



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

Toulmin's argumentative essay outline template

When to use it:

- Complicated arguments with multiple facets, rebuttals, and counterarguments
- The Toulmin method is a deep analysis of a single argument. Given its methodical and detailed nature, it works best for breaking down a complicated thesis into digestible portions.
- The Toulmin method is rather nitpicky in a very systematic way. That makes it an ideal format if your essay is a rebuttal or counterargument to another essay—you can dissect and disprove your opposition point by point while offering a more reasonable alternative.
- Stephen Toulmin's original purpose was to analyse the nature of arguments, but the application of his teachings has evolved into an argumentative essay format, especially for challenging existing arguments. It focuses on the six elements of a good argument: claim (thesis), grounds (data and reasons), warrants, backings, qualifiers, and rebuttals.

The argumentative essay outline example below shows the recommended order in which to put these elements:

I. Introduction

- A. Open with a hook, if you can, to garner interest
- B. Explain the topic and its necessary context
- C. Make your thesis statement

II. Present the grounds (hard evidence) to validate your thesis

- A. Present your first evidential support of data or logical reasons
- B. Present your second evidential support of data or logical reasons, and so on

III. Explain your first warrant (justification for your thesis)

- A. Explain how the warrant relates back to your thesis
- B. Provide backing to support your warrant (could be more evidence or data or just logical reasoning)
- C. List any qualifiers that undermine or limit your warrant—the idea is to acknowledge any weaknesses in your own argument

IV. Explain your second warrant, and so on

- A. Continue to explain your individual warrants as above



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V. Discuss opposition

- A. Explain the first opposing point of view
 - 1. Discuss the opposition fairly and transparently
 - 2. Explain your rebuttal to defend your thesis
- B. Explain the second opposing point of view, and so on

VI. Conclusion

- A. Connect all your warrants and data
- B. Reiterate the opposing position and your rebuttals
- C. Conclude to make your final claim and reaffirm your thesis

