

3 STUDY ACADEMIC WRITING

In Section 1, you saw how the writer of the Student Model essay reflected on her topic. In this section, you will analyze the final draft of her academic essay. You will learn how to structure your ideas for your own essay.

A Student Model

Read the writing prompt again and answer the questions.

WRITING PROMPT: According to recent information on diversity in the workforce of the largest tech companies, over 70 percent of employees were male. Some people say that these companies should hire more women. Others say that it is not necessary for there to be more women in that industry. What is your point of view? Should tech companies hire more women?

- 1 What is the essay prompt asking the writer to write about?
- 2 Look at the title of her essay. What will she argue?

Read the essay twice. The first time, think about your answers to the questions above. The second time, answer the questions in the Analyze Writing Skills boxes. This will help you notice key features of argumentative essays.

STUDENT
MODEL

TOPIC

Why We Need More Women in Technology Jobs

1 Women have 52 percent of professional jobs in the United States (Warner), but they have only about 12 percent of tech jobs at technology “start-ups” (Gilpin). Some people believe it is not important to have more women working in technology companies. They feel it should not matter if employees are men or women. In fact, companies should hire more women in technology because they would be more innovative and competitive, and society would be much stronger.

2 If tech companies hired more women, they would increase their innovation. First, everyone knows that diversity of ideas is important for innovation, so hiring more women, including women of different cultures, would give new perspectives on

1 Analyze Writing Skills

Underline the hook in paragraph 1 that gets your attention. What kind of hook is it? Circle the correct word.

observation statistic
question story
quotation visualization

2 Analyze Writing Skills

In paragraph 1, underline the three main points that the writer will discuss in her body paragraphs.

ideas. The discussions about products will be different because these women will challenge the men's ideas. Secondly, women could help to design products for women. Since women make 85 percent of consumer purchases ("Marketing to Women"), their preferences are important. Women engineers could help companies design products that really address their needs. For example, one app was easily activated by tapping a phone in a pocket. However, a female engineer pointed out that women often keep phones in purses. As a result, the design of the phone was changed. It is clear that women in technology would give a new perspective on ideas.

3 Analyze Writing Skills

In paragraph 2, what kind of information does the writer give to support the topic sentence? Circle all that apply.

example
fact
personal experience
quotation
statistic

TS 3 If there were more women as leaders, technology companies would be more successful. According to a study by the *Harvard Business Review* (Zenger and Folkman), women were given higher ratings in their leadership abilities. They were better at leading employees and achieving results. Some examples of successful women leaders who have shown strong leadership are Sheryl Sandberg of Facebook and Marissa Mayer of Yahoo. Also, since there are not many women in technology, women do not feel comfortable and they work harder. Men feel comfortable in technology, so they may not work as hard as women. It is possible that women leaders could make companies achieve more.

4 Analyze Writing Skills

In paragraph 3, how many supporting sentences does the writer include to support her topic sentence?
Underline them.

3 4 Most importantly, our society will benefit from more women in technology companies. First, these jobs will help women take care of their families. There are many single mothers who are raising children in this country. Since technology jobs pay well, the single mother will be able to live well and not worry about her finances. In addition, these jobs will also benefit mothers who must work to help their husbands make enough money to raise a family. Second, if women get these jobs, they can be role models for younger girls and encourage them to study for jobs in technology. It is clear that hiring women for tech jobs will make families stronger and society more stable.

5 Analyze Writing Skills

In paragraph 4, how many supporting sentences does the writer include to support her point?
Circle the words that she uses to introduce them.

5 In sum, hiring more women in tech jobs would benefit companies by making them more creative and successful, and this change would benefit society. This will happen only if companies change their ideas about hiring women, and this may not be easy for them to do. Also, teachers must encourage girls to consider careers in tech jobs. In my case, I plan to work in a tech job and will be proud to be a role model for young girls.

Works Cited

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3.1 Check Your Understanding

Answer the questions about the Student Model essay on pages 204–205.

- 1 What is the purpose of the essay?
- 2 Which point do you think is strongest? Explain.
- 3 What is your opinion of the writer's ideas? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

3.2 Outline the Writer's Ideas

Complete the outline for "Why We Need More Women in Technology Jobs." Write the thesis statement. Then use the phrases in the box.

help design products for women

higher ratings in leadership abilities

increase their innovation

men may not work as hard

women can be role models for young girls



ESSAY OUTLINE

I. Introductory paragraph

Thesis Statement

.....

.....

Body Paragraph 1 Point 1

II.

Supporting Idea 1

A. Give new perspectives on ideas

Detail

1. Will challenge men's ideas

Supporting Idea 2

B.

Detail

1. Women – 85% of consumer purchases

Detail

2. Avoid wrong decisions

Body
Paragraph 2
Point 2

III. Help companies be more successful

Supporting
Idea 1

A.

Detail

1. Better at leading and achieving

Detail

2. Ex: Sandberg and Mayer

Supporting
Idea 2

B. Women work harder – less comfortable

Detail

1.

Body
Paragraph 3
Point 3

IV. Society will benefit

Supporting
Idea 1

A. Jobs will help women take care of their families

Detail

1. Help single mothers

Detail

2. Help mothers who help support their families

Supporting
Idea 2

B.

Detail

1. They can encourage girls to study for jobs in technology

V. Concluding paragraph

B Argumentative Essays

The ability to write argumentative essays is essential in academic writing. You will often be asked to give your point of view on a topic that you have discussed in class. Stating your point of view clearly and supporting it using information from texts and your experience is a key skill in both speaking and writing. This skill will help you be successful both in school and in your career.

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

An **argument** is an opinion, or a point of view, with reasons and evidence to prove that the point of view is valid. An argument tells the reader, "I believe that my point of view is a good one, and I have persuasive reasons supported by facts and research to prove it." A successful argument makes your reader understand and recognize that your point of view has some value; however, it does not mean that your reader will in the end change their opinion and agree with you.

The Student Model writer's argument is summarized below.

Student Model Writer's Argument: Companies should hire more women in technology because they would be more innovative, they would be more competitive, and society would be much stronger.

Reasons and Evidence for Argument: Increasing the number of women in tech positions would make companies more innovative since the diversity of women from different cultures would make the workplace more creative. Women would challenge ideas and bring new ones. It would make the companies more competitive since women have a lot of power as consumers and they are good leaders. Finally, it will benefit society because more women will be able to take care of their families, especially single mothers, and these women will be role models to young girls and encourage them to choose careers in technology.

DEBATABLE TOPICS

When writers choose a topic for an argumentative essay, they must make sure that they choose a debatable topic. Debatable topics are those that people have serious disagreements about, such as women's rights, freedom of religion, animal rights, free higher education, and the death penalty.

On the issue of "Should higher education be free?," three points of view are:

Point of view 1: Higher education should be free because if a country's citizens are all educated, there will be more skilled workers. More skilled workers means that companies will produce more and sell more.

Point of view 2: Higher education should be free because it is a citizen's basic right. It should not matter if a person is rich or poor. Everyone should get a good education.

Point of view 3: Higher education should not be free because if it is free people will not work hard or care about their studies. People will not be educated or competitive. As a result, the economy will suffer.

Other debatable topics include "Should governments control the Internet?," "Is marriage necessary?," "Should men and women receive equal pay for the same job?," and "Is a job a human right?"

THE STRUCTURE OF AN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

Writers carefully construct each part of their essay because each part has a specific purpose.

- 1 The **introductory paragraph** gets the reader's attention, convinces the reader that the topic or issue is important, and leads the reader to the thesis statement. It consists of:
 - a **hook**, such as a famous quote, a story, a surprising or alarming fact, or a statistic about the issue
 - **background information**, which explains the issue, its importance, the different sides of the debate, and information that introduces the thesis
 - the **thesis statement**, which usually contains the points that the writer will prove in the body paragraphs
- 2 The **body paragraphs** build the argument by explaining each reason and giving clear evidence – such as facts, examples, personal experiences, and research – to convince the reader that the reason is valid.
- 3 The **concluding paragraph** summarizes the argument and reminds the reader why the topic is important. It ends with a memorable closing statement, quotation, or call to action.



3.7 Notice

Check (✓) the correct answers. In some cases, there may be more than one answer.

- 1 In which paragraph(s) does the writer tell the reader why the topic is important?
☐ a introductory paragraph ☐ b body paragraphs ☐ c concluding paragraph
- 2 How do writers use facts in an argumentative essay?
☐ a as a hook ☐ b to prove a reason in a body paragraph ☐ c as part of the thesis statement
- 3 In which paragraph(s) do writers give support for the reasons in an argument?
☐ a introductory paragraph ☐ b body paragraphs ☐ c concluding paragraph
- 4 In which paragraph does the writer comment on the issue or tell the reader to do something?
☐ a introductory paragraph ☐ b body paragraphs ☐ c concluding paragraph

WRITING AN INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

The introductory paragraph in an argumentative essay has a lot to accomplish. As mentioned earlier, it:

- gets the reader's attention and interest using a hook
- explains a little bit about the issue and the different sides of the debate so that the reader understands what the issue is, what people are saying about the issue, and why the thesis statement makes sense
- ends in the thesis statement

If the introductory paragraph is uninteresting or vague, the reader will have difficulty reading and understanding the rest of the essay.



3.8 Notice

Look at the introductory paragraph of the Student Model essay on pages 204–205. Answer the questions.

- 1 The writer chooses a statistic as her hook. Why is it effective?
- 2 How does the writer help you understand the issue?



3.9 Apply It to Your Writing



Look at your chart from Section 1 on page 199. Think about the essay prompt and ask yourself these questions.

- 1 What background information should the reader know about the topic in order to understand why it is an important issue?

- 2 Write a possible way to get your reader's attention (e.g., an interesting or surprising statement, a quote, a story, a fact, or a statistic).

STRONG AND WEAK THESIS STATEMENTS

In an argumentative essay, the **thesis statement**, also called a **claim**, states the writer's point of view. A strong thesis statement:

- Answers the prompt with a clear point of view. The prompt may ask you to agree or disagree, to say whether something is or is not a problem, or to say whether something is or is not true. It contains the word *should* if necessary.
- Uses key words from the prompt that are part of the question and the issue.
- Gives specific reasons that are clear and could be supported by evidence.

Read the writing prompt and the weak and strong thesis statements that follow. Notice the differences between the two.

WRITING PROMPT: Tech companies are not known for the diversity of their workforce. In fact, in some of the largest tech companies, almost three-quarters of their workforce is made up of young males, mostly Caucasian. There has been a lot of debates about whether these companies should be more diverse and include more diversity in gender and ethnicity. What is your point of view? Should tech companies hire people with more diverse backgrounds?

Strong Thesis Statement: *Tech companies should hire more people of diverse backgrounds because companies with a diverse workforce are more innovative, the workforce should reflect the people in the society, and someone's gender or ethnicity should not determine who gets a job.*

This thesis statement is strong because:

- 1 The point of view is clear. The writing prompt has *should* in it, and the thesis statement does, too. The writer thinks that the lack of diversity is a problem and that tech companies should hire more women and people of different ethnicities.
- 2 The writer includes key words such as *tech companies*, *gender*, and *hire*.
- 3 The reasons are clear, support the point of view, and could be supported by evidence.

Weak Thesis Statement: *There are not many women or different kinds of people in technology jobs, but this is how our society is.*

This thesis statement is weak because:

- 1 The point of view is not clear. The writing prompt has *should* in it, but the thesis statement does not, so it does not answer the prompt.
- 2 The thesis does not contain key words from the question or about the topic.
- 3 The reasons are not clearly stated, and it is not apparent what the reasons will be.



3.10 Evaluate Thesis Statements

Read the thesis statements for each writing prompt. Write *W* for weak and *S* for strong. Discuss your answers with a partner.

WRITING PROMPT 1: Is a high-paying job necessary to have a happy life?

- 1 A high-paying job is not necessary for a happy life because a happy life depends on things that do not need money, such as having good friends and a loving family, being a good person, and enjoying life.
- 2 A high-paying job is necessary for a happy life because you can take care of your family, enjoy participating in things that cost money, and help others.
- 3 When people make a lot of money, it can sometimes make them happy, but often it is a problem because money can make people greedy and they do not make good decisions.

WRITING PROMPT 2: Should the Internet be controlled by governments?

- 1 The Internet is a human right and there is a lot of important information that companies, scientists, and all people need.
- 2 The Internet should not be controlled by governments because access to information is a right and countries without control are more innovative.
- 3 The Internet should be controlled by governments because governments must protect its citizens from illegal activities, false information, and hateful people.

MORE ABOUT THESIS STATEMENTS

Thesis statements do not have to list the reasons or points. Read the thesis statements below. One thesis statement does not give the specific reasons for the reader, but they both clearly indicate what the writer will discuss in the body paragraphs that will follow.

Thesis Statement 1: *Living in a multicultural society is challenging because you have to adjust to different social norms, deal with feelings of isolation, and change your habits.* (The writer includes three specific reasons for the point of view.)

Thesis Statement 2: *Living in a multicultural society is challenging because people must always make adjustments and these adjustments can be difficult.* (The reasons are not specific, but the reader knows that the writer will discuss adjustments and why they are sometimes difficult.)



3.11 Analyze Thesis Statements

Work with a partner. Read the thesis statements and discuss the points the writer might discuss.

- 1 Money is not the most motivating factor in choosing a job.
- 2 People can peacefully live together in a multicultural society if they work together to respect each other's customs and values.

BUILDING AN ARGUMENT IN THE BODY PARAGRAPHS

Each **body paragraph** in an argumentative essay has a clear goal. The goal is to make the reader, especially the reader who disagrees with you, say, "I may not totally agree with your argument, but this paragraph sure is convincing!"

Each **body paragraph** consists of:

- a **topic sentence** that links to the thesis statement by repeating important words from the thesis statement in it
- **evidence**, such as facts or statistics, quotations or examples, logical reasons, or personal experiences, and an explanation that shows how the paragraph supports the topic sentence

Below are examples of the types of evidence that writers use.

- 1 **Facts:** Facts are ideas that can be proven or are accepted as true. They make your arguments seem valid.
Today, Russia and the United States are two of the top destinations for immigrants.
- 2 **Statistics:** Figures are numbers, data, or statistics that come from research, surveys, or polls. They make your arguments more credible.
Over 800,000 immigrants arrived in the United States in 2013.

- 3 **Quotations:** Quotations are relevant phrases and sentences that are copied from another source, put in quotation marks, and properly credited.

In a study by Harvard Business Review, researchers found that women were rated as “better overall leaders than their male counterparts” (Zenger and Folkman).

Zenger, Jack and Joseph Folkman. “Are Women Better Leaders Than Men?” *Harvard Business Review*, 15 Mar 2012. Web. 2 Feb 2015.

- 4 **Examples:** Examples are specific stories or cases that illustrate a point. They help the reader imagine and understand what you mean.

Imagine a Saudi man, a U.S. woman, a Dominican man, and an Egyptian woman all discussing ways that the company can improve its sales in the global market. Each person will have a unique perspective on the various markets. This conversation will be much more valuable than one between four people of the same gender and culture.

- 5 **Personal Experiences:** Personal experiences are stories that happened to you or someone you know. They make your arguments more real and believable.

In 2007, my family immigrated to Manitoba, Canada. That same year, my parents opened a Filipino restaurant in a small town in Manitoba. After working hard for many years, my father has become a respected leader of the community.

Whichever you choose, strong evidence is key. To find strong **evidence**, ask yourself these questions:

- What facts or statistics would most likely convince my reader?
- What quotations or examples clearly support my opinion?
- What personal experiences would make my opinion more believable and persuasive?



3.12 Identify Evidence

Work with a partner. Read the underlined sentences in the paragraph. Identify the type of evidence in each sentence.

A job is not supposed to make people happy. First, a job is a paycheck and not a place to have fun. Many people in the world would agree with this. In a global survey on jobs by Gallup (qtd. in Gallo), over 80 percent of people in the world did not care about their jobs. In my family, three of my uncles work in construction. They all complain about their job, but they have very good salaries, so they go to work every day. Also, the supply and demand of goods controls the kinds of jobs that exist. If people want to work, they have to take the jobs that are available.

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

The **concluding paragraph** tells the readers what you want them to remember about your essay. It is your last chance to restate your argument, say why the topic is important, and convince the readers to agree with your point of view. Writers often create a memorable ending by leaving the readers something to think about: a strong closing statement, quotation, or call to action.



3.15 Notice

Look at the concluding paragraph of the Student Model essay on pages 204–205.

Answer the questions.

- 1 Where does the writer restate her argument? How is it different from the introductory paragraph?
- 2 How does the writer remind you why the topic is important? Is it convincing? Why or why not?
- 3 How does the writer end the essay – with a strong closing statement, a quotation, or a call to action? Is it memorable? Why or why not?
- 4 Did the writer persuade you to agree with her point of view? Why or why not?

Target 4—Task 2: Organizing Your Writing

Your thesis statement is the main idea of your writing. Now you have to support your main idea with general ideas. You should have two or three general ideas for each topic.

Make notes of your ideas. You can use concept maps to organize your ideas. Follow these steps to organize your writing.

1. Read the topic.

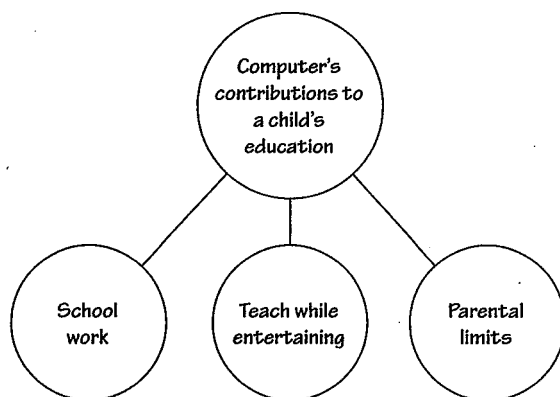
More and more families have computers in their homes, and children spend a great deal of their time using their home computers.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that computers contribute to a child's education. Give your own opinions.

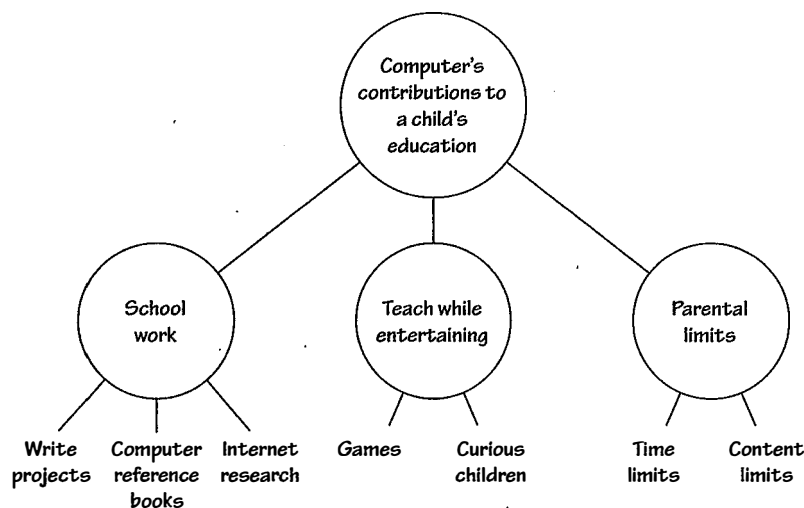
2. Determine the task. Support an opinion.

3. Write a thesis statement. Computers contribute a lot to a child's education.

4. Add general ideas.



5. Add supporting details.



TIP

Everything you write in your answer must be relevant to the question.