

## **Constructing a Research Proposal/Outline for a Argumentative/Persuasive Research Paper Transcript**

### Slide 1

Welcome to this Herzing University EN 104 presentation on the Argumentative/Persuasive Research Paper Proposal and Outline. This presentation will help you create an organizational strategy for your research paper assignment, and ensure that the argument you make is solid and thorough.

### Slide 2

What are we doing in an argument paper?

There are different types of argument or persuasive papers that you can write. Depending on your purpose and your assignment, you might need to either write a straightforward argument that is supported by facts, or you might need to write a more persuasive paper in the context of an argument where there are multiple viewpoints.

An example of the former would be something similar to more of a research paper – where you come up with a thesis and show why it is true. For instance, “childhood obesity is on the rise,” is something that is fairly well documented, but that you could write a paper about, offering some fresh perspectives of research. The other type – the more persuasive type – might be a thesis like, “Vending machines should be removed from schools to prevent obesity in children and teens.” Here, you are making an argument where there could possibly be a strong opposing argument – or pushback – from one or more parties. In this case, students and vending machine companies.

Whatever type of argument paper you have to write, you need to make sure that you first have a plan. Your plan can include ideas on how to organize your paper, how to research your topic, how to check on if you’ve made a strong argument and how to format, proofread and cite your work so that you maintain academic dishonesty and have a great presentation for your reader.

### Slide 3

First, consider what you’ll be writing about. For our class, the assignment is a persuasive research paper. That means that you will pick something with multiple viewpoints and argue one side or one perspective of that argument. Remember that a persuasive thesis needs to be clear and take a strong stance. You do not want ambiguity, as any bit of hesitancy can make your argument feel weak or that you do not grasp the argument.

Likewise, make sure that the topic is something that you can research and argue, and that you are interested in. You don't have to be an expert – but you should be prepared, especially for a longer research paper – to spend more time with the material and interest will create the ability to look inside the topic for more angles and more information.

After you have your idea for your thesis, be sure you write it out. At this stage, it can be very simple and can be added to later. Taking our example from before, we would write: "Vending machines should be removed from schools."

That's a strong thesis – but we want to add some context. We don't want to remove the machines from schools to make more room in the lunchroom. We want to remove the machines, "in order to reduce obesity in children and teens."

Now our thesis is strong AND leaves little room for ambiguity. Our reader can tell exactly what we mean and we also give a little bit about what we intend to argue. You can add one element that encompasses the entire argument, or you can briefly add your three strong arguments to your thesis, like this:

"Vending machines should be removed from schools as they provide access to high-fat and sugary snacks during the school day, force the more nutritional offerings to compete with the junk food and take away lunchroom revenue that could be used to increase the quality of the food in the school."

#### Slide 4

After you have your thesis, you'll want to start constructing your research proposal. For your proposal, you'll need several things. You'll need a thesis, at least three strong arguments, three opposing arguments and responses to your opponent's arguments. There are two main ways that you can organize this information.

On this slide, we first consider all of our opposing arguments together, without mentioning the opposition. Then, after the arguments are done – we gather the opposition's arguments and reply to them point by point.

#### Slide 5

On this slide, we have an example of a research paper organized by each major argument. In each section, we consider one of our major arguments, bring up an opposing viewpoint and answer to that viewpoint.

#### Slide 6

Now that you have your thesis, and you know how you will set up and organize your paper, you need to come up with your supporting arguments. How do you do this?

For this part of your proposal, it's best to brainstorm or cluster potential arguments and how you might support them or what material you need to find in your research to support your points. You'll want to consider the strongest and most salient and relevant arguments. In our example, you would not include a fourth argument, for instance, that states, "Vending machines should be removed because some people don't like the bright colors in the cafeteria," as this is not relevant to your thesis.

You will also want to avoid informational points. Every supporting argument must support your thesis – or answer the question of why your thesis is true. For instance, you would not include one argument on how vending machines got to be in schools in the first place – this does not answer the question of why they should be removed. Background information like this can be put in the introduction or in a background section.

Be sure to make points that you can support. Each supporting point should have one to two supporting quotes, facts or statistics from your research to provide credibility to your argument. That means that you want to be sure that your points are researchable. If you cannot find specific facts or statistics to back up your idea, a quote from an expert in the field affirming your point is helpful.

Be sure that your arguments are logical. Test them against the thesis and make sure that you are not using one of the logical fallacies. A good way to make sure that you do not do this is by using inductive reasoning by adding conditionals to your points, such as "some" children or "many" children or using words like "might" or "possibly" – which may seem shady – but is a valid way to qualify your arguments.

You can also create sub-points for your proposal that further organize and keep you on track.

## Slide 7

For instance, for our first point on "vending machines provide access to sugary and high-fat snacks," four points of support might be:

(Example on slide)

1. On a recent survey of random vending machines, 70 percent of foods contained more than X grams of sugar (and this can either be supported by a study you find, or your own, qualitative research).
2. Likewise, 60 percent of the foods contained more than X grams of saturated fat.
3. Healthier foods are placed below eye level and do not have as brightly colored packaging or easily recognized brand names, as the healthier food producing companies are not the premium companies that create a higher gross for the vending companies. It is safe to say that the children would be more attracted to food at eye level that is brightly packaged.

4. Students often have access to the vending machines both before and after school as well, increasing the opportunity to purchase unhealthy snacks at various points in the day.

#### Slide 8

You might also include, in your research proposal, information that is like an annotated bibliography. You can include some research points as you construct the proposal, where you will support your arguments.

For instance, here is an example of point number four with a supplementary quote:

(Example on slide)

#### Slide 9

After determining your supporting points, you need to have your opposing points. The reasons that we need to include these points are to show that we have a credible grasp of the larger subject, and that we can predict any skepticism on the part of our audience. If they doubt something we've said – we can answer that in the paper, and assuage any hesitancy they might have in supporting our position.

The opposing points should be treated in the same way as your support points – relevant, supportive, researchable and logical – but as you're supporting your opponent's points, you first have to do some brainstorming in that direction. Generally, when identifying which points to choose for your opposition, you want to choose their strongest and most likely arguments. This is important, because you want to anticipate what your own audience might question in response to your thesis. Remember, you're not always necessarily persuading your strong opposition, but also people who have little knowledge of the topic. They will naturally come up with ideas that question your thesis, but from information that they might be vaguely aware of from your opposition. You want to be prepared to answer these.

#### Slide 10

For our example, our three opposing arguments will be:

1. Students have plenty of healthy options available, both in the vending machines and in the lunchroom.
2. What about students' rights? Shouldn't they be able to pick what they want at lunch in junior high and high school?
3. Is it true that the food in the cafeteria would become healthier as a result of the removal of the vending machines? Wouldn't it just limit choices and have an empty result?

As you can see, your opposing arguments can also kind of be phrased as a question – you just need to put doubt in the audience’s mind. These are also the kinds of questions that laypeople, rather than experts on the topic, would be likely to ask. Be sure to identify who your audience is, though, before using this tactic – as it would not work for a very educated or expert audience.

#### Slide 11

After you find your opposing arguments, you’ll want to reply to them. Try to reply in an original way that does not repeat one of your supporting arguments, or you might be accused of “circular reasoning.” You will want to answer each opposing argument that you have included. Our answers could be:

(Example on slide)

1. Just because the options are there, does not mean the students will choose them. In addition, those who choose the unhealthy snacks will generally be the children who need the most help, as eating sugary and fatty foods is like an addiction. If this food were not available, this would leave no option but more nutritious food.
2. Students would still have the right to bring sugary foods from home if their parents provided it or if they buy it with their own money. It’s not a school’s job to provide this choice.
3. Removing the vending machines would not create a junk-free food zone, but would be an important step in limiting easy access to these unhealthy foods. Though students could still bring them, the school will be sending a message that it endorses health and, thereby teaches the responsible choice.

#### Slide 12

So now you have a skeleton for your persuasive research paper. Remember that these points are not the only points you need and you must develop these out into paragraphs with supporting information. Depending upon the length of an assignment – in this case 5-6 pages of text, your research for support material might need to be more extensive. Remember, you can use any number of paragraphs for each point on your research proposal.

Once you have your research proposal written out, it’s fairly easy to incorporate it into an outline. You just adapt it, section by section to your outline layout and make sure that everything is in the correct order. In this outline, we have included our points, our sub-points and the other parts of the paper, like the introduction, conclusion, and supplementary sections, such as a background or solution section. We can refer directly to our research proposal for more specific information about each of the argumentative points.

#### Slide 13

Thank you for watching this EN 104 presentation on the persuasive research paper proposal and outline. Remember that you need to have a strong thesis for a persuasive paper that can be backed up by relevant arguments and evidence. Creating a research proposal involves organizing your strong arguments, the opposing arguments and responses into a coherent whole. In the end, you will make a complete outline from your research proposal to organize your paper as you begin writing. By having all of this information at your fingertips when you begin to write, you can keep your work organized, avoid writers block and have a handy reference to connect your major points with source quotes and points from your research.