

REFUTING AN OPPOSING ARGUMENT

WHAT IS REFUTING AN ARGUMENT?

Refuting an argument is taking a position (usually one other than that you are arguing) and showing why that opinion is not valid.

WHY DO WE DO IT?

In any type of opinion writing, you look better if you anticipate the other side's argument. This shows that you understand more than just your own point of view.

WHAT IS THE MOST COMMON ERROR?

The most common error most students make is the error of only LISTING the opposing argument, not explaining why it is not valid.

BAD EXAMPLE 1 (Only lists the other side—doesn't actually refute it)

Those who say the school bond should not be passed argue that it costs too much money.

BAD EXAMPLE 1 IMPROVED

Those who say the school bond should not be passed argue that it costs too much money. However, they are overstating the case. The cost of the millage would be just fifty cents per thousand dollars of taxable value. Broken down for a home valued at \$200,000 that comes out to about \$100 a year. Broken down further that is about \$8.50 a month or slightly more than a quarter a day. Realistically, this is a small price to pay for the services the bond will provide.

BAD EXAMPLE 2

Those who argue that the University of Michigan is better than Michigan State often point to the success of the Wolverines athletic programs which they feel are far superior.

BAD EXAMPLE 2 IMPROVED

Those who argue that the University of Michigan is better than Michigan State often point to the success of the Wolverines athletic programs which they feel are far superior. However, MSU actually has better athletics. Its mens basketball team has gone to five Final Fours in the last decade, its' hockey team won an NCAA title in 2007 and its football, field hockey, mens soccer and volleyball programs have all been highly successful in recent years. In recent years, this success has earned much national recognition. In fact, in a recent ranking by *The Sporting News*, which took into account wins, fan support, academic performance of athletes and support for non-revenue sports, The University of Michigan ranked 11th in the nation. Michigan State ranked 2nd.