

The Argumentative Essay Proposal Format

An essay proposal is a brief overview of your intended subject, what you currently know about that subject, a list of the possible claims that the other side might have, and your response to those possible objections. It is only a start or plan of attack. Your hypothesis, claims, support, and objections will surely change as you do your research. Using a proposal format will help you clarify possible content for the various sections of your paper. It will force you to think about what you already know and identify areas where you will need to do research to fill in the gaps. Each section should begin with a header in bold.

Hypothesis: This is one sentence stating your hypothesis or initial claim. You should avoid conjunctions and keep to a simple claim that is not too broad or too narrow. It should not be a feeling or simple fact. It must be provable by university-level research.

Explanation: This is a paragraph explaining what your paper will accomplish and how you propose to accomplish your goal.

Main Points: These paragraphs provide a discussion of potential support for your hypothesis. You will need two reasons why your hypothesis is correct or advisable.

The other side (objections): This is a short sentence that states a problem with your theory. If there are no problems, why are you trying to persuade your reader? If you cannot think of problems, you may not have a good understanding of your claim. You will write one honest objection that your reader/target audience might have.

Reply to objection: This is a short discussion of how you expect to answer the problems with your theory that you have identified in the objection section. You need not resolve the problem, but you must acknowledge and respond to it, even if it is just to say, "I am not sure of how to fix this part."

EXAMPLE
ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY PROPOSAL

NAME: John Smith

HYPOTHESIS: Surrogate parenting should not be banned by law.

EXPLANATION: Surrogate parenting is a controversial practice in which a woman becomes pregnant and carries a child to term for another person or couple. In doing so, the woman makes the miracle of parenthood possible for people who are biologically or ethically unable to give birth. At the same time, the surrogate can earn a much-needed fee for providing her services. For these reasons, legal restrictions should not be part of this very personal and private transaction.

SUPPORT (Main Points)

Surrogacy benefits parents because not every potential parent can have a child.

1. Some potentially wonderful parents cannot have children because they are infertile.
2. Some potentially wonderful parents cannot have children because they carry genetic diseases that should not be passed on.
3. Some potentially wonderful parents cannot have children because pregnancy would endanger the mother's life.

Surrogacy benefits surrogate mothers because it can be a way of earning much-needed income.

1. A surrogate mother can earn money for school without interrupting her studies.
2. A surrogate mother can earn money while being a stay-at-home mom.
3. A surrogate mother can earn money for a socially worthwhile purpose, for example, helping others.

OBJECTIONS (the other side)

Surrogate practices are equivalent to baby selling, which is a crime.

REPLY TO OBJECTION

Surrogate pregnancy is not selling a baby any more than adoption is buying a baby.