

How to Write Counterargument (Opposing View) Paragraphs

This resource provides general strategies for addressing readers' objections and concerns in argumentative essays and short (five- to ten-page) research papers. To learn more about writing counterarguments for subject-specific assignments like case study reports and journalistic writing, visit the [Subject-Specific Resources Page](#) at Purdue Online Writing Lab.

Even though your arguments may seem reasonable and well supported, some readers will question or even challenge your ideas, especially if their views on the topic differ from yours. But rather than ignore readers' questions or challenges, you should address them and even explain why their concerns may be valid. Doing so will make you appear knowledgeable, forthcoming, and capable of seeing the topic from different angles, thereby increasing your credibility as a writer and your chances of persuading readers.

Preparation for Writing a Counterargument Paragraph

Before you begin writing counterargument paragraphs for your paper, you should already have formulated a tentative thesis or view. You should also have done some preliminary research on your topic and taken notes on any sources you have found so far.



Procedures for Writing a Counterargument Paragraph

1. Read over your tentative thesis, source material, and notes.
2. Write down several objections or concerns that readers might have about your thesis.
3. Read over this list of objections and concerns. Then choose one objection or concern to work with for now.
4. State this objection/concern in a complete sentence. Introduce it with some transitional phrase which signals to readers that you are acknowledging a potential objection or concern, like "Some readers might object, arguing that..."
5. Clarify to readers why this is a valid objection or concern.
6. Read over your source material and notes. Pick one piece of evidence that shows why this objection or concern is valid.
7. Write down that piece of evidence, remembering to properly introduce and document it. (For more information on research documentation and source integration and documentation, please refer to the [Research and Citation Resources](#) page at Purdue Online Writing Lab.)
8. Write a brief explanation of how this evidence validates the readers' objection or concern. You might start with a phrase like "In essence,..." or "This evidence suggests that..."
9. Then respond to the objection or concern. If possible, refute the objection or concern by pointing out its weaknesses. If you cannot refute the objection or concern, explain why your view is still more logical and reasonable.
10. Use evidence from one or more of your sources to support your response to the objection or concern.
11. If possible, conclude the paragraph by reemphasizing the strength of your view on the topic.

Back to our Resources page: <http://info.francis.edu/writing-center-resources-for-students/>

To see how this process can be used to create an effective counterargument, please refer to the sample counterargument section below.

Sample Counterargument Section

This excerpt is from peer tutor Hannah Brooks's research paper on Facebook, which she completed for ENGL 103: Writing for a Discipline. Hannah's overall view on Facebook is that it "should be defended against public scrutiny because it holds massive potential for uniting people of any age, race, or culture in one easy-to-manage interface. It also holds psychological benefits such as improved self-esteem in college students because of a shared feeling of 'connectedness.'" In other words, Hannah adopts a favorable attitude towards Facebook. Despite its security problems, she believes that Facebook is socially and psychologically beneficial to most users. But Hannah recognizes that not all readers agree with her. In the following excerpt, Hannah addresses several criticisms made about Facebook and supports her discussion of each criticism with evidence from outside sources.

Despite its soaring popularity, Facebook has recently been criticized for allowing personal user information to become available to online advertising companies. According to the article "Marketers Can Glean Private Data on Facebook," a researcher from Stanford named Aleksandra Korolova performed a study in which she was able to locate the age and sexual orientation of certain Facebook users by creating ads specifically aimed at their profiles. In a separate study, researchers from both the India branch of Microsoft and the Max Planck Institute for Software Systems located in Germany discovered that Facebook users listed as homosexual were shown different advertisements than users listed as heterosexual. This is not only a case of direct discrimination; it opens up privacy issues regarding personal information such as a person's sexual orientation. To further elaborate on this issue, an article titled "Facebook in Privacy Breach" published in *The Wall Street Journal* stated that online advertising companies not only obtained users' private information, but sold this information to other advertising companies. The fact that a person's private information can travel to so many places across the Internet without the owner's knowledge is extremely unnerving.

Back to our Resources page: <http://info.francis.edu/writing-center-resources-for-students/>

Yet another source of criticism against Facebook is that it has let internet safety go by the wayside. According to the article "Facebook in Privacy Breach," Mark Zuckerberg was publically criticized for allowing advertisers to glean ID numbers associated with specific profiles in order for these advertisers to gain access to personal information of Facebook users. This information was passed around to different companies without the awareness of the specific users in question. Grude described the story of one participant labeled "S4" who was contacted by a stranger on Facebook who at first only instant messaged her through the Facebook Chat application and eventually proceeded to visit her at her workplace, essentially stalking her (Grude, Scholl, and Thompson 7). With the threat of identity theft being very prominent in today's society, it is no wonder people are concerned about Facebook allowing personal information to be distributed to random advertising companies. I, too, am concerned that Facebook could so easily allow personal information to sift through its safety barriers into the hands of advertising companies, and like many people existing in the online age, I want to have the most enjoyable Internet experience possible without compromising my personal safety.