

## Writing assignment series

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### Writing Position Papers

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#### Write a position paper to

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- Organize and outline your viewpoint on an issue
- Formally inform others of your position  
as a foundation to build resolution to difficult problems
- Present a unique, though biased, solution  
or a unique approach to solving a problem
- Frame the discussion in order to define the "playing field."  
This can put you in an advantageous position with those who may not be so well prepared as regards the issues behind their positions
- Establish your credibility  
Here you are demonstrating that you have a command of the issues and the research behind them, and can present them clearly
- Let your passion be demonstrated in the force of your argument  
rather than in the use of emotional terms
- Guide you in being consistent in maintaining your position in negotiation

#### **The better prepared you are**

the more disadvantaged are your opponents and more likely they will defer to you

#### Guidelines:

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- Format should be consistent with guidelines determined by the sponsoring organization or committee
- Include topic, date, purpose, etc., and should readily identify you as the author
- If the paper represents a group, organization, committee, do not write in the first person (not I, my, mine, etc. but rather we, our, etc.)
- Limit yourself to two pages following the format established by previous successful position papers

#### Research:

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- Develop supporting evidence for both sides  
including factual knowledge, statistical evidence, authoritative testimony

- Identify the issues and prejudices keeping in mind your audience  
List these as appropriate and anticipate counterclaims
- Assume familiarity with basic concepts  
but define unfamiliar terms/concepts or state meanings that define your point of departure
- Refer to those who agree with your position to assist you in developing your argument
- Familiarize yourself with those who disagree with you to prepare your defense.  
Summarize their argument and evidence, then refute

## Introduction:

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### **Consider your audience:**

start with a topic sentence or two that attracts attention and summarizes the issue  
Inform the reader of your point of view

## Development:

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Focus on three main points to develop  
Each topic is developed with

- a general statement of the position
- an elaboration that references documents and source data
- past experiences and authoritative testimony
- conclusion restating the position

### **Establish flow from paragraph to paragraph**

- **Keep your voice active**
- **Quote sources** to establish authority
- **Stay focused** on your point of view throughout the essay
- **Focus on logical arguments**
- **Don't lapse into summary**  
in the development--wait for the conclusion

## Conclusion

- **Summarize, then conclude, your argument**
- **Refer to the first paragraph/opening statements**  
as well as the main points
  - does the conclusion restate the main ideas?
  - reflect the succession and importance of the arguments
  - logically conclude their development?

### **Share a draft with others**

to better develop the paper and ensure that your argument is clear

**Revise, spell-check, and succeed in building your case.**

## Writing assignments

Writing for the "Web" | The five-paragraph essay | Essays for a literature class |  
Expository essays | Persuasive essays | Position papers | Open book exams |  
Essay Exams | White papers | Lab reports/scientific papers |  
Research proposals | Elements of a Research Paper  
Seven stages of writing assignments | "Lessons learned"

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