

Writing an Argument

First, determine what you have to say about the subject and draft a thesis statement (see the video on thesis statements on the LVA Writing Center Page). A **thesis** is a statement clearly stating the argument of your essay. An **argument**, on the other hand, is the overall focus or direction of your paper. Arguments are built with the claims, or main points, that support the thesis. An example of a thesis could be: *“Peanuts are a better alternative to popcorn in movie theaters because they have more vitamins and they are easier and cheaper to produce.”*

For the sample thesis statement, there would then be **two points** in your paper to support this thesis. These points are often stated in **topic sentences** at the beginning or end of body paragraphs. Topic sentences function like mini-thesis statements, letting readers know what the paragraph is about and how it connects to your thesis. They state reasons your audience should believe you. Based on our thesis statement, the first body paragraph topic sentence could be *“Peanuts have more vitamins than popcorn.”*

Peanuts can be better than popcorn in multiple ways, but focusing on one thing at a time is important when going from point to point. Each body paragraph should focus on one central point of your argument. Also, consider **evidence** or supporting facts that will build on your point. What kind of vitamins do peanuts have? How many? How many vitamins does popcorn have in comparison?

Once those are addressed, you may move on to your next point: *“Peanuts are easier and cheaper to produce than popcorn.”*

Evidence would then support this point, as well.

Counterclaim

In an argumentative essay it is important to introduce an opposing viewpoint for your paper. Strong papers often include counter-arguments and the writer’s response.

Sketching a brief outline of your paper can visually show how you support your thesis and if you have enough support. For our example paper, an outline might look like this:

Thesis: Peanuts are a better alternative to popcorn in movie theaters.

1. *Peanuts have more vitamins than popcorn.*
 - a. Describe the nutritional value of peanuts
 - b. Compared with the nutritional value of popcorn
 - c. Connect to benefits for moviegoers
2. *Peanuts are easier and cheaper to produce than popcorn.*
 - a. Describe the production process of peanuts
 - b. Compared with the production process of popcorn
 - c. Explain how lower production costs mean lower costs
for moviegoers
3. Counterclaim – a viewpoint different from yours, and your response to the counter argument.



In sum,

- Formulate the thesis
- Think of smaller points that will support your thesis and constitute your argument
- Compile evidence for each point
 - Weave in quotes, statistics, and/or data while maintaining your own voice
- Keep your thesis in mind as you develop the main points of your argument
 - Ask yourself, “Does this argument support my thesis?”
- Keep each paragraph focused on one central point or claim
- Do not limit yourself to a single paragraph per point or claim

Some need just a sentence or so of evidence; some benefit from pages of discussion

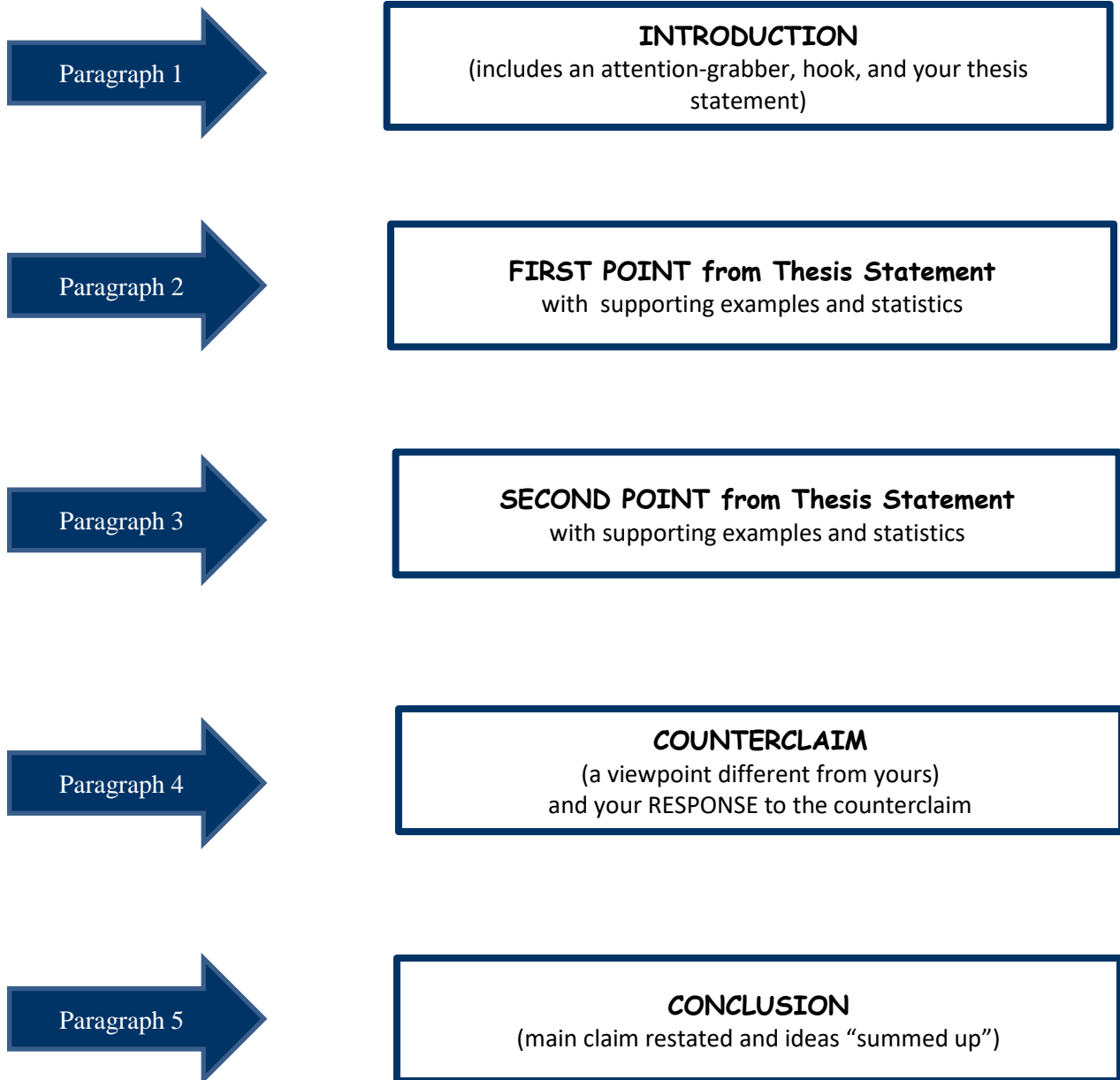
SEE NEXT PAGE FOR ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY OUTLINE

Argumentative Essay

In an argumentative essay, a writer presents a **main claim** (your opinion or position) about a topic or issue, and then supports that claim with **reasons** and **evidence**.

As a writer, you choose your topic that you have opinions about, or that you have researched. Then you write your essay where you discuss the issue by stating your position along with your reasons and supporting evidence. That supporting evidence can be made up of important facts, statistics or quotes that you have found in researching your argument.

Follow this structure for your Argumentative Essay



Internet RESEARCH

To get familiar with your topic and include some facts, current statistics and/or quotes, conduct a Google Search. Try to narrow your search by using words like STATISTICS in your search topic.

As you browse articles:

- ✓ Write down important facts and details that seem to support your own opinions
- ✓ Try to find a good quote or two that will support your claims
- ✓ Do not copy entire sentences, but instead, jot down key information in short phrases
- ✓ Locate and record the citation information for each website you go use

Information I will need to CITE this website:

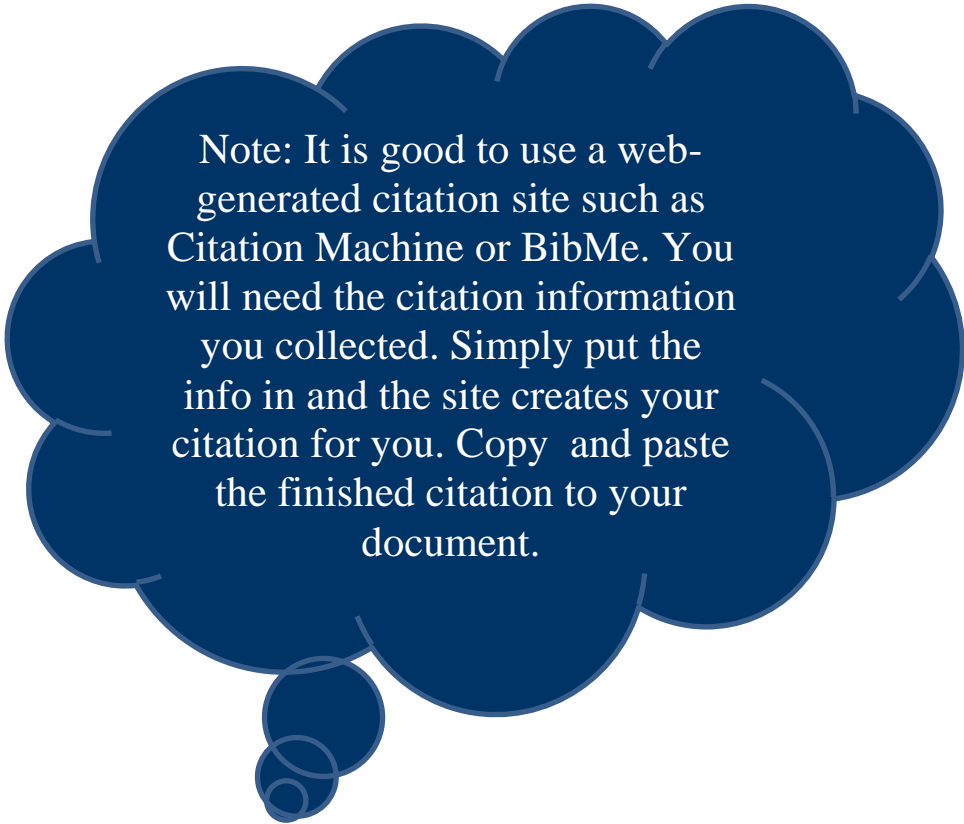
Author of Website (if given)

Title of the page

Title of the website

Publisher and date published (if available – look at bottom of website)

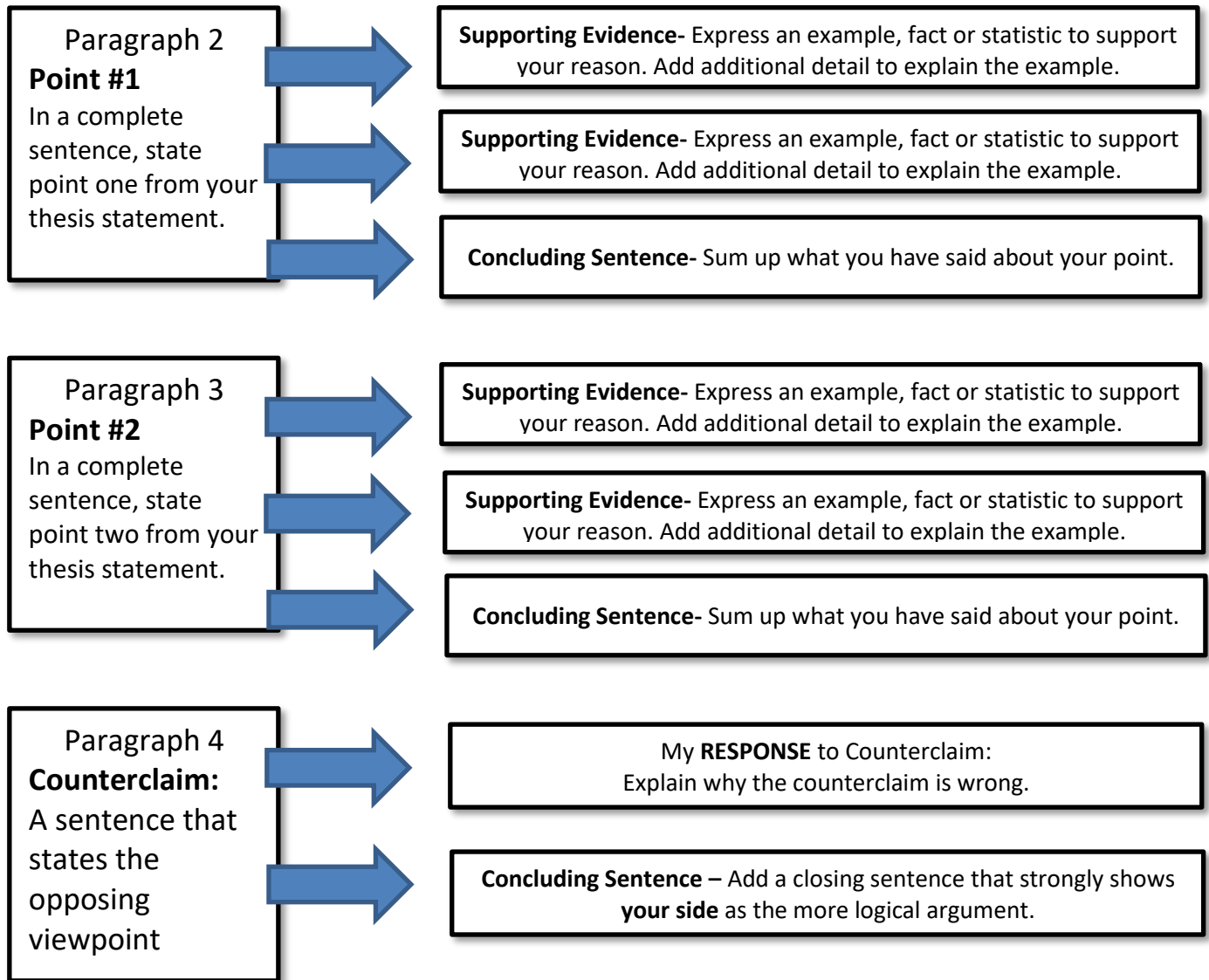
Websites URL (usually starts with www.)



Note: It is good to use a web-generated citation site such as Citation Machine or BibMe. You will need the citation information you collected. Simply put the info in and the site creates your citation for you. Copy and paste the finished citation to your document.

Pre-Writing Organizer

Paragraph 1 – **INTRODUCTION** – See below “Writing the Introduction” - This is to get your reader interested in your topic with a hook, and you state your main claim (thesis statement – what you believe about your topic)



Paragraph 5 – **CONCLUSION** – Begin your paragraphs with a concluding transition, such as **(Therefore, Overall, All in all, Finally, In summary, To summarize,)** Re-state your thesis statement and summarize your reasons. Next, “sum up” some of the strongest evidence you used in the essay (DO NOT mention every one of your reasons, just bring up the ones you feel were your strongest.) Then, add one more **final, convincing statement!**

Writing the INTRODUCTION

When writing an introduction, you will need to begin with an **attention grabber or hook**, and then go on to your thesis statement.

To Hook your reader, you'll need to start with something catchy! You can

- ❑ **Use a surprising fact or statistic from your research**
 - Ex.: One single plastic drinking straw can take up to 200 years to decompose!
- ❑ **Invite the reader to imagine or picture a certain situation**
 - Ex.: Imagine being terrified of getting on the bus each morning because there are bullies waiting to harass you at school.
- ❑ **Ask a thought provoking question (stay away from “Have you ever ...?”)**
 - Ex.: Why would anyone smoke cigarettes where children or friends could breathe in toxic second-hand smoke?

Once you have your attention grabber (hook), you will need to **elaborate** on what you said in that first sentence. This should be at least two sentences or more. Finally, you will state your **thesis statement** in a clear and complete sentence.