

A Writer's Word Bank: Vocabulary for Argument

College-level papers typically require you to discuss a controversy and explain both your position and other authors' opinions. Use the words below to **decide** your position, **qualify** it, and **describe** it.

Deciding the Position

Perhaps you have to write a paper discussing a proposed gun control law.

Ask yourself questions like: Do I agree or disagree with the law? When compared to an existing law, does the proposed law seem more beneficial or harmful? Do I support one section of the proposed law? What do other people think about the law?

Then, use language from the word bank below to show your position. Look at the bold words from the bank in these examples:

1. **Compared to** the existing law, the proposed law protects more people.
Position: When I have to choose between two options, I support the proposed law for one reason.
2. Senators **assert** that the proposed law will protect everyone; however, they have not **considered** gun shop managers.
Position: I disagree with the senators because one group is not mentioned in the proposed law.
3. The president **questions** the proposed law when he **advocates** for more research.
Position: I think the president disagrees with the proposed law because he asked for more research.

| To add | To compare | To prove | To show time or sequence | To give an example | To summarize or conclude |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| And Again And then Besides Equally important Finally Further Furthermore Nor Too Next Lastly Moreover In addition First, second, etc. | Whereas But Yet On the other hand However Nevertheless On the contrary By comparison Where Compared to Although Conversely Meanwhile In contrast In reference to | Because For Since For the same reason Obviously Evidently Furthermore Moreover Besides Indeed In fact In addition In any case That is Thus | Immediately Thereafter Soon Finally Then Later Previously Formerly Next Then First, second, etc. | For example For instance In this case In another case On this occasion In this situation To demonstrate To illustrate As an illustration Take the case of Consider | In brief On the whole Summing up In summation To conclude In conclusion As I have shown As I have said Hence Therefore Accordingly Thus As a result Resulting in Consequently |
| To repeat | To claim | To agree | To question or disagree | To recommend | To cast doubt |
| In brief As I have said As I have noted As has been noted As mentioned To reiterate | Argues Insists Believes Asserts Claims Emphasizes Observes Suggests | Acknowledges Verifies Agrees Concurs Corroborates Endorses Extols Praises | Complains Complicates Repudiates Contradicts Denies Disavows Questions Refutes Qualifies | Advocates Calls for Demands Encourages Exhorts Implores Recommends Urges | Seem Appear to be Doubt Conceivably Perhaps Possibly Unclear |

Qualifying and Describing the Position

Once you have decided your position, you can add strength, weakness, or a specific tone to your claims using modal verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Ask yourself questions like: Do I agree completely, partly, or not at all? Do I disagree due to a possible problem or a proven downside? Do I want to acknowledge other views or prove that all other views are wrong? Do I want readers to support my position or respond to it with other ideas?

Then, use language from the second word bank below to further define your position. Look at the bold words in these examples. Which positions are stronger? Invite more discussion?

1. Compared to the existing law, the proposed law **will definitely** protect more people.
Qualified Position: When I have to choose between two options, I *fully* support the proposed law for one *important, proven* reason.
2. Compared to the existing law, the proposed law **may** protect more people.
Qualified Position: When I have to choose between two options, the proposed law *seems* better, but I am *not yet convinced*.

Read one more example. How do the bold words change the position?:

1. Furthermore, this law will **completely** limit **everyday** freedoms.
Qualified Position: I disagree with the proposed law because it will take away freedoms we enjoy every day.
2. Furthermore, this law will **barely** limit **necessary** freedoms.
Qualified Position: I support the proposed law because the freedoms we need will only be affected to a small degree.

| To qualify | To describe value |
|---|--|
| Can Could May Might Must Shall Should Will Would Completely Somewhat Partially Barely Hardly Rarely | (in)accurate (in)complete (in)effective Lacking (un)successful Thorough Weak |