

STRATEGIES FOR WRITING A POSITION PAPER

Position papers are a kind of academic writing in which you research a controversial issue and write a paper that explains your stand or viewpoint on it. Your main goal is to take part in the larger debate on an issue by stating and supporting your opinion or recommended course of action. To persuade your audience, research other papers on the issue, analyze them in depth, and develop your own argument on the matter.

ANALYZING OTHER POSITION PAPERS

The best way to start a successful position paper is through researching the positions and arguments of others.

- What are the various positions on the issue? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? Did the writers cite sources of information and provide a reference list?
- Did the writers explain and fairly analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the various sides of the issue? How deeply into the argument did the writers go?
- If only two different opinions were presented in the paper, did the writers carefully explore the strengths and weaknesses of each, or did the writers just disprove one side without going into the details?
- Did the writers analyze the controversy and discuss what others have said about it?
- What are the writers' positions on the issue? What are the writers arguing that we, the reader, should or should not do about it?
- What are the writers' reasons for their opinions? How well do the writers support the recommended course of action?
- Did the writers see the objections to or weaknesses in their own arguments? Did the writers argue strongly for a specific point of view or direction?
- Was the paper persuasive? Why or why not?



STRUCTURING **YOUR** POSITION PAPER

A successful position paper persuades its audience. By reading your paper objectively and critically, you will avoid any weaknesses in argument that you may have noticed in other papers. The best way to write persuasively is to:

- Define the issue and provide as thorough a background as possible. State your own position.
- Discuss and analyze the various positions you have researched. Ensure that both strengths and weaknesses are taken into account.
- Discuss your position and analyze its strengths and weaknesses.
- Discuss its relevance to other positions and why you have chosen it. Provide counter arguments against potential criticisms of your argument.
- Give reasons why your position or suggested course of action is the optimum one for all parties involved.

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