



The Introduction

The introduction has four jobs to do:

1. It must attract the interest of a specific audience and focus it on the subject of the argument.
2. It must provide enough background information to make sure that the audience is aware of both the general problem as well as the specific issue or issues the writer is addressing
3. It must clearly signal the writer's specific position on the issue and/or the direction of her/his argument. Usually a classical argument has a written *thesis statement* early in the paper—usually in the first paragraph or two.
4. It must establish the writer's *role* or any special relationship the writer may have to the subject or the audience. It should also establish the image of the writer (the *ethos*) that he/she wants to project in the argument: caring, aggressive, passionate, etc.

Some Questions to Ask as You Develop Your Introduction

1. What is the situation that this argument responds to?
2. What elements of background or context need to be presented for this audience? Is this new information or am I just reminding them of matters they already have some familiarity with?
3. What are the principal issues involved in this argument?
4. Where do I stand on this issue?
5. What is the best way to capture and focus the audience's attention?
6. What tone should I establish?
7. What image of myself should I project?

The Confirmation

There's a strong temptation in argument to say "Why should you think so? Because!" and leave it at that. But a rational audience has strong expectations of the kinds of proof you will and will not provide to help it accept your point of view. Most of the arguments used in the confirmation tend to be of the inartistic kind, but artistic proofs can also be used to support this section.

Some Questions to Ask as You Develop Your Confirmation

1. What are the arguments that support my thesis that my audience is most likely to respond to?
2. What arguments that support my thesis is my audience *least likely* to respond to?
3. How can I demonstrate that these are valid arguments?
4. What kind of inartistic proofs does my audience respect and respond well to?
5. Where can I find the facts and testimony that will support my arguments?
6. What kinds of artistic proofs will help reinforce my position?

The Concession/Refutation

You want to concede any points that you would agree on or that will make your audience more willing to listen to you (as long as they don't fatally weaken your own side). This is a place to use both pathos and ethos: by conceding those matters of feeling and values that you can agree on, while stressing the character issues, you can create the opportunity for listening and understanding.

But you will also have to *refute* (that is, counter or out-argue) the points your opposition will make. You can do this in four ways:

1. Show by the use of facts, reasons, and testimony that the opposing point is based on incorrect evidence, questionable assumptions, bad reasoning, prejudice, superstition, or ill will.
2. Show that the opposition has some merit but is flawed in some way. When you point out the exceptions to the opposition rule, you show that its position is not as valid as its proponents claim it is.
3. Show that the opposition has merits but is outweighed by other considerations. You are claiming, in essence, that truth is relative: when a difficult choice has to be made, we must put first things first. Or you may say that yes, it's true that my proposal is expensive, but consider the costs if we do *not* undertake it, or how much the price will go up if we wait to undertake it, etc.
4. Show that the reasoning used by the opposition is flawed: in other words, that it contains [*logical fallacies*](#).

In general, strategies 2 and 3 are easier to pull off than strategy 1. Showing that a position is sometimes valid gives the opposition a face-saving “out” and preserves some sense of *common ground*.

Some Questions to Ask as You Develop Your Concession/Refutation

1. What are the most important opposing arguments? What concessions can I make and still support my thesis adequately?
2. How can I refute opposing arguments or minimize their significance?
3. What are the possible objections to my own position?
4. What are the possible ways someone can misunderstand my own position?
5. How can I best deal with these objections and misunderstandings?

The Conclusion

Conclusions are hard and there's a temptation to simply repeat your thesis and topic sentences and pray for a miracle. However, if you try to step back in your conclusion, you can often find a way to give a satisfying sense of closure. You might hark back to the background: why has this remained a problem and why is it so important to solve it, your way, now? Or you might hark back to the common ground you have with your audience: why does accepting your argument reinforce your shared beliefs and values? Too many times classical arguments don't close—they just stop, as if the last page is missing. And this sense of incompleteness leaves readers dissatisfied and sometimes less likely to accept your argument. So spending a little extra time to round the conclusion out is almost always worthwhile in making the argument more successful.

Some Questions to Ask as You Develop Your Conclusion

1. How can I best leave a strong impression of the rightness and importance of my view?
2. How can I best summarize or exemplify the most important elements of my argument?
3. What is the larger significance of the argument? What long-range implications will have the most resonance with my readers?
4. How can I bring the argument “full circle” and leave my readers satisfied with the ending of my argument?