

Communicative English Language Skills II

Lecture 9

Writing: Argumentative Essays

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WELCOME

Welcome to Lecture 9

Hello, everyone. Over the past eight lectures, we explored paragraph development, grammar, and academic reading and so on. Today we reach a landmark point in the course — we bring all of those threads together through the writing skill that sits at the heart of academic English: the argumentative

Why this lecture matters

This lesson is not just about writing an essay. It is about learning to think clearly, reason carefully, and communicate ideas with power and integrity — skills you will use throughout university and far beyond.

What This Lecture Covers

- The nature and purpose of argumentative writing
- The structure of a complete argumentative essay
- How to construct and support an argument with evidence
- The concept of writer responsibility
- Language focus: future forms, predictions, and planning
- Oral and written practice activities

Why Argumentative Writing Matters

By the end of today's session you will not only know how to write an argumentative essay — you will understand why it matters.

Argumentative writing is central in university, in professional life, and in civic participation. Every time someone makes a case for a policy, defends a scientific finding, or argues for change, they are using the same skills you will practice today.

OBJECTIVES · PART 1

By the End of This Lecture You Will...

- Define argumentative writing and distinguish it from other essay types
- Identify and produce the structural components of an argumentative essay
- Construct a clear, defensible thesis statement on a debatable topic
- Select and integrate appropriate evidence to support an argument
- Recognise the writer's ethical responsibilities — accuracy, fairness, sourcing
- Use future forms, predictions, and planning language correctly
- Evaluate an argumentative essay for logic, evidence, and responsibility
- Participate in structured oral argumentation as preparation for writing

Reflect for a minute

Which of these objectives feels strongest already? Which feels most challenging? Hold those answers — they will guide your work today.

Three words will guide everything we do today

01 ARGUMENT

A reasoned position on a debatable question

02 EVIDENCE

The proof that gives the argument its strength

03 RESPONSIBILITY

The writer's ethical duty to the reader

When You Hear the Word 'Argument'...

Many people picture a quarrel — two voices raised, each insisting they are right. In everyday talk, that is one meaning of the word. In academic writing, an argument means something quite different — and much more powerful. An academic argument is a reasoned position on a debatable question, supported by evidence and logic. It is not about emotion or volume. It is about clarity, evidence, and persuasion through reason.

Everyday Argument vs. Academic Argument

Everyday Argument	Academic Argument
Based on personal feelings	Based on evidence and reasoning
Often emotional and spontaneous	Planned, structured, and deliberate
Aims to 'win' or silence the other side	Aims to persuade through logic and proof
The 'other side' is attacked	The 'other side' is acknowledged and refuted fairly
Sources are rarely cited	Sources are cited responsibly and accurately

Which Statements Are Truly Arguable?

- 1. Ethiopia has seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- 2. The government should invest more in environmental protection than in tourism development.
- 3. Bilharzia affects 250 million people worldwide.
- 4. Indigenous knowledge is more valuable than scientific knowledge alone.
- 5. The sky is blue.
- 6. Nuclear energy will solve the world's energy problems by 2050.

Discuss for three minutes, then we share decisions with the class.

Facts vs. Debatable Claims

Facts (1, 3, 5)

These cannot really be argued. They describe the world but offer nothing to take a position on.

Debatable (2, 4, 6)

Reasonable, informed people could take different positions. Statement 6 also uses future forms — today's language focus.

The key lesson: not every statement can be argued. For a topic to work as an argumentative essay it must be genuinely debatable, with a reasonable 'other side' — that is the sweet spot where evidence and logic can persuade a thoughtful reader.

Argument vs. Evidence

Argument

An argument in academic writing is a position on a debatable topic, supported by reasoning and evidence. It is not just opinion — it is a structured case.

A strong argument also acknowledges opposing views and explains why the writer's position is better supported by the available evidence.

Evidence

Evidence is what supports an argument: facts, statistics, expert opinions, research findings, and examples. Good evidence must be relevant, reliable, and sufficient.

Think of the bilharzia statistics, the Murray River data, or the indigenous-knowledge examples in your readings — those are models of proper evidence use.

Responsibility

- Accuracy — no distortion or invention of facts
- Fairness — representing all sides honestly
- Transparency — crediting sources
- Intellectual honesty — admitting the limits of your argument

Without responsibility, a writer loses credibility — and trust.

Argument · Evidence · Responsibility?

- 1. "According to the WHO, bilharzia affects 250 million people in the developing world." (___)
- 2. "Governments must prioritize environmental protection because climate change poses an existential threat." (___)
- 3. "I must acknowledge that some experts disagree, but the majority of research supports my position." (___)
- 4. "I will cite the source of all data I use so readers can verify my claims." (___)
- 5. "A 2007 UN report found Australia's per capita greenhouse-gas emissions are among the highest in the world." (___)

Purpose: To Persuade

Argumentative writing has one clear purpose: to persuade.

Unlike description, narration, or explanation, an argumentative essay takes a position on a debatable issue and works systematically to convince the reader that this position is correct, justified, or preferable.

Four Essentials of an Argument

01 A debatable claim

Something reasonable people could disagree about

02 A clear stance

The writer's position stated directly

03 Supporting evidence

Proof that gives the argument its strength

04 Acknowledged opposition

Showing the 'other side' and refuting it with reason

What Argumentative Writing is NOT

- A rant — emotion without evidence
- A report — describing both sides equally without taking a position
- Mere opinion — preference without proof
- Manipulation — using false or distorted facts

Persuasion with integrity

Argumentative writing is intellectual courage: commit to a position, defend it with evidence, and remain open to revising it if your evidence or reasoning is shown to be flawed.

Argumentative vs. Other Essay Types

Essay Type	Primary Purpose	Key Features
Narrative	Tell a story or recount events	Chronological order; personal experience; past tenses
Descriptive	Describe a person, place, or thing	Sensory details; vivid language
Expository	Explain or inform	Balanced presentation; facts; no strong stance
Argumentative	Persuade the reader of a position	Thesis · evidence · counterargument · refutation · future forms

Narrative · Expository · Argumentative?

- 1. "Describe the life cycle of the bilharzia parasite." (___)
- 2. "Write about a time you faced a significant challenge and how you overcame it." (___)
- 3. "Governments in developing countries should prioritize environmental protection over economic growth. Discuss." (___)
- 4. "Explain the different types of life skills and their importance." (___)
- 5. "Cultural heritage tourism is the best strategy for reducing poverty in Ethiopia. Do you agree?" (___)

Rewrite as Argumentative Predictions

Example: "Climate change is affecting rainfall patterns."

→ "If governments do not act now, climate change will permanently alter rainfall patterns, threatening food security for millions."

- 1. Deforestation is reducing biodiversity. →
- 2. Young people are leaving rural communities for cities. →
- 3. Tourism brings economic benefits. →
- 4. Indigenous knowledge is being lost. →

Responsible Writing: Ethics & Accuracy

Writing builds a trust relationship with readers. They expect truth, accurate evidence, and fair representation.

Distortion weakens arguments; honesty and accuracy create stronger foundations. Responsible writing means resisting exaggeration and manipulation.

Writer's Ethical Checklist

- Are all my facts accurate and verifiable?
- Have I cited the sources of all statistics and expert opinions?
- Have I represented the opposing view fairly — not as a 'straw man'?
- Have I acknowledged the limits or uncertainties in my own argument?
- Is my language measured and appropriate — not sensationalist?

PART II

The Structure of an Argumentative Essay

BEGINNING

Hook · Background · Thesis

MIDDLE

Body Paragraphs · Counter-argument · Refutation

END

Restate · Synthesise · Project Forward

Section by Section

Part	Section	Function
Beginning	Hook / Background	Engage the reader; introduce the issue
Beginning	Thesis Statement	State the writer's position clearly
Middle	Body Paragraph 1	First supporting argument + evidence
Middle	Body Paragraph 2	Second supporting argument + evidence
Middle	Counter-argument + Refutation	Acknowledge and respond to the opposing view
End	Conclusion	Restate · synthesize · call to action or projection

Hooking the Reader

The introduction has two jobs: pull the reader in and set up the argument. It is the gateway to everything that follows.

A weak introduction loses readers before they even reach your argument. A strong one makes them want to continue.

Five Hook Techniques

- Striking statistic — "By 2025, 48 countries will face serious water shortages, affecting 1.4 billion people."
- Provocative question — "What would it take for a river as vast as the Murray to simply run dry?"
- Relevant quotation — Dr. Aklilu Lemma on community involvement in bilharzia control
- Vivid scenario — "In the village of Adwa, an accidental discovery changed disease control forever."
- Bold problem statement — "The world is losing its forests — and with them, the knowledge of cultures that have lived within them for millennia."

From Hook → Context → Thesis

After the hook, the introduction narrows from the general to the specific. You give background information that helps the reader understand the issue — why it matters, what is at stake. Then, at the end of the introduction, you state your thesis.

Practice · Writing a Hook

Choose ONE topic and write TWO different hooks for it using two different techniques. Share with a partner and decide which is more effective.

1. Ethiopia should make environmental protection a national priority.
2. Indigenous knowledge must be integrated into school curricula.
3. Governments have a responsibility to control deforestation.

The Most Important Sentence in Your Essay

The thesis tells your reader exactly what you are arguing, why it matters, and how you plan to support it. Everything in the essay should connect back to it.

- Specific — addresses a particular aspect of the topic
- Arguable — takes a position someone could reasonably disagree with
- Supported — signals the reasons or evidence to follow
- Clear — the reader immediately understands the argument
- Single-focused — one central position, not several disconnected ideas

Weak vs. Strong Thesis Statements

Weak Thesis	Why It's Weak	Stronger Version
"Environmental protection is important."	Vague; everyone agrees	"Without legally enforced environmental policies, developing nations risk sacrificing long-term ecological stability for short-term economic gain."
"Indigenous knowledge is interesting."	No position taken	"Indigenous knowledge must be formally incorporated into national development strategies because it offers locally sustainable, community-owned solutions."
"This essay will talk about bilharzia."	Announces a topic, not a position	"The endod-based approach to bilharzia control demonstrates that community-centered, locally sourced health solutions are more sustainable than externally imposed interventions."

Body Paragraphs: Making Your Case

The body of your essay is where your argument lives. Each body paragraph is a unit of support for your thesis — it presents one reason, claim, or piece of evidence that moves the reader closer to agreeing with your position.

Each body paragraph should be self-contained but connected to the whole.

The TEEAL Structure

T

Topic Sentence

States the main claim of the paragraph

E

Explanation

Why the claim matters; how it links to the thesis

E

Evidence

Facts, statistics, expert opinion, examples

A

Analysis

What the evidence shows and how it supports the claim

L

Link

Closes the paragraph and connects to the next

Strong Topic Sentences

The topic sentence is to a paragraph what the thesis is to the essay: the statement of purpose and direction. Without it, readers must guess what the paragraph is about — and they should never have to do that work.

- State a specific claim, not just a topic area
- Connect directly to the thesis
- Signal the type of evidence or reasoning to follow
- Use confident, clear language

Topic Sentences in Action

- "Environmental pollution is one of the primary reasons why governments must fight for stronger environmental protection policies."
- "Dr. Aklilu Lemma's endod-based approach to bilharzia control demonstrates that community-level solutions can be more effective than expensive commercial alternatives."
- "Indigenous knowledge systems provide locally proven, culturally appropriate solutions to development challenges that modern science has repeatedly failed to address."
- "The destruction of cultural heritage sites — like the Nohmul temple in Belize — represents not just a loss of history, but an erasure of community identity."

Types of Evidence

Type	Description	Example from Course
Statistical	Numbers, data, percentages from research	"By 2025, 48 countries will face water shortages." (World Bank)
Expert Opinion	Statements from qualified specialists	Prof. Mike Young: "Adelaide is in a very frightening situation."
Research Findings	Results of formal studies	Lemma's 1971 study: bilharzia infection 50% → 15% with endod
Real-World Example	Specific cases that illustrate a point	Destruction of the 2000-year-old Nohmul temple in Belize
Analogical	Comparisons through parallel cases	From Murray to the Euphrates and the Mekong

Quote · Paraphrase · Summarize

Direct Quotation

When the source's exact words are precise, powerful, or memorable. Always introduce the quotation — never drop it in.

Paraphrase

When you want to convey the meaning of a source's idea in your own words. Shows real understanding and is often cleaner than long quotes.

Summary

When you need to convey overall findings without specific details. Useful in introductions, conclusions, and when synthesizing multiple sources.

Murray River Passage

"If temperatures continue to rise globally, as predicted, what is happening now in Australia will occur in other regions where countries share one river system — the Euphrates in the Middle East, the Mekong in Asia."

- 1. Introduce this passage as a direct quotation in an essay on climate change and water security.
- 2. Paraphrase the same passage in your own words.
- 3. Write a one-sentence summary of the broader point the passage makes.

Counterargument & Refutation

What distinguishes a sophisticated essay from a one-sided opinion piece is the inclusion of a counterargument — the strongest version of the position that disagrees with your thesis.

- Shows you have considered the full picture, not just your own side
- Demonstrates engagement with complexity — a sign of academic maturity
- Strengthens your position once you refute the strongest opposing case
- Earns the trust of readers who might initially be skeptical

Acknowledge → Concede → Pivot → Refute

1

State the opposing view fairly

Present it in its strongest form — never weaken or distort it

2

Acknowledge what is valid

If it has merit, say so: "It is true that..."

3

Introduce the refutation

Signal the shift: "However...", "Nevertheless...", "Despite this..."

4

Present counter-evidence or reasoning

Show why your position remains more justified

Pair Practice

For each thesis, write a one-paragraph counterargument and refutation. Use the structure: fair statement → acknowledgment → signal phrase → refutation with evidence.

- 1. Governments in developing countries must prioritize environmental protection over immediate economic development.
- 2. Cultural heritage tourism is the most effective strategy for reducing poverty in Ethiopia.

Leaving a Lasting Impression

The conclusion is your final opportunity to persuade. It is not a summary list — it is a powerful closing that reinforces your argument and points to the significance of the issue beyond the essay itself.

- Restates the thesis in new language — never verbatim
- Synthesizes the strongest evidence and reasoning
- Broadens the significance — connects to a larger context or call to action
- Closes with impact — leaves the reader with something to think about

What to Avoid in a Conclusion

- Do not introduce new arguments or evidence — the body is for evidence
- Do not simply repeat the introduction word for word
- Do not end abruptly or weakly: "In conclusion, this essay has shown..."
- Do not make predictions that go beyond what your evidence supports

Four Conclusion Strategies

Type	Description	Best Used When
Embedded	Conclusion woven into the final argument rather than set apart	The argument builds to a natural endpoint
Retrospective	Looks back from the perspective of time — uses 'hindsight'	Historical or long-term issues with change over time
Reflective	Broadens to themes, lessons, or moral insights	Social or ethical topics with a human dimension
Projective	Projects a future outcome — positive or negative	Environmental, social, and development arguments

For most essays in this course, the projective conclusion is the most powerful choice.

From General Principle to Specific Conclusion

Deductive reasoning moves from a general principle to a specific conclusion — "top-down" reasoning. If the principle is true and the reasoning is valid, the conclusion must follow.

Worked example

General principle: All fossil fuel combustion releases CO₂ , which contributes to global warming.

Specific fact: Australia's per capita emissions from fossil fuels are among the highest in the world.

Conclusion: Australia's fossil fuel use is a significant contributor to global warming.

From Specific Observations to General Conclusio

Inductive reasoning moves from specific observations to a general conclusion — "bottom-up" reasoning. The conclusion is probable rather than certain — the most reasonable explanation for the evidence.

Worked example

Observation 1: In Adwa, endod reduced bilharzia infection from 50% to 15%.

Observation 2: Endod is locally available, low-cost, and non-toxic to mammals.

Observation 3: Community involvement was high.

Conclusion: Community-based, plant-derived molluscicides are a viable approach to bilharzia control.

Ethos · Logos · Pathos

ETHOS

Credibility

Cite reliable sources, use measured language, acknowledge complexity. When you cite the WHO or Dr. Lemma, you borrow ethos from authoritative sources.

LOGOS

Logic

The logical force of evidence and reasoning. Every statistic explained, every sound inference drawn, every well-organized argument builds logos. The primary mode in academic writing.

PATHOS

Emotion

Appeals to values and empathy. Used sparingly—but the Murray River essay uses pathos when describing farmer suffering, making the human stakes felt.

Claim · Reason · Warrant

Another useful framework. The model breaks an argument into three essential components.

CLAIM

Your main position — equivalent to thesis or topic sentence

REASON

The evidence or grounds that support the claim

WARRANT

The logical bridge that answers the implicit "so what?"

WORKED EXAMPLE

CRW: Environmental Protection in Ethiopia

Component	Content
Claim	Ethiopia must prioritize environmental protection in its national development planning.
Reason	By 2025, 48 countries will face water shortages (World Bank); Ethiopia's agriculture is already vulnerable to drought and degradation.
Warrant	A country whose economy depends on agriculture cannot sustainably develop if its natural resources are destroyed. Environmental protection is therefore a precondition for development, not an obstacle.

The warrant is the bridge — explain why your evidence is relevant.

Common Logical Fallacies

Fallacy	Description	Example
Straw Man	Misrepresenting the opposing view to refute it more easily	"People who oppose nuclear energy want us to live without electricity."
Ad Hominem	Attacking the person rather than the argument	"We can't trust her — she's not even a scientist."
False Dichotomy	Presenting only two options when more exist	"Either we develop the economy OR we protect the environment."
Hasty Generalization	Drawing a broad conclusion from too little evidence	"Two farmers in the Murray area deny climate change, so all farmers do."
Slippery Slope	Assuming one action will lead to extreme consequences	"Any tourism development will destroy the entire landscape within a decade."
Appeal to Emotion	Using emotion as a substitute for evidence	"Think of the suffering of future generations — that alone should suffice."

Hedging vs. Certainty

HEDGING — Intellectual Humility

Modal verbs: may, might, could, should, would

Adverbs: probably, likely, possibly, arguably

Verbs: suggest, indicate, appear, seem, tend

Phrases: it is possible that · evidence suggests · research indicates

CERTAINTY — Confident Commitment

Modal verbs: will, must

Adverbs: certainly, clearly, undoubtedly, definitively

Verbs: demonstrate, prove, establish, confirm, show

Phrases: the evidence clearly shows · it is undeniable that · research has established

Rewrite Each Sentence Twice

Once with hedging language, once with language of certainty. Then discuss with a partner: which version best fits the available evidence — and why?

- 1. Climate change will destroy all of Earth's ecosystems.
- 2. Indigenous plants can be used to treat all diseases.
- 3. The government will increase tourism revenue if it invests in heritage sites.
- 4. Cultural heritage protection always leads to greater community cohesion.

Self-Assessment Checklist

- I can write a clear, arguable thesis statement
- I can build a body paragraph with topic sentence, evidence, and analysis
- I can integrate evidence using quotation, paraphrase, and summary
- I can write a fair counterargument and refutation
- I can write a projective conclusion using future forms
- I can use hedging appropriately and avoid common fallacies
- I attribute sources correctly and avoid plagiarism

Choose the ONE skill you most want to improve, and write a brief plan for working on it after class.

Thank You

Argument · Evidence · Responsibility

Carry these three words with you into every essay you write.

Questions, ideas, and reflections are warmly welcomed.

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