

Paragraph Development

for Argumentative Essays

Writing an argumentative essay can seem more complex and confusing than it needs to be. To make it easier, develop a “line of questioning” strategy. This will help you figure out what you are trying to say. You will often find that you don’t lack opinions or concrete knowledge on the subject; rather, you just don’t know how to get your ideas out of your head and onto the paper. Here’s how:

First, ask yourself:

What is the point I’m trying to make?

Ex. The United States needs stronger gun control legislation.

Now, figure out:

Why?

Ex. 1) There are too many people with mental illness gaining access to firearms

Ex. 2) The crime rate is at an all-time high

Ex. 3) Other countries with stronger gun control have had success in reducing crime

Next, recognize that you have just written your thesis!:

Ex. The United States needs stronger gun control legislation because there are too many people with mental illness gaining access to firearms, the crime rate is at an all-time high, and other countries with stronger gun control have had success in reducing crime.

Good. Time to get into the body. Take the first thesis point:

Ex. The United States needs stronger gun control legislation because there are too many people with mental illness gaining access to firearms.

(Hint: This is a topic sentence. It’s one of your thesis points joined with your argument. It leads into an elaboration.)

Then, ask yourself:

What do I mean?

Ex. Over the past few years, there have been many mass shootings conducted by people with mental disabilities.

(Hint: This is your support! Now, all you need is to find proof through research.)

Finally, figure out:

Why should someone care about this? Why is it an important issue?

Ex. This is an important issue because many people with mental disorders have trouble making sound decisions. People who are unable to do this do not need a means to harm other people. For example, when the Sandy Hook shooting took place...

Follow this pattern in each of your body paragraphs and you have an essay!