ACADEMIC SKILLS

Factsheet
📝 Write supporting arguments

Basics

If you have studied other skills in this series, you might have looked at how to *Write sentences*, *Link sentences* and *Write paragraphs*. Here we will look in detail at what a supporting argument is. Basically, a supporting argument is a sentence which supports the topic sentence of a paragraph. It can do this in a number of ways, such as adding detail or giving an explanation.

The academic context

Good academic writing has an interplay between statements and supporting arguments. It is balanced, ordered and easily understood. This is the kind of writing that will get you top marks at college or university.

Key features

A supporting argument can:

- explain the topic sentence, or show why it is important
- give examples, reasons, details, facts or statistics (evidence)
- give a quote (repeating words somebody has written or said) or paraphrase (repeating something in different words)
- sum up the previous sentence
- develop an important theme

Challenges / difficulties

A supporting argument needs to be well written and integrated into a paragraph. This means you need to read back over your work and check that your arguments give good support. Does each supporting argument clearly relate to the topic of the paragraph? Does it develop your overall argument or theme?

How can I develop this skill?

When you read, pay attention to how the sentences in each paragraph support the main idea. See if you can identify what kind of support each argument gives, using the Key features section to help you. Remember that a supporting argument can be one sentence or several sentences.

Learning outcome

When you have learnt this skill, you will feel more confident writing and editing supporting arguments for your own pieces of writing. You will be more familiar with different kinds of supporting arguments, such as those that explain or those that add details.

Theory to practice

1 **Read the supporting arguments. Match them to the functions from the box. There is one sentence for each function.**

explaining	giving examples/details	paraphrasing	quoting
stating importance	summing up		using statistics

a   Therefore, we can see that tourism causes a lot of damage to the environment. _____

b   In fact, there are an average of 300 sunny days a year. _____

c   In other words, it is one of the most controversial tourist destinations in the world. _____

d   This is because of the huge variety of animal life and beautiful flowers. _____

e   For example, many animal species are now endangered, and forests
are being cleared. _____

f   It is often called 'the Land of the Gods' because of its beauty and its history. _____

g   This is important because it shows that many people's ideas are wrong. _____

2 👥 **Compare answers with a partner. Do you agree?**

Ways to get more practice

In pairs, write a sentence and give it to your partner. Ask them to tell you what kind of supporting argument it is.