

Main Goal: Your paper should be clearly organized and should advance your own perspective while also demonstrating an appreciation of your opponent's perspective.

Standard Model: three numbered and labeled sections, with each section broken up into multiple paragraphs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The first section introduces the view or argument you're criticizing.2. The second advances your objections to that view or argument3. The third addresses possible responses to your objections.
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Example Prompt: Criticize the Argument from Suffering from Chapter 1.

The Argument from Suffering

(AS1) God would prevent the suffering that we endure.

(AS2) If God would prevent the suffering that we endure, then God does not exist.

(AS3) So, God does not exist.

Section 1 of your paper will introduce the view/argument you plan to criticize and give a "road map" to your paper. It should do the following:

1. Identify the topic with a straightforward sentence (TIP: No Fluff). For example "My aim in this paper is to assess a certain argument against the existence of God."
2. State the view/argument that you're targeting. For example, use the same style given under the sample prompt above. (Ask your instructor for their preferred citation style.)
3. Explain the idea behind each of the premises of the argument you plan to assess, one by one, explaining on your opponents' behalf how their argument is supposed to work. (Failing to present this in the best light may convey to your instructor that you don't truly understand the argument or position you're criticizing. It is okay if this part is long.)
4. State only your thesis; do not defend it. This should be the conclusion that you are arguing for. For example: "My main thesis is that the argument fails because AS1 is false: even an all-good God would want to allow suffering so that we could have the opportunity to prove our devotion." Here and throughout the paper, it is perfectly appropriate to use first-person pronouns like "I" and "my."
5. Finally, give a "road map" to your paper. For example: "In Section 2, I will present my objection to AS1 of the Argument from Suffering. Then, in Section 3, I will address two possible responses to my objection."

Section 2 is where you offer your own criticism by presenting your argument for the thesis of your paper.

Tip 1	It is crucial to deny the premise of the argument you want to resist, and not just the conclusion.
Tip 2	Make sure it's 100% clear which premise your objections are meant to be targeting.
Tip 3	You need to do more than simply express your opinion that the premise in question is false. You are trying to persuade another person to change their mind about something.
Tip 4	In a short paper (under 3000 words), it's generally better to raise a single, well-developed objection to a single premise, than to raise multiple objections to that premise, or to raise objections to multiple premises.

(Having trouble coming up with an objection to use in Section 2? It is best to read and re-read and re-re-read the chapter that you plan to criticize. If you have your choice of chapters to criticize, choose the one whose conclusion you are most inclined to disagree with. If you are in Professor Dan Korman's Class make sure you also review your Reflection Questions.)

Section 3 is where you will address possible responses to what you said in Section 2. Take on the role of the reader of your paper and identify one or two areas of your argument that the reader is likely to disagree with. Using our early prompt as an example, if you claimed in Section 2 that God allows suffering in order to test our devotion, you might imagine someone objecting that God is supposed to be all-knowing, in which case he should already know how devoted people are without having to test their devotion. Section 3 is where you will respond to that objection, for instance by explaining why it's important for God to test our devotion despite already knowing how devoted we are.

Tip 1	Make sure to carefully lay out the objections you're anticipating <u>before</u> going on to address them.
Tip 2	Make sure the objections you anticipate actually advance the discussion.
Tip 3	Your opponent may respond to your objections from Section 2 by trying to show that those objections fail, but that isn't the only option. Another possibility is for them to concede that your objections work, but then try to

revise their own argument in a way that makes it immune to your objections, perhaps by revising some of the premises. In Section 3, you could consider some way that they might try to do that, and then respond by raising a new objection to their revised argument.
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Editing is an important part of the writing process, so leave lots of time to revise your work. First drafts are messy and full of small mistakes, and cleaning up the mess and catching all these small mistakes will take time. Read your paper out loud and ask yourself:

1. Is this exactly what I meant to say? - Getting the details right is especially important when you're explaining the views and arguments you plan to criticize.
2. How might someone challenge this? - Thinking hard about every possible way someone might try to deny something you've said is a great strategy for identifying good responses to address in Section 3. You should also be on the lookout for "cheap" ways that someone might challenge the sentence, which can be addressed by simply rewording it.
3. Can I make the sentence clearer? - You might find that the sentence is so complicated that you have trouble even reading it off the page. If so, simplify the wording, the grammar, and consider breaking it into two smaller sentences. Sentences may include "vocabulary words" that you would never use in ordinary conversation, so try to replace them with ordinary words that mean the same thing. Don't let the point you're trying to make get obscured by needlessly complicated ways of saying it.
4. Can I make the sentence shorter? - If a word or phrase isn't serving some clear purpose, cut it out.

Additional resources of help with writing in Philosophy:

Vaughn, Lewis. *Writing Philosophy: a Student's Guide to Reading and Writing Philosophy Essays*. Oxford University Press, 2018. (Chapter 3 Specifically)

Pryor, Jim. *Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper*,
www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html.

Source:

All tips and structure information provided in this handout is from Professor Dan Korman's book "Learning from Arguments An Introduction to Philosophy" and you can find full details in Appendix B: Writing (page 180). All information is subject to change.