

## English 11-AP - Argumentation Shape - Applications

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

### Standard Shape for an Argument

*Introduction (attracts and engages your readers and provides a forecast)*

- Identify the issue clearly and immediately. Show the audience that your essay deserves their attention.
- Acknowledge the opposing viewpoint *accurately*, and concede its merit.
- Offer at least one point of your own that your audience can agree with.
- As you build to your thesis, offer *significant* background material so your readers are fully prepared to understand your position.
- State a clear, concrete, and *definite* thesis. Never delay your thesis without good reason. (For now, you might include a list of supporting points in your thesis statement.)
- Do all the above in no more than one or two paragraphs.

*Body (offers the support and refutation)*

- Use reasons that rest on *impersonal* grounds of support.
- In one or more paragraphs *each*, organize your supporting points for best emphasis (from least to most important or dramatic or compelling, or vice-versa). If you think your audience has little interest, begin with the more powerful material. Sometime you can sandwich weaker points between stronger points . But if all your points are equally strong, begin with the most familiar and acceptable to your audience — to elicit some early agreement. In general, try to save the strongest points for last.
- Develop each supporting point with concrete, specific *details* (facts, examples, narratives, quotations, or other evidence that can be verified empirically or logically). Never be vague.
- Using transitions and other connectors, string your supporting points and their supporting evidence together to show a definite line of reasoning.
- In at least one separate paragraph, refute opposing arguments (including any anticipated reader objections to your points) — unless you've done your refuting earlier or throughout.

*Conclusion (sums up your case and makes a direct appeal)*

- Summarize your main points and your refutation, emphasizing your strongest material. (Keep things short and sweet.) Offer a view of the Big Picture.
- End by appealing directly to readers for a definite action (where appropriate).

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## Argumentation Workout Exercises

### Application 1

Which of the following statements are debatable? Be prepared to give the reasons for your choices.

1. Grades are an aid to education.
2. Forty percent of incoming freshmen at our school never graduate.
3. Physically and psychically, women are superior to men.
4. Pets should not be allowed on our campus.
5. Computer courses are boring.
6. Every student should be required to become computer literate.
7. The computer revolution is transforming American business.
8. Computer prices are dropping by as much as twenty-five percent yearly.
9. French wines are better than domestic wines.
10. French wines generally are more subtle and complex than domestic wines.
11. French wines are overpriced.
12. College is not for everyone.

### Application 2

Using your own subjects or those below, develop five arguable assertions.

*Examples - [law]* "Lawsuit fervor" has created more problems than it has solved.

*[a personal gripe]* The library isn't open late enough or on weekends.

taxes	law	a classroom incident
sex	music	jobs
drugs	war	a personal gripe
pollution	dormlife	a suggestion for improving something

### Application 3

The statements below are followed by false or improbable conclusions. What specific supporting evidence would be needed to justify each conclusion so that it is not a specious (hasty or sweeping) generalization? (First, you need to infer the missing generalization or premise; then you have to decide what evidence would be needed for the premise to be acceptable.)

#### *Example*

Only 60 percent of incoming freshmen eventually graduate from this college. Therefore, the college is not doing its job.

To consider the above conclusion valid, we would have to be shown that:

1. All freshmen want to attend college in the first place.
2. They are all capable of college-level work.
3. They did all assigned work promptly and responsibly.

1. Eighty percent of black voters in Alabama voted for George Blank as governor. Therefore, he is not a racist.

2. Fifty percent of last year's college graduates did not find the jobs they wanted.

Therefore, college is a waste of time and money.

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3. She never sees a doctor. Therefore, she must be healthy.
4. This house is expensive. Therefore, it must be well built.
5. Felix is flunking freshman composition. Therefore, he must be stupid.
6. My parents never argue. Therefore, they must be happily married.
7. Abner has never had an accident in two years of driving. Therefore, he must be a good driver.

### Application 4

Select one of the following general claims, and list five specific items (grounds) that would inductively support each.

*Example*

**General claim** We have little cause to be optimistic about our global future.

**Inductive support (grounds)** 1. Our environment is becoming more and more polluted.

2. The nuclear arms race is intensifying.

3. Energy shortages threaten the economic survival of industrialized countries.

4. The earth's population will double in thirty-five years.

5. Changing weather patterns threaten the world's agricultural production.

1. We have good cause to be optimistic about our global future.

2. College is not for everyone.

3. Grades are (an aid, a detriment) to education.

4. Our school (should, should not) begin student evaluation of teachers.

5. Television has made a (positive, negative) contribution to the education of the young in this country.

### Application 5

**PARAGRAPH WARM-UP - INDUCTIVE REASONING**

Using Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" as a model, write a paragraph where you use inductive reasoning to support a general conclusion about one of the subjects below (after you have narrowed it) or about one of your own choice.

highway safety

minorities

a graduation requirement

the legal drinking age

the changing role of women

credit cards

Identify your audience and purpose. Provide enough evidence so that readers can follow your chain of reasoning to your conclusion.

### Application 6

Assume that someone recently has made a decision that you disagree with (say, the dean has imposed a curfew because of several assaults on campus, or a friend has decided to drop out of school). Write a letter to the specific person or group involved, arguing that the decision was unwise, unfair, or in some way harmful. Persuade the audience to change its mind. Provide enough evidence for your assertion and use a tone that is diplomatic and reasonable. Reserve your main point for the end of your argument.

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### Application 7

One of the following conclusions is valid. The others are based on implied generalizations that are faulty or overstated. Identify the errors and revise.

1. Because Martha claims to be a feminist, she most likely supports the Equal Rights Amendment.
2. Harold smokes cigarettes, so he will develop lung cancer.
3. Hubert, a typical male, seems threatened by feminists.
4. Since John is now a suburbanite, he will probably become an alcoholic.
5. Because I'm poor at calculating, my math instructor must think I'm stupid.

### Application 8

#### PARAGRAPH WARM-UP: DEDUCTIVE REASONING

Select an accepted generalization from the list below or use one of your own as the topic statement of a paragraph using deductive reasoning. (You'll create the specific instance [minor premise] and draw the conclusion.)

- "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."
- "That person is richest whose pleasures are the cheapest."
- Certain teachers can have a great influence on a student's attitude toward a subject.
- A college degree doesn't guarantee career success.

### Application 9

Assume that you have a younger brother, sister, or friend who is thinking about attending your college-of-choice. Based on what you know about your reader's needs, write a letter that argues for or against attending.

### Application 10

Identify the fallacy in each of the following sentences, and revise the assertion to eliminate the error.

*Example:*

**Faulty** Television is worthless, *[sweeping generalization]*

**Revised** Commercial TV offers too few programs of educational value.

1. Mary dropped out of school because Professor Quantum gave her an *F* in math.
2. Because our product is the best, it is worth the high price.
3. America — love it or leave it.
4. The fact that three of my friends praise their Priuses proves that Toyota makes the best car.
5. My grades last semester were poor because my exams were unfair.
6. Anyone who was expelled from Harvard for cheating could not be trusted as a president.
7. Until college students contribute to our society, they have no right to criticize our government.
8. Because he is a devout Christian, he will make a good doctor.
9. Anyone with common sense will vote for this candidate.

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10. You should take up tennis; everyone else around here plays.
11. Poverty causes disease.
12. Convex running shoes caused Karl Crane to win the Boston marathon.

### Application 11

Revise the following paragraph so that its tone is more moderate and reasonable, more like an intelligent argument than an attack. Feel free to add any personal insights that might help the argument.

People who argue that the drinking age should be lowered are either crazy adults or underage kids who only want to get legally bombed and grow up to be boozers who squander their salary in bars and come home to beat the wife and kids. Any intelligent person knows that alcohol burns out the brain, ruins the body, and destroys the personality. Hangovers cause fights and trash productivity all the time. Maybe if those jerks who want schoolkids to be drinking would put down the beer cans and sober up an hour or so, the world would be a more peaceful place.

### Application 12

After reading the paragraph below, answer the questions that follow.

<sup>1</sup>Responsible agronomists report that before the end of the year, millions of people, if unaided, might starve to death. <sup>2</sup>Half a billion deaths by starvation is not an uncommon estimate. <sup>3</sup>Even though the United States has done more than any other nation to feed the hungry, our relative affluence makes us morally vulnerable in the eyes of other nations and in our own eyes." <sup>4</sup>Garret Hardin, who has argued for a "lifeboat" ethic of survival (if you take all the passengers aboard, everybody drowns), admits that the decision not to feed all the hungry requires of us "a very hard psychological adjustment." <sup>5</sup>Indeed it would. <sup>6</sup>It has been estimated that the 3.5 million tons of fertilizer spread on American golf courses and lawns could provide up to thirty million tons of food in overseas agricultural production. <sup>7</sup>The nightmarish thought intrudes itself. <sup>8</sup>If we as a nation allow people to starve while we could, through some sacrifice, make more food available to them, what hope can any person have for the future of international relations? <sup>9</sup>If we cannot agree on this most basic of values—feed the hungry—what hopes for the future can we entertain? <sup>10</sup>Technology is imitable and nuclear weaponry certain to proliferate. <sup>11</sup>What appeals to trust and respect can be made if the most rudimentary of moral impulses—feed the hungry—is not strenuously incorporated into national policy?

— James R. Kelly

1. Is this argument inductive or deductive? Explain.
2. Does the author appeal to our emotions? If so, where and how?
3. In which sentences does he support his position with hard evidence?
4. Restate the main point as a declarative sentence. Is the point arguable? Explain.
5. Identify one short sentence that provides emphasis. Explain how it reinforces the author's position.
6. Are the rhetorical questions effective here? Explain.