Objectives: to provide a simple example of how to organize an argumentative essay, how to construct an argument, and how to support an argument.

Method: use a simple, understandable sample students can refer back to by memory as they structure and argue a position.

Background: human beings are natural arguers, but many of us forget our strength in this area when we try to write arguments.

Part One: Review the Steps to a Strong Argumentative Essay

Step One: Preparation work prior to writing an actual argumentative essay entails reviewing

your notes, texts, etc., and brainstorming prior to the steps outlined below.

Step Two: create a thesis.

Step Three: Develop sub-claims, smaller arguments that, when supported, will strengthen your

main argument.

Step Four: Choose examples/evidence (usually key terms from texts or lecture, as well from the

primary sources) that support your sub-claims.

Step Five: Make a list of the reasons each example lead you to think of and believe your sub-

claim.

Step Six: Create an outline.

Step Seven: Rewrite your thesis.

Step Eight: Write your intro, body paragraphs, and conclusion.

Step Nine: Return to your introduction; rewrite your thesis and then your entire intro.

Step Ten: Rewrite the first sentence of each paragraph, making sure it’s an argument.

Step Eleven: Make sure each body paragraph has a sub-claim, examples and evidence, and

explanations of how these examples lead you to the argument you have in the paragraph. Each

paragraph should be a “mini-essay” with its own thesis (sub-claim), evidence, and explanation

(analysis). As you support each sub-claim, you increase the strength of your overall thesis.

Step Twelve: Rewrite your conclusion.

Step Thirteen: Create a title that is clever and suggests the gist of your thesis.

Step Fourteen: Read your paper out loud and make any necessary changes.

Part Two: Provide an Example of How to Do This

Example: the class wants me to bring a meal or snack to each class.

Students’ Initial Thesis: bring us snacks

Their Initial sub-claims: we’re hungry, we didn’t have time to eat, we don’t have money, etc.

Consider Your Audience & Recreate Thesis: what do they care about? What will convince them?

New Thesis: Providing a healthy snack during each class will increase student success

and retention by increasing attendance, participation, focus, and retention of material.

Create an Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Thesis: *Providing a healthy snack during each class will increase student success and retention by increasing attendance, participation, focus, and retention of material.*
3. Provide an interesting opening.
4. Provide a “roadmap” to what you plant to discuss/how you’ll layout your essay and argument.
5. Sub-claim 1: *Students’ attendance increases when snacks are available, enabling them to improve their outcome in the course*.
6. Example/Evidence: A study of fifty community colleges with a majority of their students as first generation showed that when students are forced to choose between earning the money to provide for their basic needs (including food) that they will choose work over school. In order to counteract this, twenty-five of the fifty test schools began making healthy snacks available at the commencement of each class. They found that attendance increased by nearly forty percent. The number of students in these colleges who succeeded in their classes improved by fifteen percent.
7. Explain/Analysis: This study suggests that, contrary to what some instructors may think, students miss class, not because they don’t care about their own education, but because they are struggling to meet their basic food and shelter needs. Once students’ nutritional needs were met, they prioritized school and attended class. By attending class, they increased their exposure to course material and other students with similar goals. The number of students succeeding jumped from sixty percent to seventy-five percent.
8. Sub-claim 2: *Professors who provide snacks/meals for their students have a more collegial relationship with their students, increasing participation and collaboration.*
9. Example/Evidence: A study out of the University of Notre Dame supports the premise that professors, who either eat with their students or bring snacks for their students, create a more interactive class dynamic. Students shifted from the perspective that faculty experts should “share” their knowledge and students should “memorize” it to the perspective that faculty members are experts in their field that students should engage and debate with, so that students can better understand material.
10. Explain/Analysis: Because students see their professors commitment to them, students begin to trust, take risks in discussion, and to form bonds with those with whom they do group work. Research that retention increases up to ninety percent when students have the opportunity to talk about material and to teach it to others. Providing snacks creates a collegial, conversational dynamic, leading students to participate more with each other and the faculty.
11. Sub-Claim 3: *Students with a strong rapport with faculty are more likely to focus on lecture material, participate in group work, and strive to do well.*
12. Example/Evidence: A leading expert in education argues that “students must know that you care before they care what you know.” Her research suggests that many modern students have the impression that educators neither care about their students nor their own craft, so students tend to hold faculty members in low regard and see school as something perfunctory, believing professors will just pass students along whether or not they do the assignments.
13. Explain/Analysis: The evidence she compiles reveals that instructors who make the effort to ensure their students’ needs are being met, as well as take the time to have conversations with them as they eat before class begins, earn students’ respect. Because they respect their professor, students listen, participate, and engage with each other. Moreover, eating a nutritional snack prior to class stabilizes blood sugar, so students are physically able to both focus and retain information.
14. Sub-Claim 4: *Ensuring students’ nutritional needs are met increases their retention of information.*
15. Example/Evidence: Stanford University’s recent biological study on the relationship between nutrition, memory, and applying knowledge argues that in order to ensure long-term acquisition of knowledge, as well as the ability to think critically about what one learns and then apply that knowledge, is directly related to the body’s nutritional levels at the time of exposure to the knowledge. Students whose nutritional needs were not met could not focus on what they were learning, could not process and understand it, and could not remember long-term or apply what they learned. Contrary to this, students who absorbed nutritionally satisfying snacks within a few minutes prior to the beginning of class overcame all of these obstacles, resulting in the ability to both critically think about what was being learned and to apply it to their world beyond the class and the particular subject.
16. Explain/Analysis: Most professors maintain that they are experts in their field, but, in addition to teaching the subject material, they’re teaching critical thinking and the application of learned knowledge. The work out of Stanford University suggests that simply providing a nutritional snack to students vastly improves their chances to benefit in the short- and long-term from what they’re learning.
17. Conclusion: Reiterate/restate your thesis in a way that makes a specific appeal to your audience. You’re a professor who values your students as human beings, and you’re committed to our academic and personal success. The research examined above, as well as additional studies, overwhelming support the argument that instructors who provide nutritious snacks to students increase attendance, improving students’ exposure to and interaction with material. This also facilitates student engagement in class because students realize that the instructor is invested in their well-being, encouraging them to participate more and to reach out for help when they need it. Moreover, providing nutritional snacks provides a spike in energy, and, more importantly, increased, long-term absorption of material. Providing a healthy snack to students increases the likelihood that you’ll achieve the teaching goals you have for this class.