

Rubric Category	Organization
Grade/Score	Grades 7-12 / Scores 2 and 3
Rubric Category	Development
Grade/Score	Grades 7-12 / Scores 2 and 3
CCSS Writing Standards	W1, W1a, W1c
Argument Type	All arguments

Incorporating Counterclaims Into Your Organizational Structure

Students will strategize where in their writing to best incorporate counterclaims.

Understanding the Expectations

As you probably recall, one of the first steps in creating a strong argument is to acknowledge that there are other possible opinions—called counterclaims—on the subject. Once you determine what counterclaims you should address in your writing, your next question is likely to be, “Where do I put this and how much do I discuss it?” There is no single absolute answer to this question. In fact, there are several options and it is up to each writer to assess where the counterclaim, as well as the response to it (called a *refutation* or *rebuttal*), will have the most impact. The goal is to create a dynamic and convincing discussion of ideas supported by evidence.

It is important to establish connections between claim and counterclaim positions and create clear relationships between them in the assertion of your positions. This will help you determine where the discussion of the counterclaim will have the most impact.

Three possible options for addressing counterclaims include:

1. Stating both the claim and counterclaim **in the introduction** prior to your thesis statement.
 - This method acknowledges other views and gets them out of the way quickly. It tends to be brief, but sometimes beginning your essay by addressing the counterclaim in the introduction can also serve as a lead-in to your own claim. This can work well if you are making an unusual or unexpected argument because it allows you to set out the “typical” perspective and then show how yours is different.
 - As you write, clarify the difference between your claim and the counterclaim and the reasons you are arguing for your position. Advance forward with your argument in the next paragraph.
2. Weighing counterclaims **within body paragraphs**.
 - In this scenario, your introduction and conclusion remain primarily focused on your claim, and you deal with alternate views and claims as they might arise in your body paragraphs. When possible, as you argue the points of your position with evidence throughout your argument, acknowledge when there may be an alternate view or interpretation. Transition back to your own view, making it clear why this is your position.
3. Responding to counterclaims **in, or just before, the conclusion**.
 - After you have completed your argument in favor of your claim, begin a new paragraph by acknowledging a clear alternate view or counterclaim. Doing this allows you to treat the opposing views fairly, because you have room to explain the reasons someone might hold a different opinion. After doing so, though, your goal is to either *refute* these views by showing how they are wrong or misguided, to *concede* the fair points of the other side while insisting on your view, or to combine both of these methods.

Trying it Out

Review the paper you are currently developing or revising and write a brief response to each of these questions:

1. Where, if anywhere, do you address counterclaims? Does it match any of the patterns described above? Why have you chosen this approach? If you haven't yet written counterclaims into your paper, consider where you *think* they should go and draft a few sentences addressing them.
2. Review the other options for addressing counterclaims and select a different approach to try out – for example, if you addressed counterclaims as they came up in body paragraphs originally, try pulling those items together and addressing them all as part of the conclusion. Write out and address the counterclaims in your notebook using whichever new approach you have chosen.
3. Evaluate which approach works best for your argument. You may find that the new version is an improvement, but even if you find that you preferred your paper the way it was, doing this work may have revealed some ways you can make your claims and counterclaims clearer for the reader.
4. Apply edits to a draft in progress to indicate where your counterclaim will work best. Use annotation or outline form.

Exchange feedback with a peer editor. Note plans for further editing.

Consider several options to determine where best to voice alternate positions in your final work. Will you note an alternate position and establish a relationship with your claim in your introduction? The first body paragraph? Later in your piece? It is important to realize that there is more than a single good option.

Writing it Up

If you are in the early stages of drafting your work, remain open minded about where your counterclaim will most effective. Seek feedback from a peer editor and your teacher. Continue your revision efforts with the remaining parts of your paper and make adjustments as necessary to include the counterclaim in the most effective spot.