

How to Write a Good Argumentative Essay: First Argument

Let's look at the first argument that we encounter in the main body of [write argumentative essay fast](#). "For starters, many of us who have grown up with computers have very poor handwriting and sometimes our fingers get sore if we have to use a pen to write a lot. That's why I like to take notes on my laptop. I can type much faster than I can write, and I can keep my notes organized in one place." Now the first thing I would say to this author is that if there's an argument here at all, it needs to be clarified. Because as it stands it sounds like what you're giving me in this paragraph is an explanation for why you happen to prefer using the laptop to type your notes. But that by itself isn't an argument for why teachers shouldn't be allowed to ban their use. So my first question to the author would be, how are these facts supposed to bear on the issue? How do we get from this to the conclusion that teachers shouldn't be allowed to ban laptops? We need to try to understand what the author was really trying to get at here. What's actually going on here, it seems, is that the author is responding to a possible objection that questions the necessity of using laptops. The teacher says, why can't you just take notes with pen and paper? You don't really need to use a laptop to take notes. This is relevant, right? Because if using a laptop to take notes really is nothing more than a matter of personal preference, then it's hard to see how that could supersede a teacher's right to conduct their class as they see fit. But this paragraph looks like it's a response to this objection. It's saying, no, I do need to use a laptop.

The quality of my note taking will suffer if I don't use a laptop. It's not just a matter of preference. OK. Let's assume that this was the author's intent. Now, you still need to connect this to the main conclusion in some way. I want to point out here that the conclusion we're going for is a moral conclusion. It says that teachers shouldn't be allowed to ban the use of laptops in classrooms. So at some point the author has to think about how these facts about sore fingers and slow note taking are relevant to this moral claim. Now it's a generally accepted principle of moral reasoning that you can't derive a moral conclusion from purely descriptive premises.

Somewhere in the premises you need to refer to a general moral principle or a statement about moral values. So my question to the author is, what sort of moral argument are you going for? You should make this explicit so that readers can see how the claims you make in this paragraph are relevant to the conclusion. If someone was to ask me, I think a natural way to develop this argument-- maybe not the only way-- is to cast it as a fairness issue. Banning the use of laptops would be unfair to the students who rely on laptops for their note taking. It would unfairly disadvantage them relative to the other students in the class who don't rely on them to take their laptops away. So if you go with this strategy, then the argument might look like this. Banning the use of laptops will disadvantage certain students in the classroom. Namely those students who, like the author, have poor handwriting, write slow, get sore fingers, are more disorganized with paper notes, et cetera. Teachers should not adopt classroom policies that systematically disadvantage certain students but not others. This is the moral premise that's doing all the work for us. A premise that basically says that all of the things being equal, a policy that disadvantages one group of students but not others is unfair. It's unjust discrimination. Now what we've done here is the sort of thing I'd try to work through with a student if they were looking for feedback on a draft. We're trying to clarify and make explicit the reasoning that's really animating this paragraph. From here I might have some suggestions for rewriting the paragraph to make this logic clear, but I'd usually let the student take a crack at that first. In this tutorial all we're doing is argument analysis, so I'll stop here. Later on we'll look at a rewritten version of the essay that incorporates some of this analysis.