

PURPOSEFUL WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES AND FOR PROFESSIONS

DEVELOPING ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS
OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS

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OVERVIEW

As you continue your studies and aim to pursue your future profession, you will also have to equip yourself with strong and effective communication skills, as these are basic requirements in any field you choose. In particular, developing and advancing your academic writing skills give you an advantage on dealing with complex communication tasks in the corporate world and puts you in a good position in our today's modern world where knowledge has become the number one commodity.

While writing is considered to be a challenging language skill to learn, there are already practical guidelines that you can use in order to acquire a good writing skill. This workbook presents you helpful tips, guidelines and practices in training you on how to write very important documents that you need to learn to produce in preparation for your college and professional life.

You will learn that three of the most important elements of writing: purpose, audience, and subject are crucial in producing relevant and effective written outputs. You will realize that every type of your writing has a reason to begin with, and we call this your purpose for writing, which is critical in the initial phase of your writing journey. You should remember to have a clear, focused, and directed purpose before beginning to write, as it will facilitate a faster and more successful writing. You will also have to consider your audience, i.e. your target readers, who will be reading your write-ups. Remember that your teacher may be your initial audience, but he/she may not be your final target audience, so you have to decide on this clearly because it will help you determine your writing style, tone, and language. Your subject provides the controlling idea in any write-up you plan to produce. Remember to have a clear, fresh and interesting topic to write about, and that it should be supported by your readings and researches so that you can provide all possible angles and perspectives about it.

In summary, your purpose, audience, and subject are important considerations in producing quality and effective professional documents. They will be complemented by other guidelines that you will find in the succeeding lessons.



Lesson 1

WRITING AN ARTICLE CRITIQUE



OBJECTIVES

When you have read and thought about the lesson, you should be able to:

1. Define what an article critique is
2. Identify the parts of an article critique
3. Explain the steps in writing a critique
4. Write an article critique



PRE-TEST

Pair Work. Pair up with your classmate and discuss the following questions briefly.

1. Have you ever read an interesting article (print or online)? _____
2. What was the article about?

3. Who wrote it? _____
4. What made it interesting?

5. When do you say that an article you read is interesting?

6. Have you ever read a dull or boring article (print or online)? _____



7. What was the article about?

8. Who wrote it? _____

9. What made it dull or boring?

10. When do you say that an article you read is dull or boring?

What is an Academic Article?

An **academic article** is often written in the form of an argument. The author takes a particular stand on an issue, which is often stated in the thesis statement. The author presents research evidence and facts in order to support his argument. Well-written academic articles are based on a great deal of research and the author has drawn conclusions from a range of sources.

What is an Article Critique?

A **critique** is a paper that gives you an assessment of a particular article. It is different from a research paper in that it only focuses on one article. It is a specific style of essay which identifies the author's ideas and evaluates them based on current theory and research.

In order to do a meaningful critique, you need to understand where the author is coming from, and why he is writing this particular article. In doing a critique, you need to respond to the article and not simply to summarize it. You need to explain why you



respond to the text in a certain way and to support your argument with your readings. Begin by regarding the article as a whole and by building up a background picture.

Steps in Writing an Article Critique

1. **Understand your teacher's instructions carefully.** While article critiques may follow a general structure, it is important that you pay attention to the requirements specified by your teacher. This will help you determine the sections that you will need in the critique paper, and it will help you save time.
2. **Find your article.** Your teacher may require you to do an article critique alongside your field of interest, or he/she may allow you to choose any 'text', which can be an entire book, a book chapter, a journal article, etc. Once your text is approved, you can start looking for your text in the library, online library database, or on the Internet, depending on the accessibility of resources. Make sure to take note of the following information, as you will be needing them in writing your critique:
 - a. Name(s) of the author(s)
 - b. Title of the article
 - c. Title of the work where it was published (journal, newspaper, book, etc.)
 - d. Publisher, publication date and place
 - e. Page number
 - f. Article abstract (if any)



Activity 1

Pick out at least three different possibilities for texts that you could critique for this exercise. Working alone or in small groups, consider the potential of each text. Here are some questions to think about:

- Does the text provide in-depth information? How long is it? Does it include a reference or bibliography section?
- What is the source of the text? Does it come from an academic, professional, or scholarly publication?
- Does the text advocate a particular position? What is it, and do you agree or disagree with the text?

3. **Read your article.** Close and critical reading is the key here. You have to read the article through to get an understanding of the “big picture”. Read through again; this time more carefully. Underline, highlight, and annotate key words, phrases or sentences that seem important. It may look messy, but this is a normal process. The more you do this, the more you engage yourself with the text, and the more you understand the article.

As you read, try to ask yourself the following questions: *What is the author's main point? What details support this?* Look up any words that are unfamiliar. Set the article aside and try to summarize it in one or two sentences. Read the article one more time, this time to analyze how the author supported his ideas. *Are there examples, facts, or opinions? Does the author include opposing viewpoints? Are you convinced of the author's viewpoint? Why or why not?* Jot down some ideas as you analyze, as you may be able to use them when writing your critique.

Close reading is a type of reading where you as the reader *critically* engage with the text in order to understand it, question it, evaluate it, and form an opinion about it. This is a method of reading where you have to slow down and think along each step of the way. You further your understanding of the text by writing as you read and by stopping to look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary. Ultimately, once



done with a close reading of a text, you have begun to form an opinion about the text, and you are ready to make an evaluation of it.

Here are some basic steps to help you in your close reading.

- a. **Write while you read.** This is the most essential part of close reading. Writing and reading are closely related activities, and when you write about your reading as you are reading (even *in* what you are reading), you inevitably understand what you are reading better than you do if you read without writing. Close reading includes taking notes: writing down the most important points of the text, paraphrasing, summarizing, etc.
- b. **Explain the main points of the texts in your own words.** When you put something in your own words, what you are essentially doing is “translating” the text you are critiquing into your own language and your way of understanding something. This is an especially useful technique when you are closely reading complex and long texts—books or more complicated academic articles that you are having a hard time understanding. You might want to put the main points in your own words on a separate sheet of paper. Using a separate sheet of paper makes it easier to note questions or other points about the text as you read.
- c. **Form an opinion as you read.** The two main goals of a close reading are to fully understand what the text means and to form an opinion about whatever it is you are closely reading. If you follow the steps for close reading outlined here, you will inevitably end up with a more informed opinion about the text that can be a starting point toward writing critically about the text.
- d. **Keep questioning the text.** As you go along in your close reading, keep asking questions about the text: *What is the point? Do I agree or disagree with the text? Why? What parts of the text are you confused about? How can you find answers to the questions you have? and How do you see it fitting into your research project?* Keep asking these kinds of questions as you read and you will soon understand the text you are critiquing a lot better.



Activity 2

- Following the guidelines offered above, do a close reading of one of the pieces of articles you have found. Be sure to write “in” the text as you read (either in the margins or with post-it notes), explain the main points in your own words, look up key words or words you don’t understand in the dictionary, and closely read toward an opinion. Be sure to bring the work of your close reading to class to share and to discuss with your classmates and with your teacher.
- If you are working collaboratively with classmates on a research project, you can individually do close readings of a common text and compare your reactions. Once an agreed upon text is selected, each member of the collaborative group should individually closely read the same text. Bring to class in the work of your close reading to compare and discuss each of your group members’ readings.

4. **Format your paper.** Your teacher may provide your class the structure or format for the article critique, so you have to check with him the formatting and structural specifications. Generally, both short (one page) and long (four pages) article critiques have a similar structure, as discussed below.
 - a. **Introduction.** The length of an introduction is usually one paragraph for a journal article review and two or three paragraphs for a longer book review. Include a few opening sentences that announce the author(s) and the title, and briefly explain the topic of the text. Present the aim of the text and summarize the main finding or key argument. Conclude the introduction with a brief statement of your evaluation of the text. This can be a positive or a negative evaluation or, as is usually the case, a mixed response.
 - b. **Summary.** Present a summary of the key points along with a limited number of examples. You can also briefly explain the author’s purpose/intentions throughout the text, and you may briefly describe how the text is organized. The summary should only make up about a third of the critical review.



- c. **Critique.** The critique should be a balanced discussion and evaluation of the strengths, weakness and notable features of the text. Remember to base your discussion on specific criteria. Good reviews also include other sources to support your evaluation (remember to reference).

You can choose how to sequence your critique. Here are some examples to get you started:

- Most important to least important conclusions you make about the text.
- If your critique is more positive than negative, then present the negative points first and the positive last.
- If your critique is more negative than positive, then present the positive points first and the negative last.
- If there are both strengths and weaknesses for each criterion you use, you need to decide overall what your judgment is. For example, you may want to comment on a key idea in the text and have both positive and negative comments. You could begin by stating what is good about the idea, and then concede, and explain how it is limited in some way. While this example shows a mixed evaluation, overall, you are probably being more negative than positive.
- In long reviews, you can address each criterion you choose in a paragraph, including both negative and positive points. For very short critical reviews (one page or less) where your comments will be briefer, include a paragraph of positive aspects and another of negative.
- You can also include recommendations for how the text can be improved in terms of ideas, research approach; theories or frameworks used can also be included in the critique section.

- d. **Conclusion.** This is usually a very short paragraph.

- Restate your overall opinion of the text.
- Briefly present recommendations.
- If necessary, some further qualification or explanation of your judgment can be included. This can help your critique sound fair and reasonable.

- e. **References.** If you have used other sources in your review, you should also include list of references at the end of the critique.



Summarizing and Paraphrasing for the Article Critique

Summarizing and **paraphrasing** are essential skills for academic writing and in particular, the article critique. To summarize means to reduce a text to its main points and its most important ideas. The length of your summary for an article critique should only be about one quarter to one third of the whole critical review. The best way to summarize is to:

1. **Scan the text.** Look for information that can be deduced from the introduction, conclusion and the title and headings. What do these tell you about the main points of the article?
2. **Locate the topic sentences and highlight the main points as you read.**
3. **Reread the text and make separate notes of the main points.** Examples and evidence do not need to be included at this stage. Usually they are used selectively in your critique.

Paraphrasing means putting it into your own words. Paraphrasing offers an alternative to using direct quotations in your summary (and the critique), and it can be an efficient way to integrate your summary notes. The best way to paraphrase is to:

1. Review your summary notes.
2. Rewrite them in your own words and in complete sentences.
3. Use reporting verbs and phrases (e.g., The author describes..., Dela Cruz argues that ...).
4. If you include unique or specialist phrases from the text, use quotation marks.



Activity 3

- Write a brief summary of the text you intend to write your critique about, preferably one which you have already examined with a close reading and for which you have developed a list of possible criteria. For the purposes of this exercise, keep the summary brief—no more than 100 words or so—and be sure to strive for a summary that focuses as much as possible on “just the facts.” Show your summary to readers who haven’t read the text that you are summarizing and ask them if they understand what the text is generally about and if they have any questions about the text.
- With a group of collaborators and your teacher, decide on a text that you will all summarize. Individually, write a brief summary for readers you assume haven’t read the article. Keep the summaries short—less than 100 words or so—and be sure to strive for a summary that focuses as much as possible on “just the facts.” Come together in small groups to discuss each group members’ individually written summary. What similarities are there between each person’s summary? What are some of the notable differences between summaries?



Some General Criteria for Evaluating Texts

The following list of criteria and focus questions may be useful for reading the text and for preparing your article critique assignment. Remember to check your assignment instructions for more specific criteria and focus questions that should form the basis of your critique. The length of the assignment will determine how many criteria you will address in your critique.

CRITERIA	POSSIBLE FOCUS QUESTIONS
Significance and contribution to the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the author's aim?• To what extent has this aim been achieved?• What does this text add to the body of knowledge? (This could be in terms of theory, data and/or practical application)• What relationship does it bear to other works in the field?• What is missing/not stated?• Is this a problem?
Methodology or approach (This usually applies to more formal, research-based texts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What approach was used for the research? (e.g. quantitative or qualitative, analysis/review of theory or current practice, comparative, case study, personal reflection, etc.)• How objective/biased is the approach?• Are the results valid and reliable?• What analytical framework is used to discuss the results?



<p>Argument and use of evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear problem, statement or hypothesis? • What claims are made? • Is the argument consistent? • What kind of evidence does the text rely on? • How valid and reliable is the evidence? • How effective is the evidence in supporting the argument? • What conclusions are drawn? • Are these conclusions justified?
<p>Writing style and text structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the writing style suit the intended audience? (e.g., expert/non-expert, academic/non-academic) • What is the organizing principle of the text? Could it be better organized?

Activity 4

Take a look at a text you will potentially critique. If you've already done a close reading of a text for your critique, be sure to use the text you used for this exercise. Either individually or collaboratively, analyze the text by using the criteria outlined above by creating two columns on a sheet of paper or in a word processing file. Write the criteria in one column and in the other column, note the parts of the text that you think of as support for the criteria.



A Student Example

“A Critique of ‘Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students’ by Ashley Nelson

Ashley’s topic was on the use (and misuse) of drugs to treat attention deficit disorders in adult-aged patients. Ashley’s essay begins with an introduction that explains how this exercise fits into her overall research project and a brief summary of the article she is critiquing. But most of her essay focuses on her critique of the article.

A Critique of “Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students: Cross-Gender and Cross-National Prevalence,” by George J. DuPaul, Elizabeth A. Schaughency, Lisa L. Weyandt, Gail Tripp, Jeff Kiesner, Kenji Ota, and Heidy Stanish

While researching my topic, I came across many articles that were interesting and that I thought could be useful for me with my research topic. When I read “Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students: Cross-Gender and Cross-National Prevalence,” by George J. DuPaul et al, I knew it would be a good article to critique, too.

The article explains the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and describes an experiment with university students in the United States, New Zealand, and Italy. 1,209 students took two different self-reported surveys. The goal of the survey was to examine the percentage of students who have ADHD symptoms, if symptoms vary between gender and country, and also to find out if symptom patterns agree with the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The DSM creates the criteria to diagnose ADHD in young children. Most of the research on ADHD has been conducted with young children; therefore, understanding the symptoms in college students has not been widely studied (370).

The results showed that gender was not a big factor in the United States. However, in Italy and New Zealand women had about a ten percent increase in the hyperactive-impulsive category. The results also proved that using the age adjusted diagnostic criteria, compared to the DSM, more college students reported having either one symptom or both.

I think this article is good for several reasons. DuPaul and his colleagues explain what ADHD is and why it is important for college students to be diagnosed with the right criteria. The authors are also clearly experts in their fields. I also liked this article because the authors provide very good details about the results of their study.

DuPaul et al explain that ADHD “is characterized by developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention and impulsivity, and motor activity” (370). ADHD begins usually in early childhood. If a child is not treated for the disease, the symptoms will still appear in adulthood. These factors lead to “university students being at a higher risk for academic impairment and underachievement relative to their



counterparts without ADHD” (370). Despite the risks to college students, according to DuPaul et al, most of the research on ADHD has focused on children, which is one of the motivations for this study in the first place.

The authors of this article were clearly qualified to conduct this study, too. Most of the researchers are college professors in psychology departments around the country and around the world. Further, most of the researchers specialize in issues having to do with ADHD (370). I think the authors’ qualifications show that they are all motivated and dedicated to help people with this disease. This experience and dedication makes me believe that these writers conducted a credible study.

I also like this article because the authors do a good job of explaining their research and the results. They provide lots of information about the results throughout the article, and they also provide a number of useful tables, too. The authors believe that the DSM’s standards of criteria for what counts as ADHD are wrong for young adults because it was created for children. So the researchers constructed a 24 item survey called the Young Adult Rating Scale that was based on traditional ADHD symptoms and on symptoms that would appear in college-aged young people (372).

The researchers point out that there were a variety of limitations with their study. For example, the students who participated in the survey were only from five different universities. In addition, the students were not asked any personal questions that could have effected the outcome of the survey (378). However, DuPaul and his colleagues believe that this study helps to pave the way for future students which “would provide a better understanding of the age-related changes associated with ADHD symptoms and the relevance of these changes to diagnostic criteria for ADHD in university students and other adults” (378).

I think that “Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students” is an informative and interesting article, one I would certainly recommend to anyone interested in learning more about ADHD in young adults. DuPaul and his colleagues explained and interpreted the results of their survey very effectively.

Work Cited:

DuPaul, George; Elizabeth A. Schaugency, Lisa L. Weyandt, Gail Tripp, Jeff Kiesner, Kenji Ota, and Heidi Stanish. “Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students: Cross-Gender and Cross-National Prevalence.” *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. 34.4 (July/August 2001). 370-379.





POST-TEST

1. What is an academic article?

2. What is an article critique?

3. How do you make a meaningful article critique?

4. What are the steps in writing an article critique?

5. How do you summarize? paraphrase?

6. Describe each of the parts of an article critique.

7. What do you think is the importance of doing an article critique?

8. What are the skills that are developed in you when you do an article critique?



9. Why are these skills important?

10. Give at least three practical uses of having good article critique skills in your daily life.



WRITING TASK

Writing an Article Critique

Instructions

Critique a selection of writing you have found in your research as part of the ongoing research project. The main goal of this critique is to provide a detailed review of the particular selection of writing that will help your audience learn about your position on the writing selection and also to help your audience decide for themselves whether or not the writing selection is something they might be interested in reading.

Format

Paper size: 8.5" x 11" (short)

Font type and point: Times New Roman 12 or Arial 12

Spacing: Double

Margin: 1-inch margin on all sides, justify alignment

Pagination: Bottom center, plain number

Follow APA style



Questions to consider as you write your first draft

- If you were asked to choose your own text to critique, did you spend some time carefully considering possibilities? Why did you select the text that you did? Why did you rule out others?
- As part of your close reading, did you write both about and “in” the text that you are critiquing? What sort of marginal notes did you make? What are some of the key phrases or ideas that seemed important to you as you read that you underlined or noted with post-it notes in the margins? What kinds of questions about your reading did you write down as you read?
- How did you explain the main points of the text you closely read? What did you see as the main points of the text?
- Did you use a dictionary to look up words that you didn’t understand and couldn’t understand in context? Did you look up any complex or abstract terms? Did the dictionary definition of those terms help further your understanding of the word and the context where they occurred? Did you look up any terms that you saw as particularly important in different dictionaries? Did you learn anything from the different definitions?
- When you finished your close reading, what was your opinion of the text you closely read? Beyond a simple “good” or “bad” take on the reading, what are some of the reasons for your initial opinion about your reading?
- What criteria seemed most appropriate for the text you were critiquing? Why? What would be an example of a criteria that would probably be inappropriate for this text? Did you consider some of the criteria that are similar to the tests for evidence I suggested in chapter one?
- Have you explained for the reader somewhere in the first part of the essay what your main point is? In other words, did you introduce the criteria you would be using to critique your text early on in your essay?
- Have you noted key quotes and passages that would serve as evidence in order to support your criteria? What passages are you considering quoting instead of paraphrasing? Are there other reasons you are turning to as support for your criteria?
- Have you written a summary of your text? How familiar do you think your audience is with whatever it is you are critiquing? How has that effected your summary?



Review and Revision

Considering the recommendations of classmates in a peer review group and of other readers is especially important for this project. After all, if the goal of a critique essay is to give readers an idea about what it is you think of a particular reading, their direct feedback can help ensure that you are actually accomplishing these goals.

Here are some questions you and your classmates want to consider as you revise your critique essays (of course, you and your teacher might have other ideas and questions to ask in review too!):

- Do your readers understand (generally speaking) the text that you are critiquing? Of course, how much your readers understand the essay you are critiquing will depend on how familiar they are with it, and as the writer of the critique, you will probably know and understand the text better than your readers. But do they understand enough about the text to make heads or tails of the critique?
- Is there too much summary and not enough critique? That is, do the comments you are receiving from your readers suggesting that they do fully understand the article you are critiquing, but they are not clear on the point you are trying to make with your critique? Have you considered where you are including summary information in different parts of your essay?
- Do your readers understand the main point you are trying to make in your criteria? Have you provided some information and explanation about your criteria in the beginning part of your essay?
- Do your readers seem to agree with you that your criteria are appropriate for whatever it is you are critiquing? Do they have suggestions that might help clarify your criteria? Do your readers have suggestions about different or additional criteria?
- Are you quoting and paraphrasing the text you are critiquing effectively? Are there places where your readers have indicated they need more information from the critiqued text? Are there places where your readers think you might be relying too heavily on quotes or paraphrases from the critiqued text and wish they could read more about your opinion?
- As your readers understand the article you are critiquing, and the points you are making about it, do you think you have created any interest in your readers in actually reading the article themselves?



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Lesson 2

WRITING A POSITION PAPER



OBJECTIVES

When you have read and thought about the lesson, you should be able to:

1. Define what a position paper is
2. Identify the parts of a position paper
3. Explain the steps in writing a position paper
4. Write a position paper on a significant topic



PRE-TEST

Pick three from the topics below. Take a stand on these topics (e.g. agree or disagree) and write your responses together with your supporting ideas in the worksheet below.

1. Staying single forever is better than getting married.
2. Having a short but fantastic life is better than having a long but simple life.
3. Engaging in pre-marital sex is acceptable nowadays.
4. Success is a choice not a destiny.
5. Facebook is an effective communication tool.
6. You only live once (YOLO), so do everything that you can think of.
7. Love is forever.
8. Nothing lasts forever.
9. Money is the root of all evil.
10. Education is the key to success.



CHOSEN TOPICS	AGREE OR DISAGREE?	EXPLANATION, EXAMPLE & EVIDENCE



What is a Position Paper?

A **position paper** is a type of academic writing where you research on a controversial issue and write a paper that explains your viewpoint on it. The purpose of writing a position paper is to convince the audience that your opinion is valid and worth listening to. Ideas that you are considering need to be carefully examined in introducing the topic, developing your argument, and organizing your paper.

In writing your position paper, it is very important to ensure that you are addressing all sides of the issue and presenting it in a manner that is easy for your audience to understand. Your job is to take one side of the argument and persuade your audience that you have well-founded knowledge of the topic being presented. It is important to support your argument with evidence to ensure the validity of your claims, as well as to address the counterclaims to show that you are well informed about both sides.

Choosing Your Issue

Choose an issue where there is a clear division of opinion and which is arguable with facts and inductive reasoning. You may choose an issue on which you have already formed an opinion. However, in writing about this issue you must examine your opinion of the issue critically. Prior to writing your position paper, define and limit your issue carefully. Social issues are complex with multiple solutions. Narrow the topic of your position paper to something that is manageable. Research your issue thoroughly, consulting experts and obtaining primary documents. Consider feasibility, cost-effectiveness and political/social climate when evaluating possible solutions and courses of action.



Consider Your Audience

Who is the intended audience of your paper? It may be your professor, classmates, or some other persons or groups out in the world that you want to convince. Knowing your audience is essential to making a strong argument. In considering your audience, ask yourself the following questions:

- **What does my audience value and believe?** Keep these things in mind when writing the paper. Your argument is going to be more convincing if you show that you have taken the situation of your audience into account.
- **What side of argument do they favor?** Are you trying to convince someone who probably already agrees with you, or is the reader someone you need to convince to think otherwise?
- **How will their interests be affected by the issue?** In other words, why should your audience care about this issue? This question can also be broader – why should anyone care about this issue?
- **What kind of evidence will be most effective with them?** Because you are writing an academic paper, the type of evidence you want to use should be based on reputable research and sound logic.



What Type of Evidence Do I Use to Support My Argument?

The **evidence** can be in many forms, but make sure it is reputable and clearly connects to the point you are trying to make.

- **Statistics** – always investigate how this data was achieved. This could influence the credibility of the information.
- **Factual data** – this data should be widely agreed on by most people, or supported by other reliable information.
- **Reputable opinions and claims** – make sure the individuals have the credentials to be making these claims and are respected in their fields.
- **Relevant personal testimony** – the testimony might be from individuals directly involved in the issue you are investigating. They may be able to provide first-hand experience that will help validate your argument.

Determine Your Viewpoint

In determining your viewpoint, ask yourself the following questions:

- How do I feel about the topic?
- Can I assert an argument for my position on the topic which will result in a reasonable (supportable) outcome?
- Do I have enough material or evidence to support my opinion?

Analyzing Other Position Papers

The best way to start a successful position paper is research. Here are some strategies to effectively analyze other positions or arguments:

- Did the writer analyze the controversy and discuss what others have said about it?
- What are the various positions on the issue? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? Did the writer cite sources of information and provide a reference list for readers who want to read those?



- Did the writer explain and fairly analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the various sides of the issue? How deeply into the argument was the writer able to go? If there were only two different opinions, did the writer carefully explore the strengths and weaknesses of each, or did he/she just disprove one side without going into the details?
- What is the writer's position on the issue? What is he/she arguing that we the reader should or should not do about it?
- What are the writer's reasons for his/her opinion? How well does the writer support the recommended course of action?
- Did the writer see the objections to or weaknesses in his/her own argument? Did he/she argue strongly for a particular point of view or direction?
- Was the paper persuasive? Why or why not?

Strategies for Structuring Your Position Paper

- Define the issue and provide a background as thorough as possible. State your own position.
- Discuss and analyze the various positions you have researched. Ensure that both strengths and weaknesses are taken into account.
- Discuss your position and analyze its strengths and weaknesses. Discuss its relevance to other positions and why you have chosen it. Provide counters against potential criticisms and weaknesses in the argument.
- Give reasons why your position and/or suggested course of action is the optimum one for all parties involved.
- A successful position paper is one that persuades its audience towards its argument. Reading your paper objectively and asking the same questions of it as you asked of the ones you researched, will help you avoid the same weaknesses in argument that you may have noticed in the papers you have analyzed.



Organization

Your introduction should lead up to a thesis that organizes the rest of your paper. There are three advantages to leading with the thesis:

1. The audience knows where you stand.
2. The thesis is located in two strongest places, first and last.
3. It is the most common form of academic argument used.

Parts of a Position Paper

The following structure is typical of a position paper:

The **introduction** should clearly identify the issue and state the author's position. It should be written in a way that catches the reader's attention.

The **body** of the position paper may contain several paragraphs. Each paragraph should present an idea or main concept that clarifies a portion of the position statement and is supported by evidence or facts. Evidence can be primary source quotations, statistical data, interviews with experts, and indisputable dates or events. Evidence should lead, through inductive reasoning, to the main concept or idea presented in the paragraph. The body may begin with some background information and should incorporate a discussion of both sides of the issue.

The **conclusion** should summarize the main concepts and ideas and reinforce, without repeating, the introduction or body of the paper. It could include suggested courses of action and possible solutions.

There is no one "right" way to set up your paper. Depending on the type of assignment, the discipline, the teacher, or even the topic, the organization of your paper may vary.



The sample outline below may be used as your start-up template.

Sample Outline

- I. Introduction
 - A. Introduce the general issue
 - B. Present the background information about the issue
 - C. Gradually lead up to your thesis statement (your view of the issue)
- II. Background Information / Counterargument
 - A. Explain the context of the issue
 - What's the history of the issue?
 - What makes the issue so important?
 - B. Counterargument
 - Research that supports it
 - C. Reiterate your point-of-view to refute counterargument
- III. Point 1
 - A. Topic Sentence
 - B. Research, Examples, and Discussion
 - C. Explain how the point relates to your thesis
- IV. Point 2
 - A. Topic Sentence
 - B. Research, Examples, and Discussion
 - C. Explain how the point relates to your thesis
- V. Point 3
 - A. Topic Sentence
 - B. Research, Examples, and Discussion
 - C. Explain how the point relates to your thesis
- VI. Point 4
 - A. Topic Sentence
 - B. Research, Examples, and Discussion
 - C. Explain how the point relates to your thesis
- VII. Et cetera...
- VIII. Conclusion
 - A. Revisit/ summarize your thesis (don't simply restate it).
 - B. Ask yourself the "so what" question. Why does what you wrote matter to your audience, to society, etc.?



Points to Remember:

1. **You may need more than one paragraph for each point you make.** Do not fall victim to the “5 paragraph essay” format you may have learned early in high school. When you feel that you are introducing a new facet of the point you are making, start a new paragraph.
2. **Transition smoothly from one point to the next.** Do this by previewing the following paragraph at the end of the current one you are writing, **or** by referring back to the previous paragraph at the beginning of the current paragraph. Think about what connects the two points. Why are you placing them in the order that you are?



Sample Position Papers

Instructions: Read the sample papers below and identify the parts.

Sample 1

**These sample position papers were submitted by the delegation of Romania and Portugal at the 2007 UNA-USA Model UN Conference in New York City*

Committee: International Labor Organization

Agenda: Globalization and Development

Country: Romania

In the past two decades the rapidly growing world trend has been toward globalization. With the emergence of the internet as a means of communication and the increasing accessibility of international trade physical barriers are not the only barriers withering away. Protective tariffs are plummeting and free trade agreements are becoming more prevalent. Romania appreciates that globalization creates favorable situations for expansion of commercial as well as economic assets. In the past year Romania has seen a foreign direct investment (FDI) increase of 199%. Inward FDI increased from EURO 234 million in 2005 to EURO 699 million in 2006. However, Romania realizes that increased globalization does not automatically produce more equality.

Globalization and Development can contribute to the advancement of the overall international human condition; however, the delegation of Romania recognizes that without proper regulation the potential for advancement will remain limited to an elite few individuals, businesses, and nations. Unless checked and aimed toward the common good, globalization cannot effectively serve the global community. Crucial in dealing with the complexities of globalization, good governance must act with solidarity and responsibility. Romania believes that in involving people in globalization we must promote moral values, democratic principles, inclusive global political culture, institutions that safeguard both individual civil rights and inherent freedoms, and the common good. In addition, coping with the influx of information from globalization governments must act with solidarity and insight. Access to digital education will undoubtedly result in the confidence of citizens in their respective administrations and allow for a greater degree of transparency, and therefore a lesser degree of corruption.

Romania believes the multinational business community has the ability and the obligation to support pertinent values in human rights, labor standards, and environmental preservation. As stated by the president, Mr. Traion Baseescu, Romania feels a "heartfelt attachment to multilateralism, as an effective instrument designed to identify the adequate answers to the challenges brought by globalization."

Romania is party to the majority of multilateral treaties and conventions identified as such by the Secretary General in the context of the Millennium Summit in 2001. Romania has always supported innovative and effective ways of establishing cooperation within and between regional organizations. As one of the newest members of the European Union, Romania is an active member of the World Trade Organization, and looks forward to offering its support to the redirection of globalization to best benefit the global community.



Sample Paper 2

Name of the country: Portugal

Name of the committee: United Nations General Assembly: Committee-I (Disarmament and Security)

Agenda: Preventing Acquisition of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) by Terrorist Organisations

Today, we have gathered in this formal committee not only to discuss the cowardice attitudes of those who procure weapons for mass killing and shameless acts of terrorism, but our purpose will only be fulfilled when we stitch clothes of wisdom for those who have lost their loved ones, and will act as a soothing balm for them in the times of adversity and will give them the courage to fight these anti human relentless activities. Hence, the people of Portugal would like to open by saying that our position on terrorism is absolutely clear-cut and not negotiable. As we said to general assembly in December 2007, "Terrorism is criminal and unjustifiable in any circumstances." A weapon of mass destruction (WMDs) proliferation currently represents one of the greatest threats to international security. The nation of Portugal has been against the weapons of mass destruction and its proliferation and has always attempted at eliminating the WMDs at the global level.

Disarmament and non-proliferation remain indispensable tools to help create a security environment favourable to ensuring human development, as enshrined in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. One of the main purpose of the United Nations is "to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace" (Article-1; UN Charter). The objective of the UNs Security Council's Resolution 1540 (2004) is to prevent individuals and organisations, especially terrorist groups from laying their hands on and spreading nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and the means of their delivery.

At national level, we are reviewing our policies, with a view to establishing what further measures may be necessary. At European level, Portugal has contributed to establish effective policies within the European Union to prevent WMD proliferation, and will continue to do so. At international Level Portugal is party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention (BTWC). Portugal has adopted an Additional Protocol to its IAEA Safeguards Agreement.

Due to the inherent destructive nature of the WMDs, Portugal believes that it is essential to take the necessary measures to prevent terrorist organisations from acquiring these in order to save a fairly large amount of people from the threat of a WMD terrorist attack. Portugal fervently supports measures to assist Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs in its attempts to prevent terrorist organisations from catching hold of these weapons. Portugal is a signatory to

Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof (Seabed Treaty) and The Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ) Agreement, that the USA and the United Nations has agreed to stating that a group of states may establish a treaty to ban to usage, development and deployment of nuclear weapons in given areas.

Portugal mainly possesses small and light arms and as such no large resource of WMDs. Portugal believes in global peace and we see these as a speed-breaker in the long road to the same. With the aim of promoting cooperation and interaction between several national bodies involved in counter-proliferation, a program has been developed; the programme's objectives are: to support control of export and technology transfers, to detect underground procurement networks and to fight nuclear and radioactive smuggling. Portugal is an active member of the multilateral export control regimes, namely of the Nuclear Supplier's Group, the Australia Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Zangeer Committee and the Wassenaar Arrangement. In addition to national export control lists, control lists developed under those regimes are also applied by the Portuguese export control system. It is Portugal's policy to encourage non-member states of the export control regimes to adhere to regime guidelines on export controls.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors poses a unique threat to the international community because of the very nature of their desire for such weapons. Furthermore, globalization has made it easier than ever before for non-state actors to acquire weapons of mass destruction often through untraceable means. Portugal does not provide any form of support to non-state actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery. We seek the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373 and we encourage the sharing of intelligence regarding terrorist groups and their activities. Portugal applies the rules on non-proliferation, export controls and border security as established in the framework of the relevant international treaties and regimes.

Portugal is participating, from its inception, in the Proliferation Security Initiative, launched in May 2003. Its objective is the interdiction/interception of trafficking of WMD and related material. The PSI principles are explicitly based on the 1992 UN Security Council Declaration on proliferation of WMD and are consistent with national legislation and relevant international law and frameworks, including the UN. The Nation of Portugal also strictly opposes the use of nuclear, chemical and bio- weapons from the international to the local level and the same is reflected in its policies. Portugal thoroughly believes that it is essential to prevent terrorist organisations from acquiring WMDs and that it is only global cooperation and initiative that can put an end to the threat posed by the same.



POST-TEST

1. What is a position paper?

2. Why do you need to learn how to write an effective position paper?

3. What do you do when you 'take a position'?

4. What type of issues can you use in writing your position paper?

5. Who can be your audience of your finished position paper?

6. Why is it important to consider your audience before writing a position paper?

7. Where can you get evidence to support your points?

8. Why is it important to determine your viewpoint on a topic that you will write about?



9. What are the parts of a position paper?

10. Why is it important to outline your points in a position paper?



WRITING TASK

Writing a Position Paper

Scenario

Consider yourself a Philippine delegate to the annual Ivy League Model United Nations Conference (ILMUNC), which will be held at the Harvard University in the USA. Each of the delegates will have to present a position paper on a national issue at the conference.

Instruction

Research on a pressing national issue in the Philippines. After you have completed your research, write a position paper following the structure outlined above. You may refer to the sample position papers presented in this lesson.

Format

Pages: 1-2 pages

Paper size: 8.5" x 11" (short white paper; black text only)

Font type and point: Times New Roman 12 or Arial 12

Spacing: single

Margin: 1-inch margin on all sides, justify alignment

Pagination: Bottom center, plain number

Follow APA style



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