

How to Write a Toulmin Argument Essay: From Thesis to Final Draft

Step 1: Make your Claim (your debatable opinion of the topic)

Example: Dominique Hickey's Claim -- \$\$\$ prom = worth it 😊

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

*Note: For this guide, we will use the "Toulmin (Points) Method" on page 106 in [Structures](#).

Instructions: In a Toulmin Argument structure, the topics (or "points") for two of the elements of Argumentation – Claim and Opposition + Rebuttal – are in separate paragraphs. However, unlike the Classic Argument, you have at least three Reasons, and each piece of Evidence supports its own Reason.

Example:

CLAIM: \$\$\$ prom = worth 😊

- I. **REASON 1: Senior year – once in a lifetime**
EVIDENCE 1: Detailed examples and/or logical explanation for Reason 1
- II. **REASON 2: Friends**
EVIDENCE 2: Detailed examples and/or logical explanation for Reason 2
- III. **REASON 3: Family**
EVIDENCE 3: Detailed examples and/or logical explanation for Reason 3
- IV. **A. OPPOSITION: Grandma says "bizarre"**
B. REBUTTAL: my answer "not unusual"

RESTATED CLAIM: \$\$\$ prom = worth 😊

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 Statement: I believed that the expenses for prom were worth it due to the lifetime memories of my friends, my family, and me.

- I. **REASON 1:** The first reason why I did not mind spending a lot of money for prom at the time was because it was my last year of high school.
- II. **REASON 2:** Second, the influence of my friends' choices reflected my decision making on my prom items.
- III. **REASON 3:** A final reason on why I spent a lot of money on my prom was because prom meant a lot to my family.
- IV. A. **OPPOSITION:** However, while my parents accepted the expenses for my prom, my grandma thought I was bizarre.
B. **REBUTTAL:** However, spending that much money wasn't unusual.

Restated CLAIM Statement: In one part of a teenager's life, memories are going to be important to them than expenses will ever be.

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:

The Valuable Prom

Intro paragraph -- CLAIM Statement: I believed that the expenses for prom were worth it due to the lifetime memories of my friends, my family, and me.

1st body paragraph section: REASON 1: The first reason why I did not mind spending a lot of money for prom at the time was because it was my last year of high school.

2nd body paragraph section: REASON 2: Second, the influence of my friends' choices reflected my decision making on my prom items.

3rd body paragraph section: REASON 3: A final reason on why I spent a lot of money on my prom was because prom meant a lot to my family.

4th body paragraph section: A. OPPOSITION: However, while my parents accepted the expenses for my prom, my grandma thought I was bizarre. **B. REBUTTAL:** However, spending that much money wasn't unusual.

Conclusion paragraph -- Restated CLAIM Statement: In one part of a teenager's life, memories are going to be important to them than expenses will ever be.

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 in 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 **1200 word** rough draft):

The Valuable Prom

Intro paragraph -- CLAIM Statement (100 words): When I was young, my mom used to tell me that money did not grow on trees. I always responded, "Well, it is made of paper." She just smiled and mumbled words under her breath. I used to think about what she may have said, but as I got older, I had a clear idea. Money is valued when it is earned, and you learn how to spend it wisely. When my senior year of high school came, I was more excited about prom than anything in the world. In that moment, I believed that the expenses for prom were worth it due to the lifetime memories of my friends, my family, and me.

1st body paragraph section (230-250 words): REASON 1: The first reason why I did not mind spending a lot of money for prom at the time was because it was my last year of high school. **EVIDENCE 1:**

Actually, it was my last year of any grade school in general. Life seemed as if it was going to shift in a drastic

way. With it being senior year, most friends and peers are transitioning from adolescence into adulthood. Some peers move far away, attend universities, start businesses, or start working on their goals in life right away after graduation. It is not promised that we will see someone we graduated from high school with ever again, so I wanted to take advantage of my peers being in the same room while having a good time all at once. As a result of prom, memories play in my head like a catchy song constantly. The bright, flashing lights, glamorous, red carpet, and the fast, camera strobes made prom a night to remember, but my classmates made prom a night to never forget. As I looked around, everyone's smile lit up the room. They danced like it was the last dance in their lifetime and socialized like they were silenced for days. Joy and laughter filled the room from the entrance door to the dance floor. Seeing everyone live in the present made me realize why prom was such a big deal to me. No matter what was going to happen in the next chapter of our lives, we made sure that prom was something we could reminisce on in the future.

2nd body paragraph section (230-250 words): REASON 2: Second, the influence of my friends'

choices reflected my decision making on my prom items. **EVIDENCE 2:** As I spent weeks and months planning on my prom, my friends and I decided to prepare for everything together. I had a general idea on finding a blue, mermaid dress. We went to the mall to shop for our dresses, accessories, heels, nails spas to get our manicures and pedicures done, and hair salons for our new hairstyles. We first stopped at a prom boutique. As we started looking around, I noticed that the simpler dresses and accessories were reasonable. On the other hand, the glam section was very pricy. My friends walked past the basic dresses like they never saw them in the store. They were into sparkly, glittery dresses with long trains hitting five inches to the floor. In addition, the jewelry was sparkly blinding, and the shoes created a mirror reflection on the floor. The more that I stared at the startling items, I more I began to fall in love. I brought a red, silky dress that detailed with gold applique fabric on the shoulders, stomach, and back of my dress. The dress was a ball gown cut, and my dress was long enough to step on. The dress priced at \$500 by itself. Even though it was a lot of money, my

friends and I bonded in a very special way. Everyone started to figure out each other's personalities based on what we were trying on and disliked. It was a bond that I will never forget.

3rd body paragraph section (230-250 words): REASON 3: A final reason to on why I spent a lot of money on my prom was because prom meant a lot to my family. **EVIDENCE 3:** With my sister and me being the last girls in our family to graduate at that moment, they never knew if they would have another opportunity to participate in any other proms. Taking that into consideration, my family became more involved with the event. Furthermore, my parents' goal was to make prom perfect to us and not to anyone else. They wanted to see us happy and to enjoy prom because if we were happy, then they were happy. We had several discussions about what we wanted, when we were going to get our dresses, shoes, and accessories, and the prices of the attire. I told them that my approximate expenses were going to be about \$900, and I was going to shop with my sister and a group of friends. Even though I was not working at that time, I earned the money by doing chores, dog sitting, and babysitting several months beforehand. They were a little shocked when they heard my price range, but since I was willing to work for what I wanted, they did not say much about it. Although I was earning money for the event, they decided to give me \$200. I am very grateful to have parents that support and help me through every step of the way.

4th body paragraph section (230-250 words): A. OPPOSITION: However, while my parents accepted the expenses for my prom, my grandma thought I was bizarre. Senior year is a quick transition from being a teenager and moving into adulthood, and she said that \$900 was too much for one night, and I could be spending it on something more valuable like a phone bill or save the money for a rainy day, so she tried to change my mind. **B. REBUTTAL:** However, spending that much money wasn't unusual. According to a survey from *The Guardian*, "the average US family plans to spend about \$919 on a prom-going teen" (Kasperkevic), so I refused. I knew that I was going to make a lot of memories, and I wanted to have the "perfect" memory of my prom. When we wear something that makes us feel confident, we behave in a more confident way. I did

not want to have a dreadful prom experience. As bratty as this sounds, I was either going to buy whatever I wanted to wear, or I was not going. Prom meant a lot to me back then, so I did not care about how much money I was spending. With that being said, I am glad that I stuck with my decision. Instead of being self-conscious about how I looked, I was enjoying myself and my friends. I took lots of pictures and danced carelessly throughout the night.

Conclusion paragraph -- Restated CLAIM Statement (100 words): In one part of a teenager's life, memories are going to be important to them than expenses will ever be. Throughout my whole life, I realized that money comes and goes, but memories stay forever. Life is very short, so you should live in the present and have as much fun as you can. Prom was a very special event for me because it felt like the end of a new beginning. In addition, it showed how one night can unite friends and peers in a positive way. Even though I spent an excessive amount of money for prom, it is a night I will never forget.

Work Cited

Kasperkevic, Jana. "Prom Night Can Cost Teenagers (and Parents) a Pretty Penny." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 20 April 2015, www.theguardian.com/money/2015/apr/20/prom-night-cost-teenagers-parents-pretty-penny. Accessed 5 April 2020.

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 [Dominique Hickey's Toulmin Argument Final Draft "The Valuable Prom"](#).

- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** in order to make a **word count of 1200 words** (especially an argument about a financial decision), then **do research**, either 1) to provide enough **Evidence** to support your **Reasons**, and /or 2) to know your **Opposition** well enough that your **Rebuttal** is relevant to their concerns.