

Ch. 02: Critical Thinking and Clear Writing

I. The argumentative essay tries to support a position on an issue.

- A. Good argumentative essay is well organized and clear: It is then both easier to understand and more persuasive.

II. Good argumentative writing is organized

- A. The writer of an organized essay will focus its issue, stick to that issue, arrange the parts of the essay logically, and be complete.
- B. Good writing practices make it easy to stick to these guidelines.
 - i. After completing a draft, outline the essay. Evaluate your outline for coherence and focus.
 - ii. Create an outline before starting on your paper.
 - iii. Revise an essay repeatedly.
 - iv. Get comments on the essay from someone else.
 - v. Read the essay out loud to catch problems with grammar or punctuation.
 - vi. After finishing, set the work aside for a while and return to it for more revisions.

III. Persuasive Writing Aims to Win Agreements from Others

- A. Persuasive vs. Argumentative
 - i. Persuasive writing differs from argumentative writing in aiming mainly at winning agreement from others, rather than (the argumentative ideal of) establishing objective grounds for a claim.
- B. The best persuasion is good argumentation.
- C. Certain principles of persuasion will help you get a good argument across.
 - i. Discuss your opponent's point of view but not your opponent as a person.
 - ii. Discuss what opponents of your position might say.

- iii. Speak sympathetically of views opposed to your own.
- iv. Concede the merits of an opponent's argument.
- v. When more issues exist than you have room to handle, focus on the important ones.
- vi. Rebut objections to your view before presenting your own arguments.
- vii. Open with the best argument you have.

IV. Good writing avoids reinforcing biases about race and gender.

- A. The most common bias involves treating one type, usually the white male, as the standard or norm.
 - i. In cases of gender, the bias involves using male pronouns as generic pronouns. This practice contributes to the invisibility of women in language.
 - 1. One remedy is to replace "he" by "he or she," and so on.
 - 2. A more natural-sounding remedy puts sentences into the plural, thus eliminating any need for gendered pronouns.