

How Do I Incorporate Counterarguments

Overview

Blogging One way to build credibility in crafting persuasive arguments is to make use of possible well-reasoned objections to your argument. Sometimes when we spend so much time coming up with a persuasive argument, we tend to want to avoid even acknowledging its possible flaws, for fear of weakening our stance. We may just avoid bringing them up altogether in order to ensure the apparent solidity of our argument. Even when we decide to reckon with possible objections, we tend to rely on one primary method of including them—the paragraph right before the conclusion in a five-paragraph essay. This can feel boring if you’ve been doing it for a long time. The good news is, there are actually more options available to you, and you should make a decision about which to use based on your argument’s audience and purpose.

General Considerations

A counterargument is a type of rebuttal.

Rebuttals are your way of acknowledging and dealing with objections to your argument, and they can take two different forms:

1. **Refutations:** Refutations are an often more confrontational form of rebuttal that work by targeting the weaknesses in a possible objection to your argument. Think of refutations as the more sophisticated and mature older sibling of, “that’s not true!” Generally, they work by pointing out weaknesses with the solidity or rationale of the objection’s claim itself (what the objector says about the argument) or of its evidence (the support offered for the claim).
2. **Counterarguments:** Counterarguments are a more cooperative form of rebuttal. In counterarguments, a writer acknowledges the strengths or validity of someone else’s argument, but then makes a case for why their approach is still the best/most effective/most viable

Incorporating counterarguments helps you build your credibility as a writer.

Once you learn how to seek out possible objections or counters to your own arguments and incorporate them fairly, you increase your power to build credibility with your readers. Refutations can feel satisfying (“No, you’re just wrong!”), and there are certainly situations in which they are the best or only ethical approach. However, most of the time counterarguments bring your readers to your side more effectively. This is because they are empathetic and invitational by nature (“I can see where in situation XYZ, what you suggest would make the most sense; however, in this situation, my approach works best because ABC...”)

In Practice

Rebuttals: Not just for the penultimate paragraph anymore!

Structurally, incorporating rebuttals can be done in a few ways:

1. The tried and true paragraph or section before the conclusion that explicitly addresses possible objections by acknowledging and then dispatching with them;
2. A possible objection and response with for each claim in the essay; or
3. An entire argument can even be structured as a rebuttal to someone else's argument.

Exercise

Seek out opposing views

1. What reasonable claims have others made that contradict your argument? If you don't know any, FIND SOME. (We promise: they exist.) Write them down in complete sentences.
 - a. Try writing a refutation to the claims. Is there any way in which the claims themselves are weak? Articulate them. Are there underlying assumptions behind the claims that might be faulty? Articulate them.
 - b. Try writing a counterargument to the claims. In what conditions might the claims others make be justified? How so? How is this instance different from those conditions? Why does your claim make more sense here and now? Is there anything you can incorporate from those claims to strengthen your own?
2. If you were to launch your *own* rebuttal to your argument, what would that look like? How would you then overcome that rebuttal?