

Rubric Category	Development
Grade/Score	Grades 9-12 / Scores 2 and 3
CCSS Writing Standards	W1, W1a, W1b, W1c
Argument Type	All arguments

# Developing Counterclaims Fairly

*Students will practice developing counterclaims fairly and with appropriate evidence.*

## Understanding the Expectations

In your writing, you have probably already gone through the steps of noting alternate positions, or counterclaims, and you have also considered where best to address these aspects of argument in order to have the greatest impact.

The last steps are to consider how much you should develop your counterclaim, and then to do so fairly and with evidence. Perhaps part of your journey in arriving at your claim is that you considered your issue from varied points of view. You have already weighed both sides, or multiple sides of the issue, and arrived at your position for a reason.

Even though you disagree with the counterclaim, you still have a responsibility to treat this view with respect and fairness – no one will be persuaded if they feel they are being insulted by your argument, or if they think the writer *doesn't understand* their counterclaim. Your goal here is to show that you *do* understand the other view, to respectfully disagree, and to display honest, fair thinking to the reader.

We'll practice with a topic you may have encountered before: *Cake vs. Pie – which is better?* For the questions below, quickly practice the listed tasks using this topic. Try not to spend more than 5-7 minutes in this work.

1. Identify your position, and prepare to acknowledge the strength and limitations of both the claim and counterclaim. Be fair. For example, you would not suggest, "Anyone who likes pie has horrible taste." Assert something that is debatable with concrete evidence.
  - What is your claim?
  - What is the strongest counterclaim to your argument? Sometimes this will be the *opposite* of your argument, but other times this will simply be a different interpretation.
  - Quickly list the reasons and evidence that support *your* claim.
  - Quickly list the reasons and evidence that might support the *counterclaim*.
2. Determine how best to respond to a counterclaim by using evidence. Never ignore evidence or the obvious. Create notes using bullet points.

Share ideas and exchange feedback with a peer editor.

3. Offer your response or refutation by providing and discussing evidence you have that opposes alternate viewpoints. This is your chance to refuel your own position by dismantling the position that opposes it.

Exchange feedback with a partner on the refutation. Keep feedback in mind as you continue with the next activity.

## Writing it Up

Keeping in mind the process of the last activity, use a paper you are revising or a new work in progress to examine the following ideas. Respond to prompts with bulleted notes.

1. What is your claim?
2. What is the strongest counterclaim to your argument? Sometimes this will be the *opposite* of your argument, but other times this will simply be a different interpretation.
3. List the reasons and evidence that support *your* claim.
4. List the reasons and evidence that might support the *counterclaim*.

Now take a moment to review the counterclaim and its supporting evidence. What are the most important details about it that you should share with the reader? Does it make any valid points that you should “concede,” or acknowledge as persuasive? Do you need to *respond* to other points to show why they are *not* valid?

5. Place a checkmark next to any points for the counterclaim that you need to concede in your writing. To *concede* is to say, “Yes, this is a fair point, even though I still believe my argument is stronger.”
6. For any reasons or evidence in support of the counterclaim that you don’t plan to concede, jot a quick explanation for why they aren’t right. For example, “Some readers feel that John’s behavior toward his sister is rude, but the only reason it looks rude is because John doesn’t realize how his jokes hurt her feelings. He was trying to cheer her up—not make her feel worse.”

Share and exchange feedback with a peer, if possible. Then, using what you learned from this exercise, review your draft and decide where to include this additional information about the counterclaim in order to present its ideas fairly while still furthering your own argument.

Exchange feedback with your peer editor again and make notes on what to edit or expand.

## Writing it Up

If this is the beginning stage of your work with writing up claims with counterclaims, continue to work with an awareness of being fair in your presentation of evidence and maintaining an unbiased attitude. Continue to develop ideas and seek interesting but concrete ways to oppose the counter claim. Be sure to seek continuing feedback from a peer editor or teacher as you continue to draft.