

Researched Argument Essay Checklist

Before you do a final check on your essay, take some time *away* from the essay. Spend some time doing other homework, resting, exercising, etc. Get your mind off the essay so you can come back with a clear mind. When you're ready, follow these steps:

Review the requirements for the essay:

- Re-read the assignment sheet. Does your essay meet the requirements listed there?
- Check out the rubric. If you were a professor, where would you rate your essay for each category?
Can you show evidence from your essay for these ratings?

MLA citation style: Check for good paraphrase and watch out for plagiarism.

- Use one of the plagiarism checkers listed in our PPTs for the week of March 30.
- I recommend <https://www.quetext.com/> or <http://www.plagiarisma.net/> because they check for copying from databases and they are free!
- Re-read carefully, watching for places where you need quotation marks, or places where you need to make the text your own, not a close copy of another author.
- Do you **reference** the author in the sentence and **cite** the source at the end of the sentence? In other words, are you helping your reader understand where the facts come from?
- On the Works Cited page, only include sources you have actually included in the text of your research paper.

Thesis claim: Is your thesis claim clearly stated and arguable?

- How does the thesis aim to change thinking or behavior?
- Check the March 9 PPT. Have you made one of the 5 “moves” listed in the PPT to add to the scholarly conversation?
- Identify how you **connect** with the thesis claim in *every* paragraph.
- **underline** thesis claim

Evidence & Commentary

- Do you use **specific** examples and evidence from your sources in every paragraph?
- Do you **comment** on the evidence to explain your **argument**?
- Do you have **one focus** for each paragraph?
- Do you refer to at least **eight sources** in your essay and on the Works Cited page?

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Arrangement

- Have you included an **Introduction**, **Background** section, **Argument** section, **Counter-Arguments & Rebuttal**, and a **Conclusion**? See *Everyday Writer* p.135-137 for examples of organizational outline that work well for research papers.
- Are these parts arranged **logically**, in support of your main claim? Use the reverse outline to identify any gaps in reasoning.
- Do the paragraphs **flow** clearly from one topic to the next, using conclusion sentences, key words, or thick transitions? See Week of April 6 PPT.

Alternative argument(s) & Rebuttal

- Do you explain at least one alternative argument thoroughly, using sources to show that this is a reasonable point of view?
- Do you show a point of agreement? You can agree with the values or motivations of the alternative/opposing view, even if you don't agree with the actual argument made.
- Do you show a weakness of the alternative view and return to your main argument, show it's strength?

Check the format of your essay:

- 12 point **font** (Calibri or Times New Roman are best)
- **double spaced** lines
- your **name & the date you turn in the paper** at the top of the first page
- a separate page with the title **Works Cited**, listing your sources in MLA style
- **alphabetize** your Works Cited citations
- use **hanging indent** for each citation
- check that each **in-text** citation connects with the **Works Cited** citation
- between 8 and 10 **pages** of text
- include a short **title** that piques interest for the reader

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Language, style & mechanics

- check **sentence structure** see EW Chapter 37, 45 & 46
 - Does every sentence have a subject and verb?
 - Are sentences running together, or are periods showing where one sentence stops and another starts?
- check **verbs** see EW Chapter 38 & 40
 - Do the verbs match the noun in *number*?
 - Do the verbs communicate the time of the action accurately?
- check **nouns** see EW Chapter 39
 - Do singular and plural nouns have accurate endings?
- check **word choice** see EW Chapter 17
 - Do my vocabulary words fit the academic context?
 - Are my word choices clear and communicative?

More “final check” help:

- Set your writing aside for a few hours before a final read through
- Having a friend read your essay and give feedback can be really helpful
- Reading your essay out loud can help you find errors

Finally, remember that final drafts don’t indicate perfection. As we’ve learned, writing is always in process and can always be improved. A final draft simply indicates that you’ve reached some goals and have worked with the resources you have in the time you have.