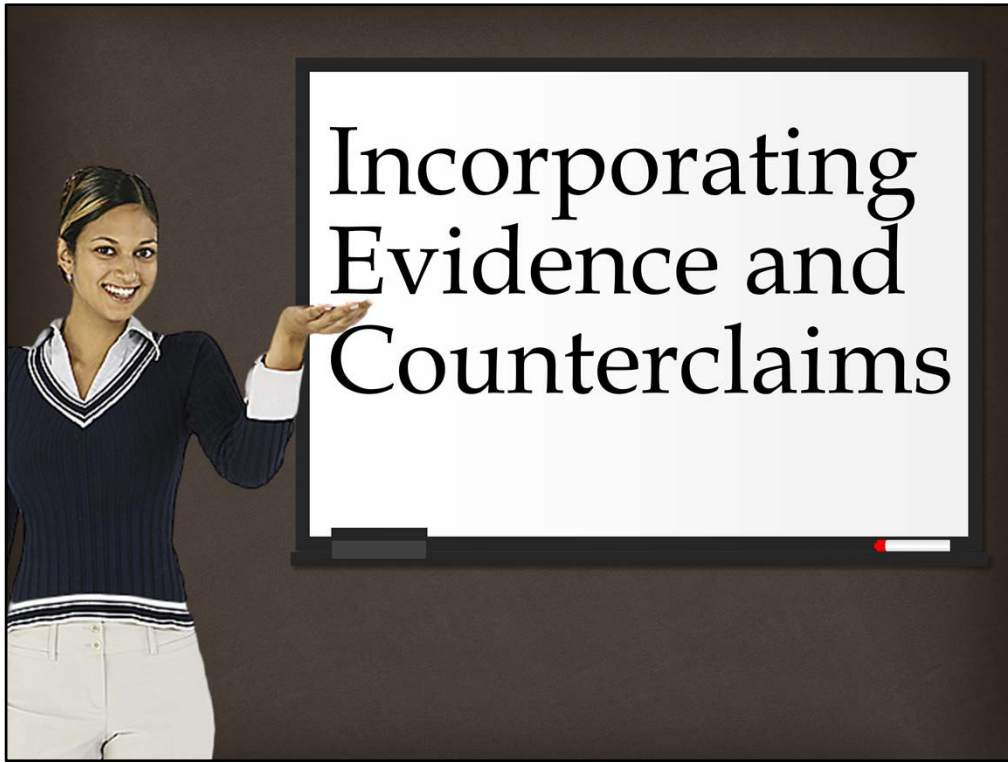
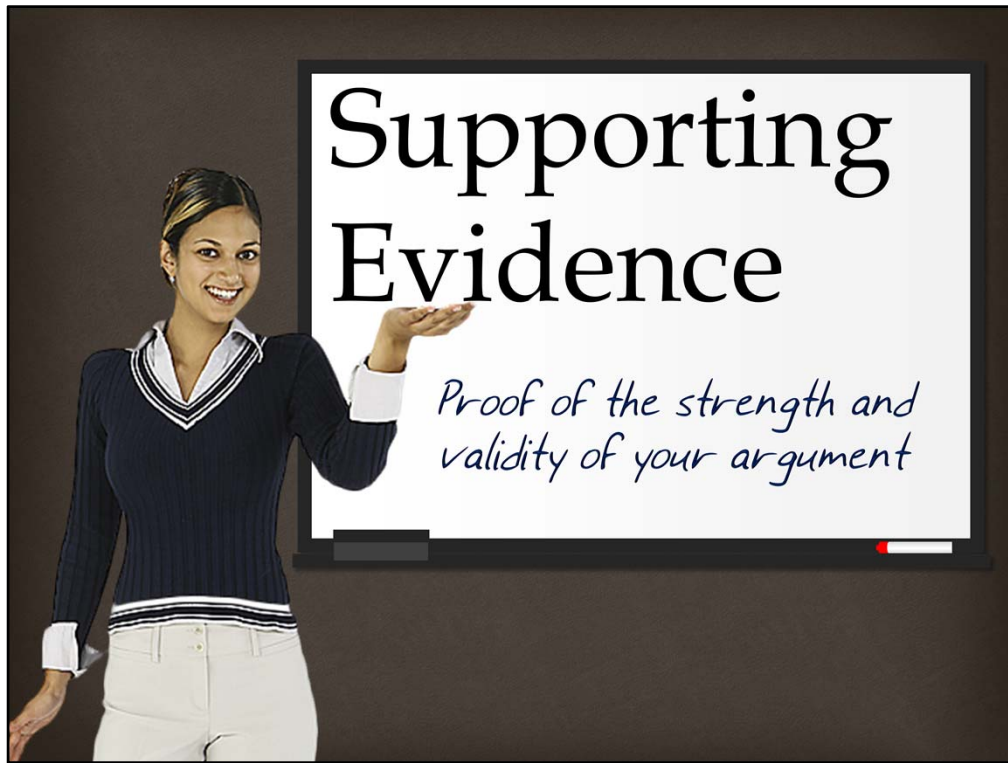


Module 2: The Art of Persuasive Writing
Topic 3 Content: Incorporating Evidence and Counterclaims



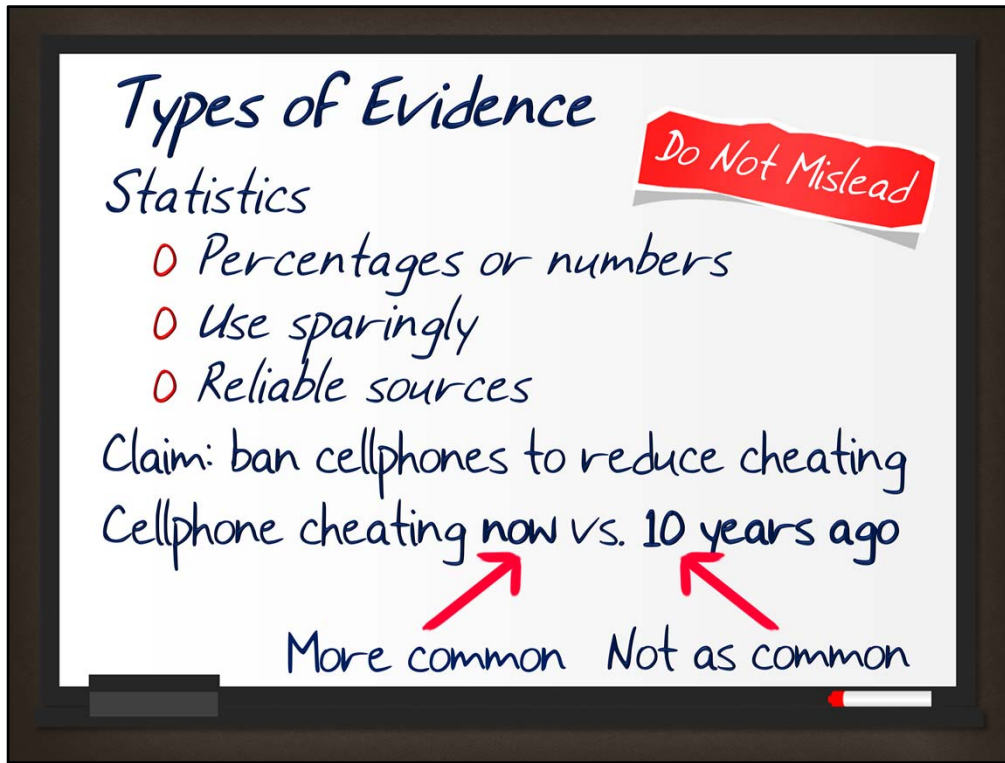
Incorporating Evidence and Counterclaims

Module 2: The Art of Persuasive Writing
Topic 3 Content: Incorporating Evidence and Counterclaims



The purpose of persuasive writing is to persuade your readers to accept your point of view or perform an action. While the claim is the foundation of your argument, it cannot support the entire argument alone. To convince and persuade your readers, you must supply evidence, or proof of the strength and validity of your argument.

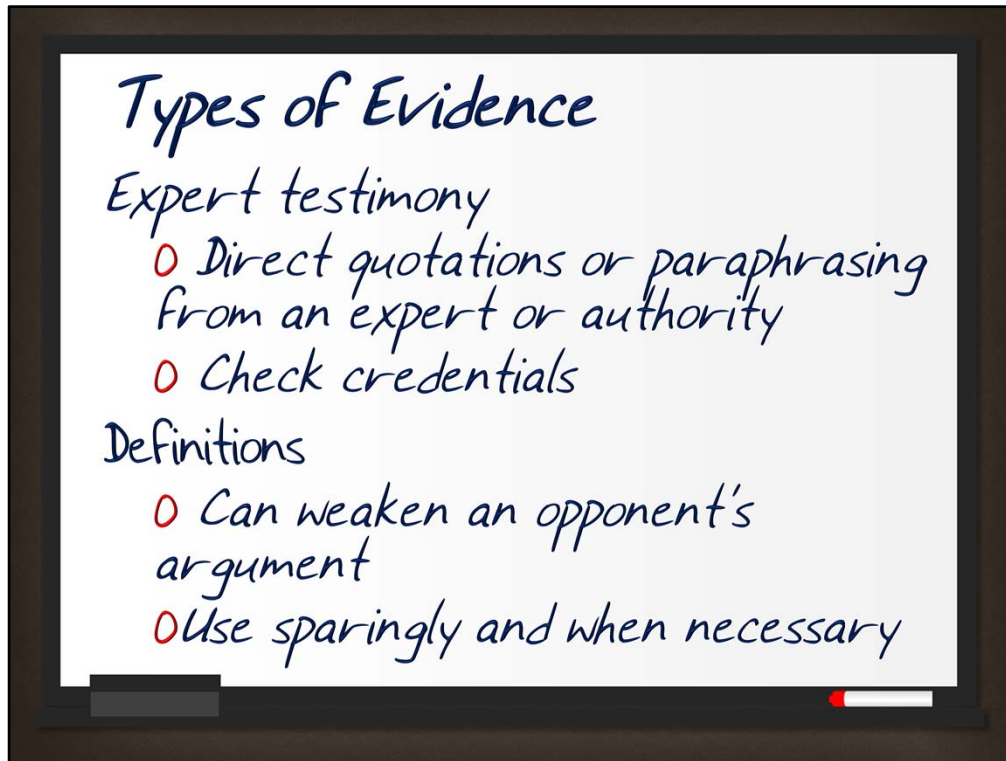
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You can think of evidence as the facts you will use to prove your claim to your readers. These facts can take the form of statistics, quotations from experts, definitions, anecdotes or incidents, examples, and analogies or comparisons.

Statistics are the hard numbers that support your argument, and they take the form of percentages or numbers. They are intended to give strong support to your argument, but you should use them sparingly and take care to use statistics from reliable sources. Also, do not try to intentionally mislead your audience with statistical evidence. For instance, you might claim that banning cellphones in public schools will reduce the incidence of cheating. To support this claim with a statistic, you might cite a survey regarding the number of students caught using cellphones for cheating *now* versus ten years ago. However, this evidence is misleading because it is likely that the number of people cheating using phones was lower ten years ago since cellphone usage was not as common among children and teenagers as it is now.

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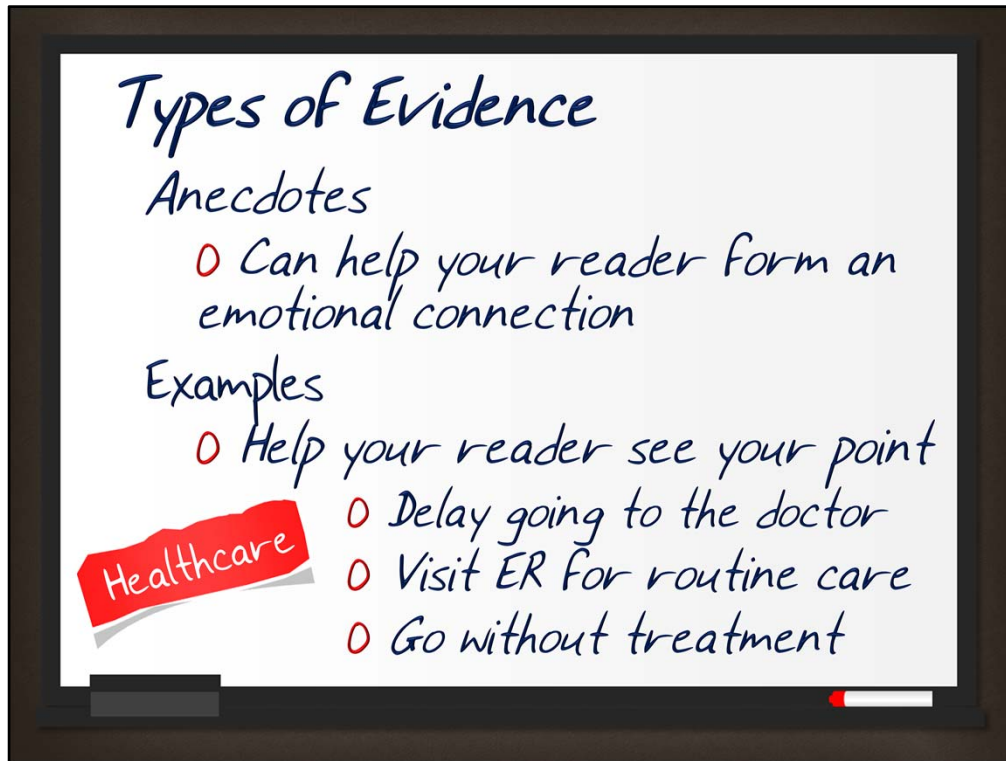


An invaluable type of evidence is expert testimony, or direct quotations or paraphrasing from an expert or authority in a field directly related to your issue. You can "borrow" the credibility of your quoted source to bolster your own credibility. However, you need to be careful when selecting your source. Be sure to check the credentials of your experts and the validity of their research.

A good argument is only as strong as the words you use to make the argument. Defining words and terms used in an argument is a good tool to use in supporting your claim. For instance, when arguing for or against racial profiling, it is a good idea to define that phrase. Sometimes a definition alone can weaken an opponent's argument. However, like statistics, they should be used sparingly and only when they will give your argument a strong boost. Using definitions as support in every paragraph of your essay will get tedious for you readers and can hurt your argument in the long run.

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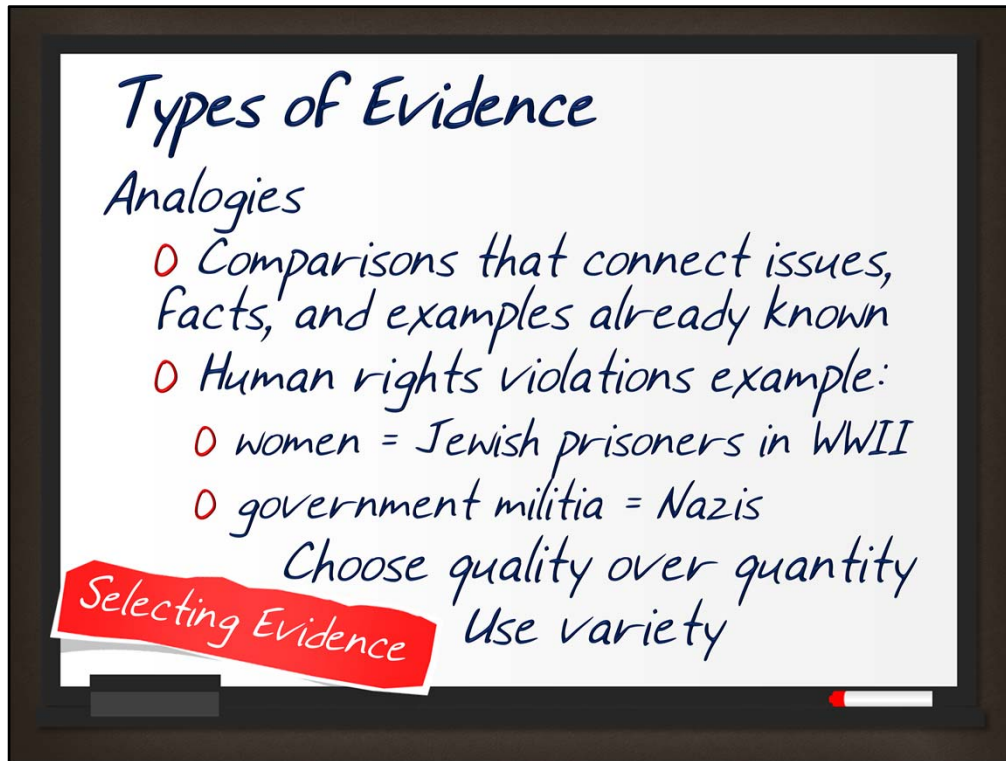


Using personal or anecdotal experience as evidence in support of your claim can help your reader form an emotional connection to your argument. Anecdotal stories can add a touch of humanity to an argument as well as make an argument more entertaining. However, you cannot rely solely on personal stories to prove your claim.

If a claim is the foundation of a good persuasive essay, then examples are the cornerstones upon which your evidence is built. Examples help your reader to see your point on a meaningful level. Nearly every point you make in support of your claim should have a specific or concrete example.

Take the topic of healthcare for instance, an important issue in political and social arenas. Politicians supporting government-mandated healthcare may claim that millions of Americans living without health insurance is problematic. However, this is just a claim with no evidence provided. If that politician goes on to say that people without healthcare delay going to the doctor, visit emergency rooms for routine healthcare, or go without any treatment for illness or disease, then evidence in the form of specific examples has been provided to support that claim. A person listening to that politician can now see why going without health insurance is problematic.

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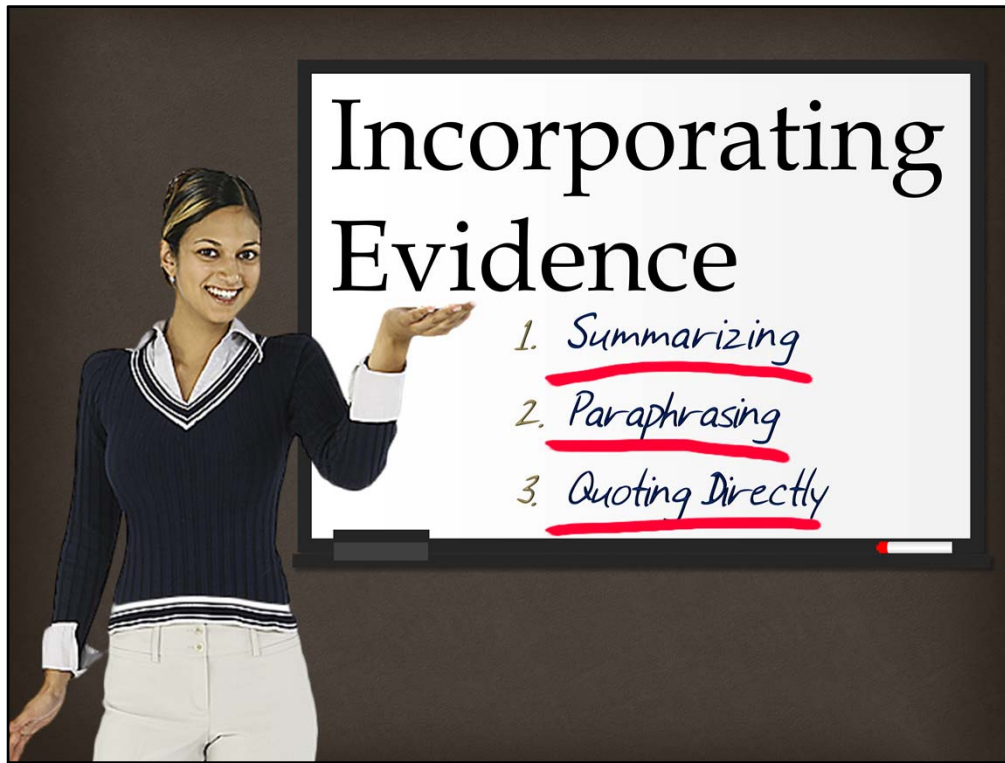


Another great tool to convince readers is to use analogies, or comparisons, to make connections with issues, facts, and examples they already know to be true. You probably remember simple analogies from elementary school: finger is to hand as toe is to foot. The same technique can be used on larger, more complex concepts as well.

For example, imagine you are trying to persuade readers to take action and help the women who are victims of human rights violations. You might use analogies to compare the plight of the women to the plight of Jewish prisoners in concentration camps during World War Two, or you might compare the country's government militia to the Nazis. By connecting these groups of people, you are encouraging the reader to transfer feelings and opinions he or she may hold about the Holocaust to the victimized women or their abusers.

When selecting the evidence to include in support of your claim, remember to choose quality over quantity and use a variety of evidence. For instance, you might use a definition and example to support one point, an analogy to illustrate a second point, and a direct quotation and statistic to support a third point.

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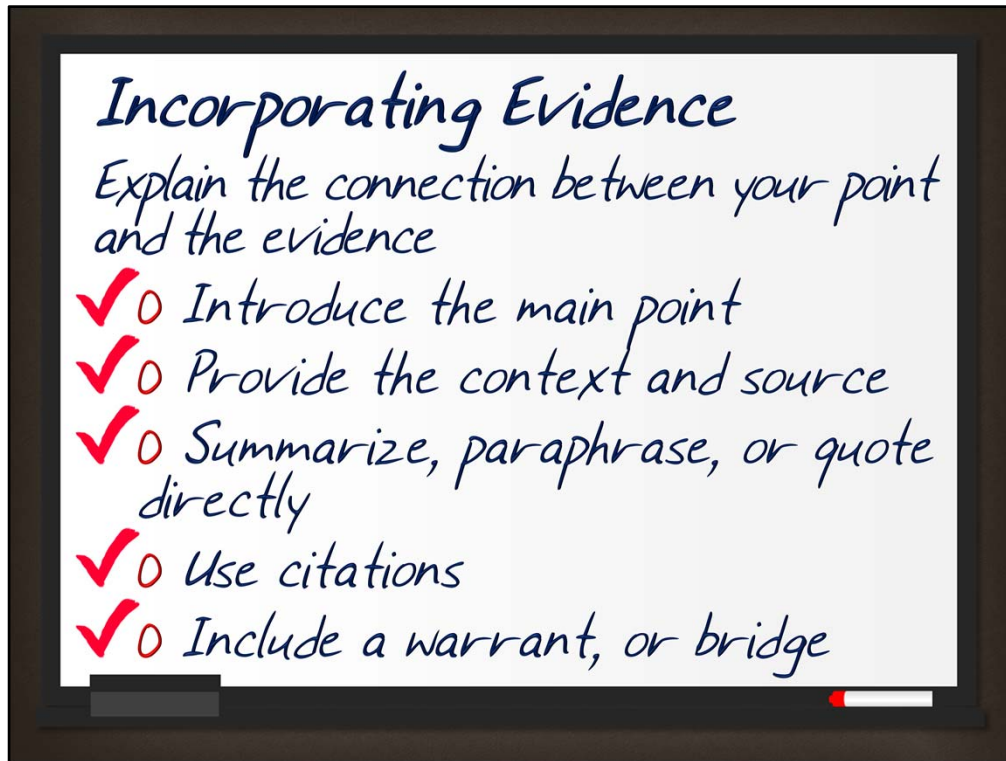
After you have carefully crafted your claim and thoroughly researched the issue to develop your evidence, how do you seamlessly incorporate this evidence into your essay? There are three methods available for incorporating evidence into developing paragraphs: summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting directly.

A summary condenses large amounts of text and information into a few sentences. Summarizing an entire research study, law, policy, or event is a good way to add supporting evidence to your essay. If you attempt to outline the entire source in detail, you will lose your reader. Instead, focus on the main points of the source that directly relate to your point or claim. As always, remember to include the appropriate citation in case your reader is interested in a more in-depth look at your source.

A paraphrase puts the original text in your own words. Paraphrases are generally shorter than the original material. In order to make certain that your readers understand your evidence, you should paraphrase information that is too technical for the average reader or that uses difficult or complicated language. You will also include appropriate citations for any information you paraphrase from outside sources.

As stated before, using a direct quotation from an expert can make your argument stronger. A direct quotation uses the exact words of a source in your writing. Remember, you have to cite direct quotations just like you must cite summaries and paraphrases. When your source is a true expert on the issue you are arguing, it is a good idea to quote directly because changing the wording of the text may diminish the strength or effect of the words.

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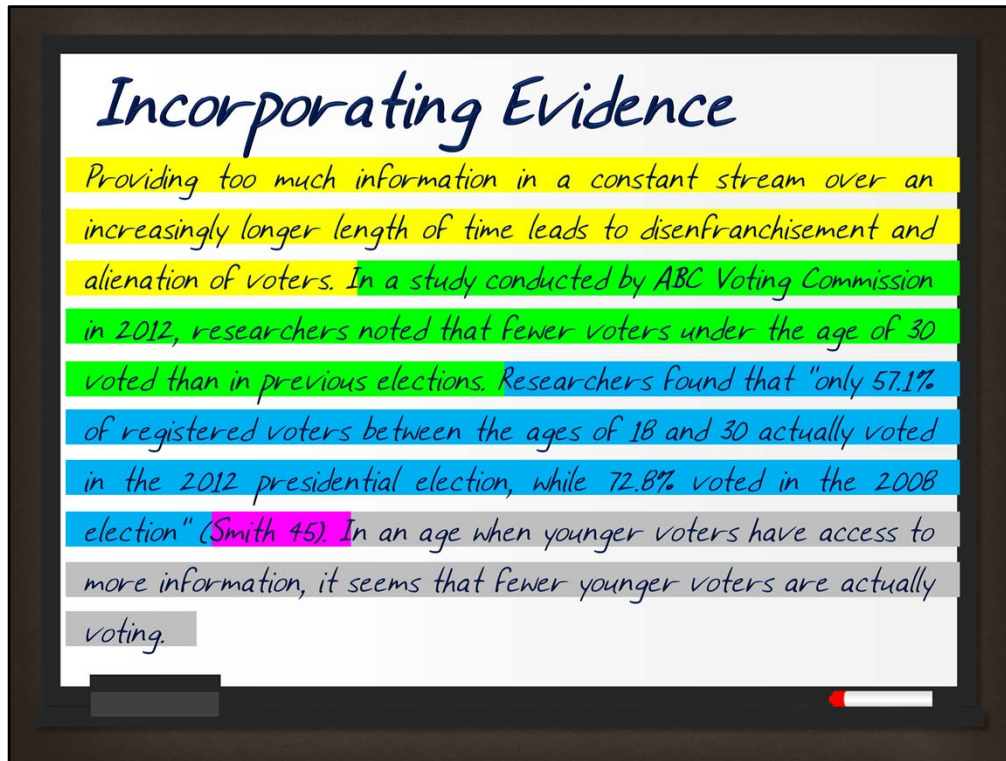


Incorporating evidence into persuasive writing can be feel daunting for many students. To incorporate evidence effectively, follow the formula detailed below.

- Introduce the main point: When writing an essay, this will essentially be the topic sentence of the paragraph.
- Provide the context and source: Before you drop evidence into the middle of a paragraph, you need to prepare the reader. Giving a little background information or "tagging" the speaker or source of the information accomplishes this.
- Summarize, paraphrase, or quote directly: Next, you need to provide the reader with your evidence, fact, statistic, anecdote, example, analogy, or expert testimony.
- Use citations: Do not forget to cite your source. Anytime you use information from an outside source, you must document it with an appropriate citation.
- Include a warrant, or bridge: You cannot assume that your reader will make the connection between your point and the evidence. You need to thoroughly explain how the two are related and why. This commentary or analysis that explains how or why the evidence supports the claim is called a warrant or bridge.

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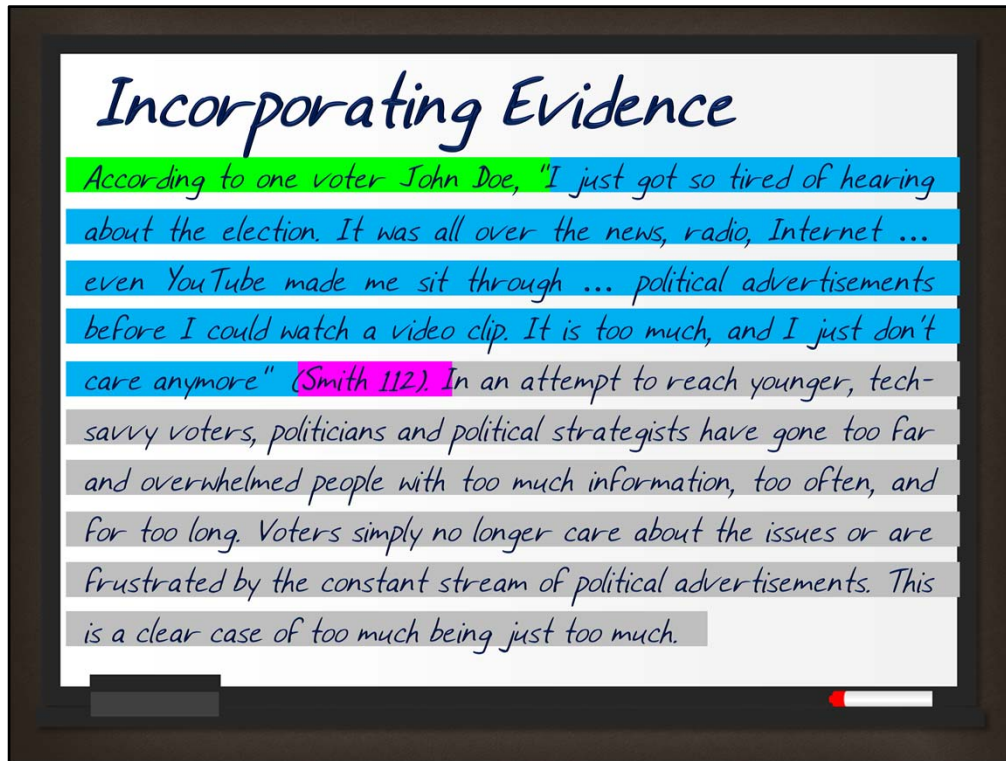


Take a look at this example. The writer introduces the main topic, shown in yellow, and then goes on to provide background and context, shown in green. Next, the writer includes a direct quotation, shown in blue, and a source citation, indicated in purple. Finally, the gray highlighting indicates where the writer explains how the evidence relates to the main point.

Example:

Providing too much information in a constant stream over an increasingly longer length of time leads to disenfranchisement and alienation of voters. In a study conducted by ABC Voting Commission in 2012, researchers noted that fewer voters under the age of 30 voted than in previous elections. Researchers found that "only 57.1% of registered voters between the ages of 18 and 30 actually voted in the 2012 presidential election, while 72.8% voted in the 2008 election" (Smith 45). In an age when younger voters have access to more information, it seems that fewer younger voters are actually voting.

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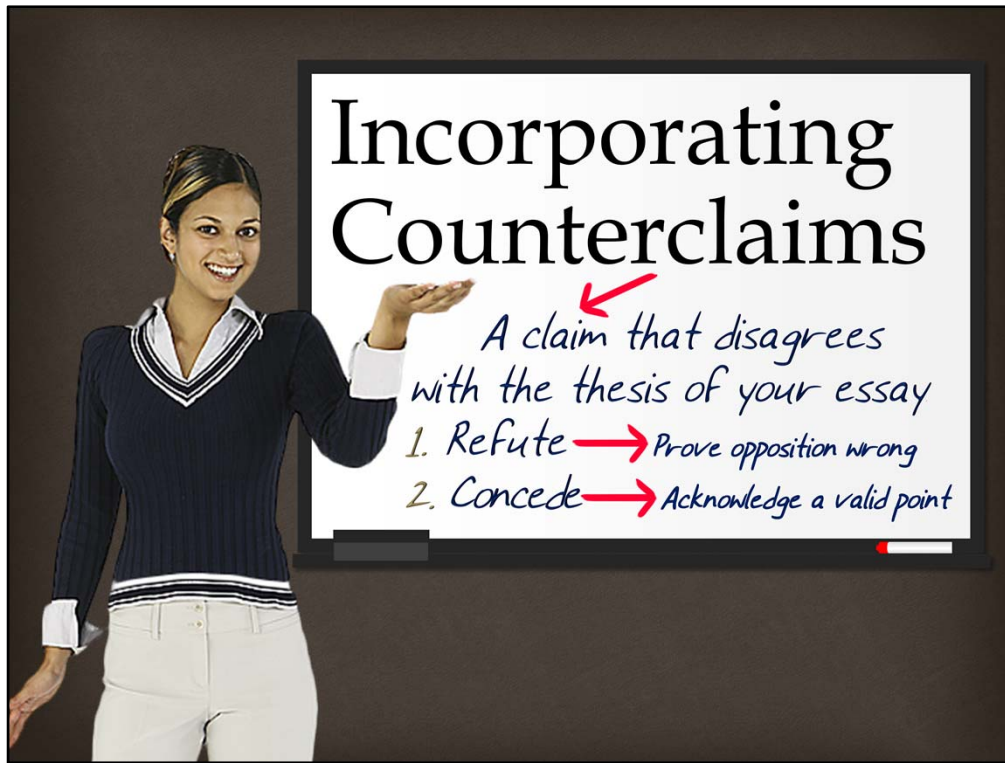


However, this writer wants to drive home the point and includes a second piece of evidence by introducing a new speaker and providing a direct quotation with the appropriate citation. The writer then goes on to connect both pieces of evidence back to the main point of the paragraph.

Example:

According to one voter John Doe, "I just got so tired of hearing about the election. It was all over the news, radio, Internet ... even YouTube made me sit through ... political advertisements before I could watch a video clip. It is too much, and I just don't care anymore" (Smith 112). In an attempt to reach younger, tech-savvy voters, politicians and political strategists have gone too far and overwhelmed people with too much information, too often, and for too long. Voters simply no longer care about the issues or are frustrated by the constant stream of political advertisements. This is a clear case of too much being just too much.

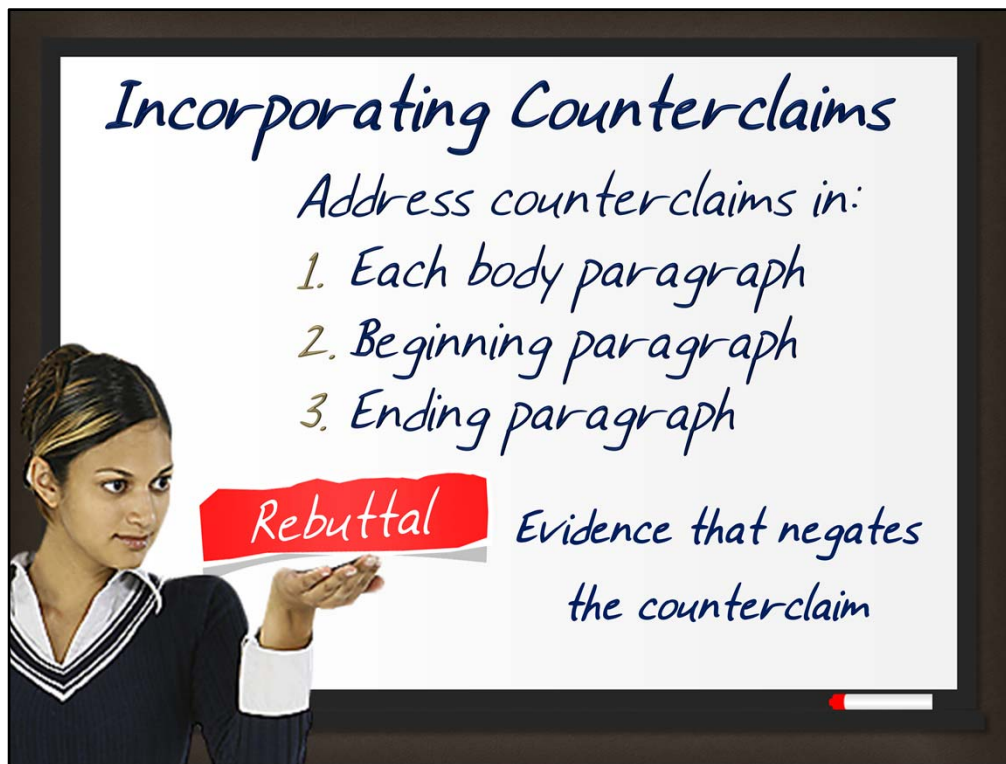
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A counterclaim is a claim that disagrees with the thesis of your essay. In other words, it is the opposing viewpoint to your own. It is always a good idea to acknowledge the existence of viewpoints and claims in opposition to your own. Ignoring your opposition in your argument is a negligent mistake. If you do not address the differing viewpoint, you leave the reader free to accept that opposing viewpoint, and this ultimately hurts your persuasive argument. Be proactive in using your opponent's argument to your advantage.

Recall that when introducing counterclaims in your essay, you have two options: refute or concede. A refutation sets out to prove your opposition is wrong. When you think of discussing a counterclaim in your essay, this is what you will most likely feel the need to do. But remember, the goal of your persuasive writing is to prove your claim, not to disprove the opposing claim. A concession does not mean you are agreeing to the opposing view; you are simply acknowledging that the opposition has a valid point or argument. Both counterclaims can be useful.

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When discussing a counterclaim in your essay, you always want to make sure that you offer a rebuttal. A rebuttal is evidence that negates, or disagrees with, the counterclaim. You never want to introduce a counterclaim without offering some kind of rebuttal. Even if you are going to concede that the opposition has a valid argument, you still want to reiterate that there is strong evidence to support your claim. There are essentially three formats for incorporating counterclaims into your essay: you can address counterclaims in each body paragraph, you can have one paragraph near the beginning of your essay where you discuss counterclaims and offer rebuttals, or you can have one paragraph near the end of your essay where you discuss counterclaims and offer rebuttals.