n* distinct reasons
- *n* pieces of evidence per reason (examples, facts, statistics, quotes, etc.)
- Evidence from *n* HELPS categories, each category labeled in margin
- Correct outline format

Body Paragraph 4/Counterclaim Refuted

- Clearly stated counterclaim
- *n* pieces of evidence to refute
- Respectful tone

Works Cited

- Authors’ names in correct format/correct caps
- Titles in correct format/caps, quotation marks, italics
- Complete publication information in correct format
- Correct heading and structure

After completing all the “parts” of the argument essay, many teachers choose to combine them to create the final draft. Students have the opportunity to revise and edit each draft and apply teacher feedback, with emphasis on the writing process and improving the overall quality of the work.

You will notice that the potential final-draft FCAs listed below, if preceded by multiple Type Three drafts by section, are broader and are designed to be reflective of the entire work with fair consideration given to the revising and editing effort as well as the overall appearance of the essay.

Final Copy

- Effective introduction and conclusion
- *n* body paragraphs/reasons developed with sufficient evidence
- Reflects revision based on teacher feedback
- Has been edited for spelling and grammar
- Correct format (heading, cover sheet, font size, line spacing, works cited, etc.)