Stack a Strong Argument Paragraph

Teacher		**Class**	Grade 8
Subject	ELA	**Topic**	Argument writing
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United States

Students learn to support a claim with clear reasons and relevant evidence. They build and write a stable point-evidence-explanation paragraph on paper.

Curriculum links

- Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence

Learning objectives

- Students will write a clear claim supported by two clear reasons.
- Students will choose relevant verifiable evidence to support each reason.
- Students will explain how each piece of evidence supports its reason.

Success criteria

- I can state a claim plus reasons clearly in one thesis sentence.
- I can link relevant verifiable evidence to each reason I give.
- I can explain in my own words how evidence proves my reason.

What students already know

Ask: What is the difference between saying you are right and proving you are right? Listen for claim versus proof with reasons and facts.

Key words

claim	the clear position you are trying to prove is true [4]
reason	a why that shows your position is true [6]
evidence	a checkable fact or example that proves a why [18]
thesis statement	one sentence at the start that gives your position plus your whys [8]
relevant	closely connected to the why it is meant to prove [6]

Materials

- Projector with Slides 1-11
- Paper graphic organizer (claim box, two reason boxes with evidence lines)
- Pencils
- Sample paragraph strips about homework limits, printed and cut apart

Before the lesson

- Print one graphic organizer per student plus a few spares
- Print and cut one set of sample paragraph strips per pair
- Load Slides 1-11 and test Video clip 1 (0:00-4:37) and Video clip 2 (0:00-4:30) with sound
- Arrange desks for pair work

Lesson outline

0–5 min **Starter** 5 min · Whole class

Activate ideas about proof versus opinion and hook students into paragraph stacking.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 1 and read the goal: support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
2. Say the hook and hold up a wobbly stack of papers to show a weak paragraph.
3. Show Slide 3 and ask pairs to name one proof and one trick from everyday school talk.
4. Take two quick answers and link them to today's paragraph stack work.

STUDENTS DO

1. Listen to the goal and hook.
2. Turn and talk for 30 seconds about a time someone tried to win with feelings instead of facts.

Say: No screens, no chargers, just paper. Can you stack a paragraph that does not wobble? A strong stack needs a clear point on the bottom, solid facts in the middle, and your own thinking on top to hold it together.

Ask: What is the difference between argument and persuasion-only? (Argument uses logic and verifiable facts to build a case from evidence, while persuasion can use unverifiable stories and emotional appeal [18].) · Why is a claim by itself not enough? (A claim by itself is not an argumentative thesis; you need to add your reasons as claim plus reasons [6].)

Check understanding: Thumbs up if you can name claim, reason, and evidence. If many are unsure, restate the three words with a quick hand motion for each.

Support: Show two labeled examples on Slide 3 and let students point to proof versus trick. **Stretch:** Ask students to turn a trick sentence into a checkable fact question.

Use: Slides 1-3

5–15 min **Teach Claims** 10 min · Whole class

Teach students to write a specific thesis as claim plus reasons.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 4 and walk through Step 1 Claim and Step 2 Reasons.
2. Model turning the vague topic cell phones at lunch into a specific thesis on the board.
3. Play Video clip 1 on Slide 5 and tell students to listen for claim plus reasons.
4. Check what they heard and underline claim once and each reason twice.

STUDENTS DO

1. Watch the timeline and video and jot the claim plus reasons they hear.
2. Call out the claim and the two reasons in the modeled thesis.

Say: A thesis states the position being argued and provides reasons to support the argument [8]. Think of it as claim plus reasons [6]. Be as specific as possible without giving too much detail, because a thesis is not a title [5].

Worked example: Vague topic: homework. Step 1 make it a position: Grade 8 should limit graded homework. Step 2 add two whys: because long nights cut sleep and because short practice better helps focus. Full thesis: Grade 8 should limit graded homework to 60 minutes a night because long nights cut sleep and short practice better helps focus.

Ask: Which is a thesis and why: Homework and schools or Parents ought to participate more in school? (The second is a thesis because it takes a clear position, while the first is only a title [5].) · What two parts must our first sentence include? (A clear claim and the reasons that support it [6][8].)

Check understanding: Mini whiteboards: each student writes a claim plus two reasons about later start time. Scan for because. Reteach with the frame if more than a few miss reasons.

Support: Give the frame: I believe ___ because ___ and ___. Students fill blanks only. **Stretch:** Ask students to replace one vague word with a specific stronger word and add who should act.

Use: Slides 4-5, Video clip 1 (0:00-4:37)

Created with LessonDino.com · AI lesson planner with checkable sources

15–25 min **Teach Evidence** 10 min · Whole class

Teach students to pick relevant, verifiable evidence in three useful types.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 6 and explain numbers, experts, and brief true stories as three evidence types.
2. Show Slide 9 and stress that strong evidence is relevant, specific, verifiable, and explained.
3. Show Slide 10 vote on later start times and have students vote for best support.
4. Confirm the winner and explain why the others are weaker for that reason.

STUDENTS DO

1. Study the three cards and vote for which evidence best supports the sleep reason.
2. Explain to a neighbor why the chosen fact is relevant and checkable.

Say: A good argument uses a mix of logos, ethos, and pathos to support its points [8]. That means numbers for logic, expert opinion to build trust, and a brief true story that ties to the topic [8]. Argument builds its case from evidence first and lets the reader judge from proof [18].

Worked example: Claim: School should start later. Reason: Teens need more sleep. Evidence A numbers: Sleep study says teens need about 9 hours. Evidence B expert: A teacher reports calmer first period. Evidence C wish: 90% of class surveyed want more sleep. Best is A because it is specific, verifiable, and directly proves the sleep reason [6].

Ask: Why does a personal story alone often fail as argument evidence? (Because persuasion can use unverifiable anecdotes and emotional appeal, while argument needs logic with verifiable facts [18].) · What makes evidence relevant? (It directly proves that reason, is specific not vague, and can be checked [6].)

Check understanding: Fingers 1-3 for A-B-C on Slide 10. If split, re-vote after one student defends A with relevance.

Support: Color-mark one strong and one weak example and let students match the new cards to those models. **Stretch:** Ask students to rewrite the weakest card as a verifiable fact for the same reason.

Use: Slides 6, 9-10

Created with LessonDino.com · AI lesson planner with checkable sources

25–50 min **Main Activity** 25 min · Pairs

Build and write a stable body paragraph that links point, evidence, and explanation.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 7 and play Video clip 2 to model how a reason links to evidence with transitions.
2. Hand out cut strips and demo ordering them into supporting statement, evidence, and explanation.
3. Hand out the graphic organizer and Slide 8 task and set a 12-minute writing timer.
4. Circulate, check P-E-X labels in margins, and prompt for how the evidence proves the point.

STUDENTS DO

1. In pairs, order the cut strips into P, then E, then X and check with another pair.
2. On your own organizer, write your own stack on homework limits and label P, E, X in the margin.
3. Read your paragraph to your partner and underline where you explained the link.

Say: The first line of each paragraph should be a supporting statement, then add facts and evidence to support the point and explain how it supports the main point [11]. Transitions are the mortar that holds the essay together and help the reader follow your logic [3]. Label P for point, E for evidence, and X for explanation.

Worked example: Strips in order: P Point: Grade 8 homework over 90 minutes a night hurts learning. E Evidence: Our grade survey showed students with 2 hours of homework slept about 1 hour less and scored lower on Friday quizzes. X Explanation: Less sleep hurts focus, so extra work backfires, which proves a 60-minute limit would help learning. This stacks because the evidence is relevant to the reason and the last sentence explains the link [11].

Ask: How do you know your evidence is relevant? (It is a verifiable fact that directly proves that exact reason, not a different topic [6][18].) · What must the X sentence do? (Explain how and why the evidence supports the main point of the argument [11].)

Check understanding: Collect organizers and scan margin labels P-E-X and underlined link sentence. Pull a small group for reteach if X only repeats evidence.

Support: Provide the supporting statement already written so students only add evidence and explanation.
Stretch: Have students add a second piece of evidence and explain which one is stronger and why.

Use: Slides 7-8, Video clip 2 (0:00-4:30)

Created with LessonDino.com · AI lesson planner with checkable sources

50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

Check understanding of claim plus reasons and relevant evidence against success criteria.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 11 true or false statements and take class votes.
2. Ask students to fix each false idea using their paragraph as proof.
3. Return to Slide 2 objectives and have students self-rate with fingers.
4. Preview that a fair summary of the other side plus rebuttal builds trust [4].

STUDENTS DO

1. Vote true or false and defend answers with examples from the lesson.
2. Self-assess against I can statements and note one fix for their paragraph.

Say: An argument is usually a main idea backed up with evidence that supports the idea [4]. Today we built claim plus reasons and picked relevant proof. Check your stack: is every E checked, specific, and tied to its reason with an X?

Ask: True or false: A claim alone counts as an argument? (False. It needs reasons plus evidence [6].) · True or false: Irrelevant facts can still support a claim if they are true? (False. Evidence must be relevant to the reason or it does not support the claim [6].)

Check understanding: Exit slips with three true-false fixes. If many miss relevance, start next lesson with resorting weak versus strong evidence.

Support: Let students answer true-false on mini whiteboards before speaking. **Stretch:** Ask students to add a one-sentence why-it-matters closer without repeating the claim word for word.

Use: Slide 11

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Writing a topic or title instead of an arguable thesis	Thesis has no position word like should and no because reasons	Upgrade to specific claim plus reasons; a thesis is not a title and should be as specific as possible [5].
Using persuasion-only tricks as evidence	Evidence is a vague story, threat, or unverifiable anecdote with strong feelings	Replace with logic and verifiable facts and explain the link; persuasion can use emotional appeal but argument needs checkable proof [18].
Adding true but irrelevant facts	Evidence is true but proves a different reason than the point sentence	Cut or swap it; credible support must be applicable to that reason to back the claim [6].

Support

- Provide the supporting statement already written so students only add evidence and explanation.
- Offer claim frames, word banks with should and because, and pre-marked strong evidence models.

Stretch

- Have students add a second piece of evidence and explain which one is stronger and why.
- Ask students to forecast reasons in order in the intro and add a next-step thought at the end.

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Sit near pairs needing writing support. Help them pick one reason, read strips aloud, and scribe the X link sentence if needed.

Check for understanding

Question	Answer
Write a thesis as claim plus two reasons for limiting homework.	Clear position plus two becauses, for example: Grade 8 should limit homework because it cuts sleep and lowers focus.
Which is stronger evidence that teens need more sleep — A) Sleep study says teens need about 9 hours, B) A teacher reports a calmer first period, or C) 90% of class surveyed want more sleep — and why?	The sleep study about 9 hours, because it is specific, verifiable, and relevant to the reason.
What must you add after evidence in a body paragraph?	An explanation of how and why the evidence supports the point [11].

Homework

Draft two reasons with one relevant fact each for one school rule you would keep or change.

Sources

1. How to Read the Standards · thecorestandards.org · https://www.thecorestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/introduction/how-to-read-the-standards/
2. English Language Arts · cps.edu · https://www.cps.edu/sites/skyline/curriculum/ela/
3. Argumentative Essays - Purdue OWL® - Purdue University · owl.purdue.edu · https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/essay_writing/argumentative_essays.html
4. Argument – The Writing Center · writingcenter.unc.edu · https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/argument/
5. Argument Papers - Purdue OWL® - Purdue University · owl.purdue.edu · https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/argument_papers/index.html
6. Argumentative Writing and Using Evidence - San José State ... · sjsu.edu · https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/Argumentative%20Writing%20and%20Using%20Evidence.pdf
7. University Writing Center: Argumentative Writing - JMU · jmu.edu · https://www.jmu.edu/learning/writing-center/link-library/types-of-writing/argument.shtml
8. Guide to Writing an Argumentative Essay - germanna.edu · germanna.edu · https://germanna.edu/sites/default/files/2024-07/Guide%20to%20Writing%20an%20Argumentative%20Essay.pdf
9. Using single paragraph outlines to plan an effective argument · thenational.academy · https://www.thenational.academy/teachers/programmes/english-secondary-ks4-aqa/units/writing-masters/lessons/planning-effective-arguments
10. Writing skills - persuade, argue and advise - BBC Bitesize · bbc.co.uk · https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z43dwnb/articles/zv6yvwx
11. How to build an argument for KS3 English students - BBC · bbc.co.uk · https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z6n6gwx
12. Academic writing · en.wikipedia.org · https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_writing
13. Strategies for Teaching Argument Writing - Edutopia · edutopia.org · https://www.edutopia.org/article/strategies-teaching-argument-writing
14. Argumentative Writing worksheets | Worksheetzone · worksheetzone.org · https://worksheetzone.org/worksheets/english-language-arts/writing/nonfiction-writing/argument-writing
15. ELA 9 : Argument writing - UnboundEd · lessons.unbounded.org · https://lessons.unbounded.org/ela/grade-9/writing-module/unit-1--part-i
16. How to Teach Argument Writing Step-By-Step - ELA Buffet · elabuffet.com · https://elabuffet.com/2022/01/31/how-to-teach-argument-writing-step-by-step/
17. Making a Claim: Teaching Students Argument Writing Through Close Reading - Pedagogue · pedagogue.app · https://pedagogue.app/making-a-claim-teaching-students-argument-writing-through-close-reading/
18. Developing Evidence-Based Arguments from Texts | Read Write Think · readwritethink.org · https://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/developing-evidence-based-arguments

19. Teach Argument Writing: Capture the Idea | eslwriting.org · eslwriting.org · http://www.eslwriting.org/learn-english-teaching-argument-writing-capture-the-idea/
20. Writing Arguments: Purposes of Argument | UMGC · umgc.edu · https://www.umgc.edu/current-students/learning-resources/writing-center/online-guide-to-writing/tutorial/chapter8/ch8-04
21. Writing Arguments: Steps to Writing an Argument - Develop ... · umgc.edu · https://www.umgc.edu/current-students/learning-resources/writing-center/online-guide-to-writing/tutorial/chapter8/ch8-08

Created with LessonDino.com · AI lesson planner with checkable sources