How to Write a Proposal (Problem-Solving) Argument Essay: From Thesis to Final Draft

Step 1: Make your Claim (your debatable opinion of a shared problem)

Example: Antonio Eudabe's Claim – **Facial Recognition Algorithms = least harmful option to fight crime** ☺

Step 2: Make a Topic (that is the "Point" for Each Body Paragraph) Outline*

*Note: For this guide, we will use the "Proposal (Problem-Solving) Method" on pages 123-130 in *Structures*.

Instructions: In a Proposal Argument, you are proposing (that is, supporting or even defending) a SOLUTION to a persistent PROBLM. The structure, therefore, have topics (or "points") that are more informative than argumentative: 1) "The Problem," 2) "Your Refutation," 3) "Your Solution," 4) "The Benefits," and 5)"The Compromise." **You need to follow the structure CLOSELY.**

Example:

CLAIM: Facial Recognition Algorithms = least harmful option to fight crime ☺

I. **THE PROBLEM:** History of crime and crime prevention
II. **YOUR REFUTATION: OPPOSITION**
   A. Critics say: Errors and violates citizens' freedom
   B. Critics say: Violates privacy
III. **YOUR SOLUTION: Rebuttal** – how it's still the least harmful option
IV. **THE BENEFITS:** Catches criminals, prevents crime
V. **THE COMPROMISE:** Not be reckless implementing algorithms

RESTATED CLAIM: Facial Recognition Algorithms = least harmful option to fight crime ☺

Step 3: Turn your Topic Outline into a Topic Sentence Outline

Instructions: Put all of the info of your Topic Outline into complete sentences. You'll produce a Claim Statement, Topic Sentences, and a Restated Claim Statement.

Example:

CLAIM: Given our circumstances, the implementation of algorithms to aid government entities in crime prevention is less harmful than abstaining from such practice and, thus, the least harmful option.

I. **THE PROBLEM:** Historically, society has put laws or rules in place to reduce the prevalence of these criminal acts for the safety, tranquility, and security of society as a whole.

II. **THE OPPOSITION:**

A. Although the intended purpose for such algorithms is to aid in crime prevention, critics have argued that an algorithm with any possibility of error and the power of stripping a citizen of their freedom should never be implemented.

B. Another opposing party believes in abstaining from the use of algorithms to aid in crime prevention because of privacy issues.

III. **MY REFUTATION & SOLUTION:** Nevertheless, implementing algorithms to aid government entities in crime prevention is less harmful than not doing so**.**

IV. **THE BENEFITS:** The benefits of the implementation of facial recognition algorithms by government entities are twofold because not only do they aid in bringing criminals to justice, but they also prevent further crime.

V. **THE COMPROMISE**: We realize that there are two options as stated: We can decide to fully implement algorithms with regulations, or we can decide to not use algorithms. To gain more insight into deciding which option is best, we can ask ourselves what the best course of action is given our circumstances and abilities while not being reckless.

RESTATED CLAIM: Implementing algorithms to aid in crime prevention is less harmful than completely abstaining from their use.

Step 4: Make a Tiny Rough Draft from Your Sentence Outline

Instructions: Put all the info of your Sentence Outline in Paragraph form. You'll have

1. your Essay Title, which is a Keyword or Keywords of your Claim Statement,
2. your Intro paragraph's Claim Statement,
3. your Body Paragraphs' Topic Sentences, and
4. your Conclusion paragraph's Restated Claim Statement

Example:

Algorithms and Crimes

Intro paragraph with CLAIM: Given our circumstances, the implementation of algorithms to aid government entities in crime prevention is less harmful than abstaining from such practice and, thus, the least harmful option.

1st body paragraph section -- THE PROBLEM: Historically, society has put laws or rules in place to reduce the prevalence of these criminal acts for the safety, tranquility, and security of society as a whole.

2nd body paragraph section -- THE OPPOSITION: A. Although the intended purpose for such algorithms is to aid in crime prevention, critics have argued that an algorithm with any possibility of error and the power of stripping a citizen of their freedom should never be implemented.

THE OPPOSITION: B. Another opposing party believes in abstaining from the use of algorithms to aid in crime prevention because of privacy issues.

3rd body paragraph section -- MY REFUTATION & SOLUTION: Nevertheless, implementing algorithms to aid government entities in crime prevention is less harmful than not doing so**.**

4th body paragraph section -- THE BENEFITS: The benefits of the implementation of facial recognition algorithms by government entities are twofold because not only do they aid in bringing criminals to justice, but they also prevent further crime.

5th body paragraph section -- THE COMPROMISE: We realize that there are two options as stated: We can decide to fully implement algorithms with regulations, or we can decide to not use algorithms. To gain more insight into deciding which option is best, we can ask ourselves what the best course of action is given our circumstances and abilities while not being reckless.

Conclusion paragraph with RESTATED CLAIM: Implementing algorithms to aid in crime prevention is less harmful than completely abstaining from their use.

Step 5: Expand Your Tiny Rough Draft, Starting with Intro Paragraph

Instructions: Use the information on pages 22-25 in *Structures* -- 1) to start your Intro paragraph, 2) to write your supporting details for the Body paragraphs, and 3) to finish your Conclusion paragraph.

- **NOTE:** When using an outside source in your essay (**also called research**), you will need to name the source (either the Human Author's Name or – if missing – the "Article Title") wherever you used it in your essay (called **in-text citation**), plus provide a source list at the end of the essay (called **Work Cited**). For more information on how to document in MLA Style researched info used in your essay, see pages 14-20 in *Structures*.

Example (for a minimum **1500 word** rough draft):

Algorithms and Crimes

Intro paragraph with CLAIM (at least 150 words): Today, society is faced with the issue of violence, terrorism, and other criminal acts such as theft or fraud. To aid in the enforcement of the law and the prevention of crimes or terrorism, government entities have implemented the use of facial recognition algorithms; these facial recognition algorithms, which are simply computer programs, have been used with the expectation of aiding in crime prevention through the identification and early detainment of suspects or perpetrators before they can commit a crime. The implementation and efficacy of facial recognition algorithms in crime prevention have drawn attention from politicians and discussions from mathematicians, researchers, and the media. This is in large part due to the issue of privacy and to the cases of algorithmic misidentification of innocent citizens for criminals which have led to unfortunate arrests. Although these cases are truly unfortunate and the issue of privacy is evident, we cannot ignore that these algorithms have had notable success in helping detain criminals in cities like New York City, where the success to error ratio is large. Given our circumstances, the implementation of algorithms to aid government entities in crime prevention is less harmful than abstaining from such practice and, thus, the least harmful option.

1st body paragraph section -- THE PROBLEM (250 words): Historically, society has put laws or rules in place to reduce the prevalence of these criminal acts for the safety, tranquility, and security of society as a whole. *[CONTINUE WITH BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM, SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM, AND ANALYSIS OF PAST AND PRESENT SOLUTIONS.]* This can be seen in our own society where we have dedicated government entities

such as municipal police departments that enforce the many regulations passed by local, state, and federal legislative bodies. Moreover, the efficacy of these government entities is what promotes the safety and tranquility of society. With recent advancements by computer scientists, mathematicians, and researchers, facial recognition algorithms have been implemented by government entities with the purpose of detaining criminal and thus preventing crime.

But before continuing, we have to realize that an algorithm is a set of instructions used to accomplish a task. They are often mathematical instructions or operations that can be translated into computer code. With the given task and instructions, a computer analyzes the data that it receives and accomplishes its task (Fry 8). From this process or algorithm, the computer achieves a given goal. The goal for government entities is to prevent crime by detaining criminals and suspects before they have a chance to commit a horrible crime. But government entities can do this after having correctly identified them by using facial algorithms. Although there has been much success, there have also been instances where algorithms have committed errors and thus misidentified an innocent person to be a criminal with similar appearances, which have led to brutal arrests. Now, there are debates regarding the use of algorithms in crime prevention processes; some argue that algorithms should not be used because they raise privacy concerns regarding the use of data, while others argue they shouldn't be used if they have a chance of committing errors.

2nd body paragraph section -- THE OPPOSITION (300 words): A. Although the intended purpose for such algorithms is to aid in crime prevention, critics have argued that an algorithm with any possibility of error and the power of stripping a citizen of their freedom should never be implemented. *[CONTINUE WITH OPPOSITION'S REASON AND EVIDENCE FOR WHY OPPOSITION MEMBERS BELIEVE THEY ARE RIGHT.]* They emphasize the fact that these algorithms have the ability to affect citizens negatively if they have any chance of failure. In context, they argue that algorithms should not be used because they currently have a possibility of error. Critics say this cause for concern is brought on by the most notable and tragic case of a resident of Denver, Colorado, named Steven Talley. Talley was brutally arrested after being algorithmically misidentified

as a bank robber. After being brutally arrested and having the charges of robbery and assault dropped, he now remains homeless and physically ill (Manning). This instance highlights the fact that algorithms are not infallible; thus, the concern about the use of algorithms in criminal detainment is reasonable.

THE OPPOSITION: B. Another opposing party believes in abstaining from the use of algorithms to aid in crime prevention because of privacy issues. *[CONTINUE WITH OPPOSITION'S REASON AND EVIDENCE FOR WHY OPPOSITION MEMBERS BELIEVE THEY ARE RIGHT.]* Facial recognition systems have been employed by police departments to detain criminals by analyzing video footage of people walking on the streets. In addition, these algorithms have been employed by businesses such as Walmart to identify repeat and suspect shoplifters. There is a concern among critics about transparency regarding the purpose of collection and use of facial data by governments and businesses; this surveillance by government entities and businesses raises worry for the potential wrongful use of facial data. Given the history of the propensity of government and businesses to act wrongfully and without transparency -- that is, without consideration of citizens -- critics have a case wherein abstaining from using facial recognition algorithms may be valid.

3rd body paragraph section -- MY REFUTATION & SOLUTION (250 words): Nevertheless, implementing algorithms to aid government entities in crime prevention is less harmful than not doing so**.** *[CONTINUE WITH REBUTTAL OF OPPOSITIONAL VIEWPOINTS, WITH EVIDENCE AND LOGICAL REASONING. EXPLAIN HOW AND WHY YOUR SOLUTION WORKS, WITH EVIDENCE AND LOGICAL REASONING.]* Governments are precisely faced with the issue of preventing violence, terrorism, and other criminal acts such as theft or fraud to maintain the safety, tranquility, and security of society as a whole. Moreover, with facial recognition algorithms being infallible yet greatly helpful, we have the circumstances under which the argument for using them is valid. Mathematician Hannah Fry states that the New York City Police Department "reported successfully identifying 1,700 suspects leading to 900 arrests, while mismatching five individuals" (172). Here, the error to success ratio is quite low, which is good.

In addition, facial recognition algorithms have shown success in Manhattan, New York City, where they helped identify David Baril, a man who attacked multiple people on the streets of Manhattan using a black hammer; this identification led to the arrest and sentencing of David Baril to twenty-two years in prison (Fry 172). By helping to identify and detain criminals, algorithms have helped governments prevent further crime and maintain safety and security for society as a whole. In contrast, not having used algorithms could have led to an equally large number of criminals not being detained. Given that criminals are likely to commit another crime, crime rates in New York City may have been higher without the use of algorithms and thus detainment of criminals.

4th body paragraph section -- THE BENEFITS (200 words): The benefits of the implementation of facial recognition algorithms by government entities are twofold because not only do they aid in bringing criminals to justice, but they also prevent further crime. *[CONTINUE WITH EXPLANATION OF BENEFITS, WITH EVIDENCE AND LOGICAL REASONING.]* If our government entities can bring criminals to justice and prevent further crime more efficiently with algorithms, then our government entities can more efficiently maintain the safety and security of society as a whole. However, critics will likely still not agree with such practices because of their concerns for the effects of the fallibility of algorithms and certain effects of limited transparency and privacy risks; algorithms used in the processes of crime prevention and business can impact lives of people for the better and for the worse. For these concerns, there is a compromise. With the help of expert computer scientists and researchers, government legislatures should provide regulations for the use of facial recognition algorithms by government entities and businesses; these regulations shall hold governments and businesses accountable for errors in their algorithms and misuse of any facial data collected. Regulation is a viable way to answer the concerns of critics because of the increased accountability and the increased incentive to improve on current algorithms while still reaping the benefits they incur on society.

5th body paragraph section -- THE COMPROMISE (200 words): We realize that there are two options as stated: We can decide to fully implement algorithms with regulations, or we can decide to not use algorithms.

To gain more insight into deciding which option is best, we can ask ourselves what the best course of action is given our circumstances and abilities while not being reckless. *[CONTINUE WITH EXPLANATION OF HOW WE CAN DO THE SOLUTION SO THAT CRITICS AREN'T TOO WORRIED – OFFERING OF ACCOMMODATIONS.]* To gain more insight into deciding which option is best, we can ask ourselves what the best course of action is given our circumstances and abilities while not being reckless. By doing so, we follow an Aristotelian principle of being virtuous which outlines the correct course of action; this involves courage or knowledge of what to do in a particular circumstance (Crash Course). To find make the correct decision, we have to assess the situation, our abilities, and act accordingly ("Elements of Rhetorical Situations"). The current problem or situation is that of choosing to reduce and prevent crime with or without facial recognition algorithms. Weighing the success of reducing crime with algorithms and without algorithms, we can see that algorithms have been a boon to human efforts, not only to detain criminals but also to prevent crime. In the case of using algorithms, we also have to be prudent in their use; the compromise above is a viable answer to that concern. With the compromise, we can achieve the flourishment of society through safety, tranquility, and security.

Conclusion paragraph with RESTATED CLAIM (150 words): Implementing algorithms to aid in crime prevention is less harmful than completely abstaining from their use. We must admit, however, that algorithms are fallible and, if used often enough and on large scales, have the potential to affect human lives for the worse through misidentification, leading to improper use of data and crime prevention respectively. However, algorithms have the potential to affect human lives for better through criminal detainment and crime prevention. Therefore, with due compromise and further debate, I hope that facial recognition algorithms will be accepted by critics in the future with the help of regulations, accountability, and transparency.

Works Cited

Crash Course. "Aristotle & Virtue Theory: Crash Course Philosophy #38." *YouTube*, YouTube, 5 Dec. 2016, youtu.be/PrvtOWEXDIQ. Accessed 10 May 2019.

"Elements of Rhetorical Situations." *Purdue Online Writing Lab*, Purdue U, 2019, owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/rhetorical_situation/elements_of_rhetorical_situations.html. Accessed 10 May 2019.

Fry, Hannah. *Hello World: Being Human in the Age of Algorithms*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2018.

Manning, Allee. "This Man's Life Was Ruined by Facial Recognition Technology." *Vocativ*, Vocativ, 1 May 2017, www.vocativ.com/418052/false-facial-recognition-cost-denver-steve-talley-everything/index.html. Accessed 9 May 2019.

Step 6: Transform Your Rough Draft into a Final Draft

Instructions: Revise for body paragraph structure and word count, edit for errors, and format in MLA Manuscript style for a Final Draft, including complete in-text citations for all sources in Works Cited (MLA documentation).

Example: see Antonio Eudabe's Proposal Argument Final Draft "Algorithms and Crimes".

- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Eudabe then turned his regular Works Cited list into an **"Annotated" Works Cited**. This was part of his last essay requirement (for a multiple-sourced Argumentative Research Paper with an Annotated Works Cited).

1. He started with a "normal" Works Cited list with four college-level sources.

2. Then under each Works Cited entry (that is, each source), he wrote a paragraph each of "Summary," "Assess," and "Reflect" notes, following Purdue Online Writing Lab's Annotated Bibliography guidelines.

3. Since Eudabe's Final Draft is 1545 words (not including his original Works Cited list), and his Annotated Works Cited is 1235 words, then Eudabe's total word count is 2780 words for his Proposal Argument with Annotated Works Cited list.