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## ARGUMENT DESIGN: COUNTERARGUMENTS

To appear reasonable, your argument should give consideration to viewpoints other than your own. Clearly not everyone thinks the same way, so it is important to recognize that other views exist!

Sensitivity to different viewpoints can build trust and credibility with a potentially skeptical audience (i.e. an audience who may not believe you). They are more likely to accept your ideas if you have taken time to consider alternative ways of looking at the issue.



**a strategy where you consider arguments that go against your thesis or main claim and dismiss or minimize these as a means of strengthening your own point.**

If you mention an opposing viewpoint, and follow this up with reasons to qualify, minimize or otherwise challenge it, then you are using a counterargument (also called rebuttal) strategy.

However, it can be difficult to talk about the opposing side of an argument without sounding as if you *agree* with it, especially when a strong point is raised.

So this handout aims to help you with that!

# Notes on an Argument...

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The most effective counterarguments attempt to show that the other viewpoint is:

- ✓ faulty
- ✓ misguided
- ✓ only partly true
- ✓ true, but with limitations

When used effectively, this strategy can *strengthen* your argument, rather than weaken it!

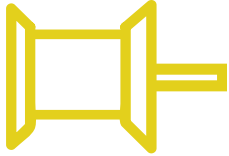
But an important strategy in countering an opposing (or otherwise conflicting) view lies in the use of *tone*, and careful choice of words.

So it's a matter of clever *language* in order to clearly shift from one element of the counterargument to the other:

- *from the opposing point*
- *to your counter to that point*

# How to write a 'counter'

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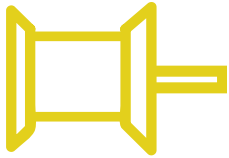


**First,** acknowledge the opposing (or otherwise conflicting) view by using an appropriate transition phrase/word, such as any of the following:

- *This argument may look/sound/seem convincing ...*
- *Some might think/believe that ...*
- *Some/many/plenty of supporters think that ...*
- *It may be logical to assume that ...*
- *It may be true that ...*
- *The common belief is that ...*
- *It may appear/seem that ...*
- *It is easy to think/imagine/claim that ...*
- *Some evidence suggests that ...*
- *There are some who think/believe/claim/say that ...*
- *It is reasonable to think that ...*
- *Admittedly ...*
- *Granted ....*
- *Of course...*

# How to write a 'counter'

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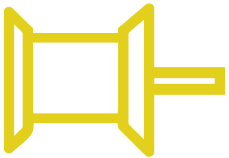
*Then*, shift the focus from the opposing view back toward your own by using a clear, contrasting transition, such as:

However ...

But ...

Still ...

Nevertheless ...



*Alternatively*, instead of using a transition in the middle of your counterargument, you could use one at the start. For example:

While some might argue ...

Although X might seem true ...

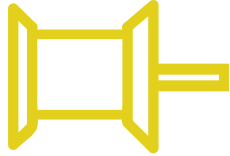
Though X is admittedly accurate ...

Despite the perceived notion that ...

**NOTE:** if you use a transitional phrase at the start of your counter, you do NOT need a transition (however/but/still/nevertheless) in the middle.

# How to write a 'counter'

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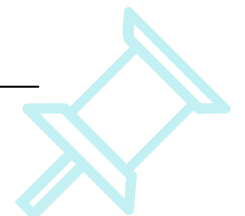


*Finally*, introduce your evidence to minimize, qualify, undermine or dismiss the opposing view. This can take a number of forms.

You can expose as:

Faulty or misguided

- ✓ • This is wrong/ false/ untrue/
- ✓ • inaccurate/ irrelevant because...
- ✓ • This view is mistaken because ...
- ✓ • In reality ...
- ✓ • It could actually ...
- ✓ • This is not the case because ...
- ✓ • It fails to consider ...
- ✓ • It ignores the fact that ...
- ✓ • It is impractical to assume ...



## Partly true...

*Yes/True/Ok, but...*

- ✓ *It is also possible that ...*
- ✓ *There are other issues that ...*
- ✓ *There remains the problem of ...*
- ✓ *It is more practical to ...*
- ✓ *The benefits/drawbacks outweigh the benefits/drawbacks...*



## True, but with limitations

- ✓ *It does not take into account ...*
- ✓ *It does not consider ...*
- ✓ *It is still worth considering ...*
- ✓ *It encourages/discourages ...*
- ✓ *It does not change the fact that ...*
- ✓ *It may be the only/best/most effective or last option ...*

# Activity

- 1 Copy the table, adding at least six extra rows.
- 2 Practice organizing point-counterpoint statements by creating eight or more generic counterargument sentences like examples 1 and 2 in the table.
- 3 Read them to a partner to make sure they sound right.

*Hint...* only use one transition per sentence  
(either in front or in the middle).

(Transition)	(Acknowledge opposing point)	(Transition)	(Introduce your evidence)
	Some evidence suggests X...	but...	this is inaccurate because...
While...	many claim X...		they fail to acknowledge that...



**Yo, I'm Jill!**  
I live on macha green tea lattes + nerdy lesson planning sessions.  
I'm on a mission to flip the script on how we teach today's writers.

I empower secondary ELA teachers with the

**resources + mindset**  
they need to make the

**writing process**  
more

**relevant, authentic, and applicable**  
for today's learners and tomorrow's leaders.

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