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What is an effective strategy for addressing a counterargument?

When constructing an argument, it is important to consider any counter-arguments that the reader can make. The recognition of the opposition shows that you are aware of this issue and not only ignore other points of view. The counter-arguments also give you the opportunity to explain and strengthen your arguments by helping to show how your argument is stronger than other arguments. Adding counter-arguments to your writing may initially seem the opposite, and some writers may not know how to do it. To make it easier to include counter-arguments in your argument, we recommend that you do the following: (a) identify, (b) investigate, (c) address, and (d) improve. The counter-argument is an argument that contradicts your thesis or part of the thesis. It expresses the opinion of a person who does not agree with your position. Content Why use a counter-argument? Why would you include a counter-argument in your essay? Isn't that a weakening of your argument? Actually, no. Done well, it makes the argument stronger. This is because it gives you the opportunity to respond to your reader's objections before they have finished reading. It also shows that you are a smart person, you have considered both sides of the debate. Both of these make the essay more initiate. Top How should the counter-argument be given? The counter-argument should be expressed in detail, fairly and objectively. Not only write a quick sentence and then immediately deny it. Please provide reasons why someone may actually have that opinion. A few sentences, or even the whole paragraph, are not an unreasonable amount of space for the counter-argument. Again, the point is to show your reader that you have considered all sides of the question, and that it is easier to answer the counter-argument. It's easier to respond to an already arranged point and makes it easier for the reader to follow you. Make sure that you have expressed the counter-argument correctly and objectively. Ask yourself if the person who actually holds this position would agree with your way of referring to it. Put yourself in your shoes and give them the benefit of the doubt. Do not use biased language when delivering your position or charge the kit. Readers see through such a thing pretty quickly. Obviously, if you really believe in the position expressed in your thesis, you will not be completely objective, as you express the counter-argument, but you should try. One of the most common goals of counter-arguments is to deal with positions that many people have, but which you think are wrong. Therefore, you want to be respectful and give them the benefit of the doubt, even if you think their opinion is wrong. Then they will be much more inclined to persuade. (Another approach, to use sarcasm and satire to reveal false ideas, is very powerful, but should be used with caution, especially before mastering art rhetoric.) Above How can the counter-argument be denied? One of the most effective ways to deny the counter-argument is to show that it is based on false assumptions. Either the facts are incorrect, the analysis is incorrect, or the meanings on which it is based are unacceptable. Examples of them are given below. In addition, some counter-arguments are simply insignificant, usually because they actually react to another argument. And some counter-arguments actually make your argument stronger when you analyze their logic. All these examples use a claim from James Loewen's book, Lies My Teacher Told Me. In this book Loewen argues that properly function in civic life ... students must learn what causes racism (143). The following examples are ideas that you can use as a counter-argument for this statement in the document, with the agreement of Loewen. Then you would deny or respond to the counter-argument as a way to strengthen your position. False factual premise Racism is a thing of the past; so students don't have to worry about it. In this example, the factual premise is that racism is the past. One of the answers would be just the facts that show that racism remains a problem. (There is a second premise, which is that students don't have to worry about what's in the past. Another answer would be to show that students need to understand the past as well as the present to function properly in civic life) Top false analytical premise Learning about racism can make students more racist. The analytical premise is that learning about racism can make you racist. The answer is that understanding the causes of the problem is not the same as causing or creating a problem. (Another premise in this argument is that it's not good to have students racist. Loewen's argument supports this premise, so you do not deny it.) Top False Values Who Care If Students Are Racist? This counter-argument is based on the supposed value that your readers probably don't share, namely the idea that students are okay to be racist. The answer would be to pay attention to this value, indicate why you don't share it and indicate why you think your readers either. Of course, the values are very personal and very diverse, so you will always have a few readers who will not share you. The most important thing is to base your arguments on values that most readers can share. Top True, but Irrelevant Students are already familiar with racism; they do not need to study at school. Many students, in fact, are already familiar with racism. But Loewen doesn't say they need to learn about racism, he says they need to know what causes it. You may be very familiar with racism, but you still don't know what causes it. This is a very common form of counter-arguments that actually negates the Argument. (Note that here is also a false premise: being familiar with something is not the same as knowing what causes it.) Top Makes argument stronger previous generations did not explore the causes of racism, so why should we start now? The answer here would be to show that previous generations did not function properly in civic life because they had many problems with racism (segregation and more hidden forms of discrimination). Therefore, the fact that they were not aware of the causes of racism, along with this other information, actually supports the statement that students need to know what causes racism. (Here again there is a false premise, implied but not specified: Previous generations supposedly acted properly in civic life. The answer indicates that this assumption is incorrect.) At the top When should the counter-argument be recognised? Sometimes you come up with a counter-argument that you think is true, and that you feel responds to your actual argument rather than some other points. Then you come across a choice: Do you give up your thesis and accept the counter-argument as your position? It often turns out that you don't need to give up your thesis, but you may need to modify or improve it. Let's take a modified version of the second example (learning about racism can make students more racist). The new version may look like this: Students get turned off by what they are forced to learn, especially when it comes to forcing them to be good. Then they turn against what they have been taught and deliberately go in a different direction. So studying racism can just make them want to be racist out of sheer contrariness. This may help to explain the hostile reaction to political correctness. One way to respond to a counter-argument, as it is, is to recognise that if it is done wrongly, education about racism can simply end up turning off children and making them hostile. Then you improve your original thesis to say something like this: Students should find out what causes racism, but should not be constantly lectured that racism is bad. Instead, they should be taught the cause and history so that they find it interesting and that allows them to decide their values. In this way, by tapping your thesis, you will be able to maintain your starting point, while at the same time strengthening it by including some of the opposition's views. This also deprives you of some of the reasons why the reader may have to disagree with you. Top Who makes a good counter-argument? Some counter-arguments are better than others. You want to use those that are actually a bit soothing. There is nothing to be obtained by denying a counter-argument that no one believes. The two things to look for are cleverness and popularity. If you are not sure about the position you have chosen as your thesis, it is easier to identify good counter-arguments. You already acknowledge that there are reasonable arguments on the other side, so you do not know a little. Look for arguments that make sense to you or that seem reasonable, even if you don't agree with them. On the other hand, you can be absolutely sure of your position, making it harder to see other opinions as reasonable. They all seem flawed to you, because you can pay attention to their mistakes and show why your attitude is better. In this case, look popular, even if they are flawed. Remember that you are trying to persuade your readers to agree with you. So you want to speak their language. This means responding to their objections, even if you think the objections are justified. If you look at the examples above, you will probably find more convincing than others. Most people will probably not find who cares if students have a racist argument very convincingly. On the other hand, you can find students already aware of the argument quite soothing. Choose arguments that you, or many other people, believe are reasonable. The more you can answer these objections, the stronger you will make your case. Top Organization Where does the counter-argument go? The short answer is the counterargument can go anywhere other than the conclusion. This is because the paragraph must be refuted after the counter-argument, so if the counter-argument is in the conclusion, something has been left. In practice (there are exceptions), the rebuttal is not usually the final paragraph, which means that the counter-argument is usually anywhere except the last two paragraphs. Counter-arguments can be very effective in introductions, especially if you are arguing about a popular opinion. However, it is also very common to put them after the case of the thesis has been submitted. In other words, they would go after all the key points that support the thesis, but before concluding in the third-last paragraph, with a rebuttal of the second-last. This is probably the most common position. As a general rule, if there are no compelling reasons inherent in a particular argument, it makes no sense to present a counter-argument in the middle of a thesis case. In other words, you usually do not give two points that support the thesis, then counter-argument and rebuttal, and then more points to support the thesis. The following are two outlines that show the most common counter-argument layout. The first is probably the most common. Introduction Support point #1 Support point #2 Support point #3 Support point #4 [may be any number of supporting points] Counter-argument Rebuttal of the conclusion counter argument, which is also used as an introduction rebuttal, which usually includes thesis Confirmatory #1 #2 #3 support point #4 [there may be any number of auxiliary points] At the top of the conclusion How should a counter-argument be introduced? It is important to use clear signals to warn the reader that the paper is about to express a different picture than (usually opposite) the thesis. Since the purpose of the whole document, including the counter-argument, is to maintain the thesis, these signals are very important. Without them, the paper looks inconsistent and contradictory. As a rule, the counter-argument will begin with an oral, phrase or sentence indicating that the following is not the author's view. This can range from a very simple, sometimes single word to Beth or However, to a rather complex whole sentence: His sublime work on representation in Western literature, the basic text of discipline, Auerbach argues that the mixture of styles is an essential component of all modern realism, an approach that has been widely accepted in half a century since its publication. Please note, however, that even this sentence is careful to attribute these views to other people and to call them views, in other words, to subtly hint that they are not facts or truth. In general, the strategy is quickly to make it clear that this is someone's attitude. Typical introductory strategies include: Many people [believe /argue/feel/think/think/think/etc.], that [specify a counter-argument here] Often [thoughts/imagined/allegedly/etc.] that [specify a counter-argument here] [It would be easy/one could easily] [think] /believe/imagine/think/etc.] that [specify a counter-argument here] It may [look/appear/look/etc.] as if [specify a counter-argument here] Another general approach is to use the question: But isn't it true that [specify a counter-argument here]? [None/ Don't/ Don't] [indicate the counter-argument here]? You can also mention specific writers or thinkers who have expressed the opposite view: On the other hand, the Foundation states that ... However, Ngugi wrote, ... Dangarembga takes the position that... Top How should we introduce a denial? If the counter-argument requires careful signaling, as well as denial. The essay has just made a 180° turn away from your thesis, and now it is about another 180° turn to complete the circle. The reader needs warnings and advice or they will fall or will receive a whiplash- you will lose them, in other words, because the essay will look inconsistent or contradictory. The general strategies for introducing denial are a mirror image of those who enter the counter-argument, and they all turn into the same basic concept: Yes, but.... They can be as simple as that, or as complicated as this example sentence: Although Auerbach's claim seems initially plausible, and is supported the numerous evidence provided by his astonishing erudition is frustrated by the inconsistency resulting from an unjustified and ultimately inconsistent definition. In all cases, the work of this transitional language is to show the reader that the opposite is now being answered. The essay went back to arguing for his thesis, reinforced by the opposition. Here are some typical strategies. These are common examples; they work best when they are tailored to an individual theme. What this argument [overlooks/ignores/ignores] is... This image [looks/looks/sounds/etc] [compelling/probable/compelling/etc.] at first, but ... Although this position is popular, it is [inconsistible facts/not logical/impractical/etc.] Although the essence of this statement is reasonable, it has drawbacks on its [reasoning/ application, etc.] Upward details For further reading More information on this topic, see the Counter argument section of the University of North Carolina Writing Center's website Argument. Works cited by Loewen, James. Lying to my teacher told me, Everything your American history textbook got wrong. New York: Touchstone, 1996. Top top