

Traditional Pattern for Organizing the Argument

NOTE: each of these elements is not necessarily its own paragraph.

- **INTRODUCTION:** Draw your reader into the argument. Build common ground, establish your tone and style, and establish your credentials (tap into ethical appeal). Clarify why the issue is important.
- **STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** Tell the “story” behind the argument and give any necessary background information. Clarify the issue and define it in terms that are favorable to your point of view.
- **CLAIM:** State your main position (like a thesis in a thesis/support essay).
- **REBUTTAL:** Examine opposing arguments (counterarguments) and offer rebuttal. Try to tear down the opposition’s argument by showing how it is faulty in its logic, how it jumps to conclusions that aren’t supported, how it appeals to emotions, but isn’t logical, etc.
- **CONFIRMATION:** Develop and support your own case. Use examples, facts, and statistics to back up your claims. Be logical in your presentation of the evidence and your analysis of it. Your confirmation will be several paragraphs long. You should consider in what order to present your evidence. One effective way is to arrange your points in this order:
 1. Second most important point
 2. Points of lesser importance
 3. Most important point

Starting and ending with your most important points helps to keep them clear in the audience’s mind—it drives home your argument.
- **DIGRESSION (OPTIONAL):** This is the place to include a touching or entertaining anecdote designed to appeal to the ethical or emotional side of your audience. It may appear that you are digressing from your argument, but, in fact, you are making it even more solid. *This is optional.*
- **CONCLUSION: END STRONGLY!** Finish with conviction and passion. You might end with a review of your main points, a reference to something in your introduction, or a plea for action. You might also encourage your opposition to “jump ship” and come to your side!



While this is a traditional organizational scheme for an argument, writers are not bound by this pattern. Writers can choose to organize their main points in other ways; variations of the traditional pattern are fine.