



Critical Thinking

Writing an Argument

Description	Writing an argument
Task Type	In-class activity or tutorial
Time	1 hour
Level	Introductory
Class Size	Groups less than 35
Learning Outcomes	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Write a quality argument that is organised, structured and clearly expressed. ✦ Evaluate an argument for its quality, organisation and clarity.
Method	<p>Prepare sets of cards with controversial statements about a topic. If you have 30 students and 6 topics then make 5 cards for each topic. Put them in a hat and have the students pull one statement out of the hat.</p> <p>They are then asked to develop a piece of writing presenting their point of view on the issue. They should provide the most convincing arguments. They may argue for or against the statement.</p> <p>Criteria for judging will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Quality of ideas and opinions, regardless of the position that they take. ✦ How well their argument is structured and organised. ✦ How clearly and fluently their views are expressed. <p>Five statements are provided in the example can be replaced with appropriate statements for the discipline being studied.</p> <p>After about 8 minutes, students are formed into groups that have chosen the same statement to write about.</p> <p>They must develop a common answer using their individual answers. This answer should be put up on butcher paper (or maybe on an electronic</p>

	bulletin board) (20 minutes). Students are then provided with a marking sheet and asked to evaluate the other groups' arguments according to the criteria. Lecturers also evaluate (15 minutes).
Concluding Activity	Student and lecturers' evaluations are consolidated and students are provided with feedback on the arguments and on their evaluations.
Assessment	Assessment Sheet provided below. Students could be graded on their written argument and on their evaluation.
Tips	Put each different statement on a different colour to make sorting the students easier. It will probably work best if some theory on good and poor arguments is presented first.
Student Instructions	<p>Write a quality argument that is organized, structured and clearly expressed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Individually (8 minutes) <p>Pick a statement from the hat and develop a piece of writing presenting your point of view on the issues. You may argue for or against the statement.</p> <p>Your response will be judged on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ The quality of your ideas and opinions, regardless of the position you take. ✦ How well your argument is organised and structured. ✦ How clearly and fluently your views are expressed. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Group Activity (20 minutes) <p>Form groups with the students who have written about the same comment as you. Introduce yourselves to one another and ensure that you know each other's names. Choose a name for your group.</p> <p>Consider what each person has written. Now construct a group argument using the same criteria as before. Ensure that you include ideas from each person in your group.</p> <p>Write your group name and your argument down on butcher's paper and use the blue tack to put it up on the wall.</p>