

## Sample Reflection: Argument Essay Student Letter

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Professor Kelli Wood  
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Dear Professor Wood:

Writing my argument essay felt like a completely different challenge from the informative synthesis essay. Instead of just presenting information neutrally, I had to take a stance and convince readers that my position was valid. This was both exciting and intimidating because I knew my argument would be judged on how well I supported my claims, not just how well I explained a topic.

**What Went Well:** I'm most proud of how I developed my thesis and main argument. Unlike my previous essays where my thesis was more of a topic announcement, this time I created a clear argumentative stance: "Despite its benefits, social media distorts modern romantic relationships." I then organized my entire essay around proving this claim with specific evidence about communication disruption, unrealistic comparisons, and parasocial attachments.

Converting my research from the informative essay into persuasive evidence worked really well. I was able to use the same sources but frame them differently to back up my argument instead of just explaining what parasocial relationships are. For example, the Cleveland Clinic information about intense parasocial relationships became evidence for how social media creates unhealthy competition in romantic relationships.

I think I did a good job addressing counterarguments. Rather than ignoring opposing views, I acknowledged that some people do find emotional growth through social media relationships (like Sai in "The Perfect Match"), but I then explained why these cases are exceptions rather than the rule. This made my argument feel more balanced and credible.

My use of evidence improved significantly. Instead of just dropping in quotes, I learned to introduce them with signal phrases and then explain how they supported my specific claims. The statistics from Pew Research about couples feeling bothered by their partner's phone use became a foundation for my argument about communication disruption rather than just an interesting fact.

**What Was Challenging:** The hardest part was maintaining my argumentative voice throughout the essay. Sometimes I would slip back into informative mode and just explain things rather than arguing for my position. I had to constantly ask myself, "Am I trying to convince readers here, or just inform them?"

Organizing my argument logically was more complex than I expected. I couldn't just present information in any order like in the informative essay—I had to think strategically about which points would be most persuasive and in what sequence. I reorganized my body paragraphs three times before I found an order that built my case effectively.

Finding the right balance of evidence was tricky. I wanted to support every claim thoroughly, but I also worried about overwhelming readers with too many statistics and quotes. Sometimes I would cut evidence that I thought was important, then add it back in, then cut it again.

I also struggled with tone. I wanted to be persuasive without being preachy or dismissive of people who disagree with me. Finding that balance between confident assertion and respectful argumentation took several drafts to achieve.

**What Helped Me Work Through Difficulties:** The argument prewriting exercises were crucial, especially the one where we had to list evidence for and against our position. That's when I realized I actually had stronger evidence than I thought, and it helped me anticipate counterarguments more effectively.

Our class discussion about logical fallacies really helped me avoid weakening my argument. I caught myself making some hasty generalizations in early drafts and was able to revise them into more nuanced claims with better support.

The peer workshop was valuable for different reasons than in previous essays. This time, my workshop partner could tell me whether my argument was actually convincing, not just whether my writing was clear. When she said she wasn't convinced by my first body

paragraph because the evidence felt weak, I knew I needed to find stronger support for that claim.

I also found it helpful to read my argument aloud to myself. If I sounded uncertain or wishy-washy when I read it, I knew those sections needed to be more assertive and better supported.

**Plans for Improvement:** I want to work on developing stronger topic sentences that clearly state my claims. Some of my paragraphs started with more general statements that didn't immediately signal what I was trying to prove in that section.

For future argumentative writing, I plan to spend more time in the prewriting phase mapping out potential counterarguments. I addressed one main counterargument in this essay, but I think acknowledging and refuting multiple opposing views would make my arguments even stronger.

I also want to get better at using emotional appeals alongside logical evidence. Most of my argument relied on statistics and expert opinions, but I think including more appeals to readers' personal experiences with social media could make my writing more compelling.

One practical change I'll make is to outline my argument structure before I start drafting. I did too much reorganizing during the drafting process, which was time-consuming and sometimes led to repetitive or unclear connections between paragraphs.

I'd also like to improve my conclusions. Mine felt a bit generic with the "we must be more mindful" ending. I want to practice writing conclusions that give readers specific actions they can take or that make the stakes of my argument clearer.

This essay taught me that argumentative writing requires a different kind of confidence than other types of writing. I had to trust that my position was worth defending and that my evidence was strong enough to convince skeptical readers. It also showed me how much research and critical thinking goes into building a persuasive case—you can't just state your opinion and expect people to agree.

I'm grateful for how this sequence of essays built on each other. The research skills from the informative synthesis essay made gathering evidence easier, and understanding parasocial relationships deeply from that essay helped me make a more nuanced argument about social media's effects on relationships.

Thank you for pushing us to take clear stances and defend them thoughtfully. This feels like the most "college-level" writing I've done so far.

Best regards,  
Dulce Rutledge

**AI Disclosure:** I used ChatGPT to help me brainstorm stronger verbs for my argument when my writing felt too passive. I also asked it to suggest ways to make my topic sentences more assertive. All the arguments, evidence analysis, and conclusions are entirely my own.

### Rubric Feedback for Argument Reflection

Criteria	Performance Level & Description	Explanation
<b>Depth of Self-Analysis</b>	<b>Advanced (A):</b> Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of own writing process; moves beyond surface observations to genuine insight	The student shows sophisticated understanding of argumentative writing's unique challenges—recognizing need for different "confidence" and strategic organization. Her insight about building on previous essay skills demonstrates mature understanding of how learning transfers across assignments.
<b>Specific Examples &amp; Details</b>	<b>Emerging (B):</b> Generally uses specific examples to support reflections; adequate detail about writing experience	Provides good specific examples (reorganizing paragraphs three times, peer feedback about weak first body paragraph, reading aloud strategy). Could include more detail about specific revision decisions or examples of how she changed from informative to argumentative voice.
<b>Honest Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Advanced (A):</b> Thoughtfully identifies both strengths and areas for improvement; realistic and balanced assessment	Shows mature self-awareness about both genuine strengths (thesis development, counterargument handling) and real challenges (maintaining argumentative voice, tone balance). Assessment demonstrates growth mindset and realistic evaluation of performance.
<b>Actionable Planning</b>	<b>Advanced (A):</b> Sets specific, realistic goals with concrete steps for improvement; plans are well-connected to identified challenges	Sets very specific, realistic goals clearly connected to identified challenges (stronger topic sentences, multiple counterarguments, emotional appeals, advance outlining). Plans show sophisticated understanding of argumentative writing development.
<b>Clear Communication</b>	<b>Advanced (A):</b> Well-organized, engaging reflection that effectively communicates insights; appropriate length and format	Excellent organization following clear logical structure. Communication is engaging and shows deep metacognitive engagement with argumentative writing process. Meets all requirements with substantive content.
<b>Authentic Voice &amp; AI Disclosure</b>	<b>Emerging (B):</b> Generally maintains personal voice; accurate disclosure of AI use with minor issues	Voice feels authentically hers and shows genuine intellectual engagement. AI disclosure is honest about specific assistance received. Voice could be slightly more distinctive or personal, but maintains appropriate academic tone throughout.

**Overall Grade Range: A- to A** - This reflection demonstrates excellent metacognitive thinking with sophisticated analysis of argumentative writing challenges and strong planning for continued growth.