



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025
How to Write an Argumentative Essay Outline



Classical (Aristotelian) argumentative essay outline template

When to use it:

- Straightforward arguments
- The most forthright approach, the Classical or Aristotelian format, is closest to traditional essay structures. It follows a simple layout: explain your argument, explain your opposition's argument, and then present your evidence, all the while relying on credibility (*ethos*), emotion (*pathos*), and reasoning (*logos*) to influence the reader.
- Aristotle had a gift for explaining things clearly and logically; the Aristotelian argumentative essay structure leans into that. Also known as Classical or Classic, the Aristotelian format is the most straightforward: the writer presents their argument and then refutes the opposing argument.

Let's look at the details in this argumentative essay, outlined as examples of the Classical or Aristotelian format.

I. Introduction

- A. Open with a hook, something to keep the reader interested enough to read until the conclusion (known as an *exordium*)
- B. Give any background information or context necessary to understand the topic (known as *narratio*)
- C. Provide a thesis statement explaining your stance and why you feel that way (known as *proposito* and *partitio*)

II. First reason

A. Start with the least controversial reason to support your argument, explaining your point clearly as an overview

1. First evidential support of your reason (known as *confirmatio*)
2. Second evidential support of your reason, then third, and so on

B. Summarise your first reason again and tie it together with evidential support

III. Second reason, etc.



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A. Continue to list your reasons in the same format as the first. List your reasons from least to most controversial

IV. First opposing point of view

A. Explain the reasoning of the opposing side. Point out their defences and evidence—what would they say if they were writing the essay?

1. Point out weaknesses and inconsistencies in their argument
2. Refute their points with evidential support (known as *refutatio*)
3. Reinforce your position as the more reasonable position

V. Second opposing point of view, etc.

A. Continue to present and refute opposing points of view in the same format as the first

VI. Conclusion

A. Reiterate your position and thesis statement, drawing on your strongest evidential support and rebuttals of opposing points (known as *peroratio*)

B. Wrap everything up with a thought-provoking ending or call to action (a suggestion you want the reader to take)