

# Lesson Skill: Writing and research using counterclaims

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**Strand** Writing — Research

**SOL** 9.6, 9.8  
10.6, 10.8  
11.6, 11.8  
12.6, 12.8

## Materials

- Internet access/computer for each student
- Available technology

## Lesson

1. Choose a general type of topic for which all students have an opinion so that no research or specific prior knowledge other than experience is needed. For example, ask students to list all of the ways homework is unwarranted or useless on one side of a sheet of paper; then, have them list ways in which it may be purposeful or important on the other side. After they have made their individual lists, put students in small groups. Each group produces a chart of pros and cons regarding homework. Compile a list either on the board or using available technology.
2. Post the list and “critique” the points with the students. Note those that are “knowledgeable judgments” and those that have validity. Once the points are narrowed, students pick one argument from each side. As a five minute free write, have each student write his/her own chosen argument providing whatever counterclaims they can make against that argument. Remind them that an important part of persuasion involves knowing and countering the other side. Do some small group or whole class sharing.
3. Have each student pick a side of the argument, addressing the place of homework in high school education. Demonstrate how to create a single sentence thesis that states the overall point.
4. Have each student create a thesis and select from the compiled chart four or five points they could make to support his/her point. Collect and read through these, checking to see that there is strong correlation between the thesis statement and the chosen points. Have students revise as needed.
5. For the next phase, students research arguments for and against; have them do an Internet search for “arguments for and against homework” and find articles and Web sites that go with their chosen stance. Have them take notes for (or print) useful articles/Web sites, emphasizing the importance of documenting the source and reviewing, if necessary, the difference between paraphrasing and quoting, reinforcing the idea of choosing valid sites. Remind them to read several articles for the other side so that they can counter strong claims from the opposing viewpoint.

6. Using notes and or printouts previously done for the earlier modeled thesis, demonstrate how to insert statistics, research results, etc., into the points listed for the modeled thesis. Emphasize synthesizing the support from the various sources.
7. Demonstrate how to use parenthetical citation.
8. Have students use an MLA/APA style sheet to insert their researched points with citation into their plan. Again, collect, check, and revise as needed.
9. This lesson can be used as a drafting exercise, or students can complete the paper. For more advanced students/grade levels, leave this example as a model and have students move to a different topic.

**Strategies for Differentiation**

- Chart Paper for process to make it more accessible to all learning levels/styles
- Model each level of the process to incorporate all students prior to students working independently
- Generate ideas collaboratively prior to students working independently
- Model thesis guidelines
- Free write modeling—guidelines
- Review/practice documentation
- Source evaluation guidelines or worksheet
- Model sentence structure and types (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex)
- Note taking guide for research—note taking organizer
- Text to speech for Web sites
- Review and practice paraphrasing
- Model synthesizing vs. summarizing