

#8 ARGUMENT

Skill Strand: Expository

It may take you six days to learn to:

1. Establish a position on a local, controversial issue
2. Interview local experts
3. Find support in the library for a position on the issue
4. Use quotations from experts to support your position
5. Write an argumentative exposition supporting your position

PREWRITING

Day One:

For the rest of your life people will expect you to support the positions you hold with evidence and not just with your prejudices. If you tell others that you believe something, they'll expect you to quote authorities on the subject. Authorities are people who are recognized by reputation or position as knowing more than the rest of us and are respected for their knowledge.

Authorities hold positions or have jobs such as: the president's National Security Advisor, the Surgeon General, the president of General Motors, the high school principal, the president of the local board of education or the leader of a church. The editors and editorial writers of major magazines and newspapers are also considered authorities and can be used to support your position.

This exercise has **five** steps:

1. **Select a topic** and a **position** on that topic
2. Find **authorities** on the topic
3. **Take statements** from experts supporting your position
4. Find support in the **library** for your position
5. Use **quotations** in a paper of argument for your position

STEP ONE: Select a topic and position

There must be lots of local issues that are controversial. These are things that people

don't agree on. Some possibilities are:

- Young people in contact sports such as football
- The pressures of homeschooling
- Competition in sports
- Prayer in public school
- Teaching of evolution or creation science
- Peer group pressures
- Dangers in eating junk food
- Religious programs in public places such as Christmas scenes on public land
- Abortion
- Affirmative action
- Toxic waste disposal

Your first job today is to select a controversial subject and decide on a position.

This part of your paper should look similar to this example

<i>Bill Smith</i> <i>English</i> <i>Feb. 9</i>
<i>ARGUMENT</i>
<i>Subject: Contact sports for young athletes</i>
<i>Position: Against</i>

STEP TWO: Find authorities on the subject

You're to use two sources as authorities for this paper:

1. **Local experts**
2. **Newspaper and magazine editors** and editorial writers and **articles** from newspapers and/or magazines

This will give you an opportunity to use both **primary** and **secondary** research.

PRIMARY:

This is material that others have not collected for you. This comes from newspapers from the period involved, interviews, original photographs, original letters, diaries and maps. Primary material is material you collect yourself. You must conduct the survey and record the results, or take the pictures yourself or collect pictures from the people who own them, or draw the maps, or find copies of the newspapers of the time if you're going to call it primary material.

SECONDARY:

This is material that others have collected, such as articles in magazines and newspapers, history or reference books, surveys and reports that have been published, and interviews that have been printed.

For the secondary material in support of your position, your parent will want you to go to the library. The librarian may show you where the supports for the positions can be found. When you support your position with secondary materials, you have to give your reader information about where the materials come from. You should **name** the source (magazine, book or newspaper), give the **date** of publication, the **publisher** and sometimes even the **page**.

This should be done even if you're not listing a bibliography. This information for this paper should be **included in the body** of the paper. This could look like this:

Doctor John R. Williams is reported to have said, according to Time magazine, in its June 15, 1999 issue, that junk food is better for teenagers than some other foods. Time reports that Dr. Williams' in his speech to the American Medical Convention audience in St. Louis, on March 23, 1999, stressed that ". . .junk food has more energy that can be used by teenagers than most balanced meals."

The sources for your support should **not** be put in footnotes or in endnotes unless you're writing what is called a term paper or you're asked to do so for a specific exercise, and you should include a bibliography only if asked to do so.

There will be authorities in your area on any topic which deals with local matters. You're to list the authorities you plan on contacting for quotations to use in your paper. This list should be on the paper you turn in which identifies your argument.(See example on the next page.)

Your parents may want to approve of your interviews. This means that they might want to decide if you should interview certain people, for instance, the custodian in the park. It might be that your parents will want to be with you when you do some interviews.

The paper you give your parent for day one should now look like the one below:

<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Bill Smith</i> <i>English</i> <i>Feb. 9</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>ARGUMENT</i></p> <p><i>Subject: Contact Sports for Young Athletes</i></p> <p><i>Position: Against</i></p> <p><i>Authorities:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. Bill Butts, the coach of the little league soccer team</i><i>2. Dr. Wells, the family doctor</i><i>3. Betty Fitters, the local high school health teacher</i><i>4. Mrs. Mom, the author's mother (All mothers are experts.)</i>
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Day Two:
WRITING

STEP THREE: Take quotations on the Subject

You're to write the questions you'll ask the authorities on your subject. **(See the example below .)**

These questions should be written so that the authorities can not answer with a *yes* or *no*. You should ask what are called open-ended questions.

A good interview question is built on an answer given by the interviewee. This means that the questions prepared in advance of the interview are general and they all may not be asked. Each one might be followed by three or four questions based on what the interviewee replies to a previous question. **(This takes practice .)**

You can see how poor an interview the following would make:

Q: Mr. Smith, do you think the kids in the youth group should smoke?

A: No.

Q: Do you feel there should be a place off the church grounds where kids could smoke?

A: No.

Q: Do you think the store on the corner should be fined for selling cigarettes to kids?

A: Yes

Q: Do you see yourself as a role model for the kids?

A: Yes.

See below for an example of an interview.

Your parent will give back to you the paper you handed in on day one, and you'll add this information to it. Your paper then should look like this:

Bill Smith

English

Feb. 9

ARGUMENT

Subject: An atomic waste dump in our county.

Position: Against

Authorities:

- 1. Mrs. Good, the mayor*
- 2. Betty Fish, the biology teacher from the local college*
- 3. Jane Wells, the public health director for the county*
- 4. Mr. Slope, the county drain commissioner*

Questions for interviewees:

- 1. Why is it that some people feel that a low level atomic waste dump in our county would be good for us?*
- 2. Why do you feel that a waste dump would or would not pollute the ground water even if the waste is active for thousands of years?*
- 3. Which do you feel is more important in this decision, the few jobs that will be created or the possible health hazards for the residents of this county, and why do you feel that way?*

Days Three and Four

Preparation:

Interview authorities on your list. A few suggestions on quoting your experts may help. It's not necessary to quote everything that is said. You can choose what you want to use, but you'll have to show your reader that this is what you're doing. This can be done in this manner: If your interviewee says, *I have been mayor in Elton for 12 years, and I have felt for years that there must be a way to create new jobs*, and you want to quote just the part about new jobs, you can use **ellipsis (just 3 dots . . .)** to show that part of what was said is left out. It could look like these two examples below.

1. *"I have felt. . .there should be a way to create new jobs."*
2. *". . .there should be a way to create new jobs."*

When you transcribe (write up) your interviews, they can look like this example (see outline of body below which corresponds to numbers in the above list of questions.):

(1) *Mrs. Sue Good, the mayor of Elton, was (2) in her office when she was asked for her views on the question of a nuclear waste dump. She was reading the fashion page of the local paper and put it down when I walked in.*

Q: (3 & 4) Mrs. Good, What problems would you expect if there were to be a nuclear waste dump?

A: "That's a good question. I've . . .thought for years that we should have a way to create new jobs."

Q: What do you feel are the reasons we shouldn't have a dump in our county?

A: "There. . .are two reasons that I can think of. One is that many of the residents of the county don't want it, and nobody wants to go against the will of the people. And the second is the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] hasn't given this dump its clearance yet."

(5) Those are certainly two good reasons why we shouldn't have such a dump here in our county. Think what a problem we might have if all public officials felt this way but were to vote for the dump anyway.

STEPS FOUR & FIVE: From your research, use quotations in an argumentative exposition

You're to start the writing of your paper during this session. This outline might help:

INTRODUCTION: (see example below)

1. History of controversy
2. Your position
3. A statement about why you've decided to support your position

BODY:

(Based on the interviews you had and the quotations you found in the library.)

1. Point number one
2. Point number two
3. Point number three

Each interview section of your body should be structured like this (see example above):

1. Name of interviewee
2. Place of the interview
3. The questions asked of the interviewee
4. The quotations taken from the answers given by the interviewee
5. How this interview supports your position

Each quotation taken from a source in the library should be structured like this (see example above):

1. Name of the person quoted
2. The person's position, title or authority to speak on the issue
3. The name, publisher and date of the magazine, book or newspaper from which the quotation was taken
4. How this quotation supports your position

CONCLUSION: (see example below)

Your position restated (don't use the exact words you used in the introduction)

Your **INTRODUCTION** can be set up to be like this example:

- (1) *Every few years someone in Elton County raises the need to bring new jobs into the county. Often this is in some way related to a waste dump or a landfill facility. Now the county commissioners have suggested a nuclear waste dump. Many of the citizens of the county are against this proposal as are the business manager, Mr. Books, the biology teacher at Elton Junior College, Dr. Fish, and Mrs. Good, the mayor of Elton City, the county seat.*
- (2) *This question has been raised again this year. I am against the county having such a dump. However there are a number of people in favor of this proposal and both sides of any controversy must be examined before any decision is justified. I have investigated this situation as well as I was able and feel for the good of the people in our county that I have to remain strong in opposition to this dump proposal.*

Your **CONCLUSION** can be set up to be like this example:

After interviewing a number of experts in the county and doing considerable research in the public library on the subject of atomic waste dumps, my views on the proposed dump site controversy remain the same. I am still against the county having a dump site of this nature.

DIAGRAM OF THIS PAPER

INTRODUCTION

(3 parts) ----->

1. History of controversy
2. Your position
3. Why you support it

BODY

(supported by
interviews ----->
and research)

- 1st point
- 2nd point
- 3rd point

CONCLUSION ---> Position on controversy restated

Day Five:

You should have the introduction and the rough draft of most of the body done. Start the conclusion today.

Preparation:

Write the finished rough draft of the body. This means that you'll have checked your paper for mechanical and spelling errors. A finished rough draft is a "clean" copy. It doesn't have many cross-outs and write-overs.

Day Six:

Your final copy will be due at the start of day seven.

(This type of paper is work, but, if you go to college, you'll have to write many like it .)