

# Building an Argument

## AN ESL WRITERS' WORKSHOP

Students examine the process of building an argument: they look at the thesis statement, the main supporting points, and the examples needed to complete a coherent argument. The first argument they examine is whether smoking should be banned in public places. Then, on their own, they try to build an argument for using public transportation.

### Preparation:

#### Homework to be completed before class:

Have students complete the two vocabulary handouts titled **Smoking** and **Public Transportation**. This homework is essential because it helps them become familiar with the content and can serve as a mini-dictionary for them during the class.

#### In Class:

Make a copy of **Building an Argument** for every student in the class.

## Introduction:

Do not hand out the worksheet *Building an Argument* yet.

Go over the homework from last class (the two worksheets mentioned above). Then write the title of today's lesson, *Building an Argument*.

## Main Lesson:

Write thesis statement on the board and explain what thesis statement means. Then write *Thesis Statement: Smoking should be banned from all public places* on the board. Make sure the students understand what that means. Ask them if they agree or if they think it's a good idea.

Now divide the board into two and write the headings *Supporting Points* and *Examples*. Then ask the students why smoking should be banned from all public places.

They may give you a supporting point or an example (sometimes it's hard to distinguish). The teacher helps them fill out the board in a way similar to the handout (which they haven't seen yet).

When you have enough supporting points and examples hand out the worksheet titled **Building an Argument**. Compare the class discussion with what is written on the worksheet.

Have one student read the paragraph on banning smoking and then check that everybody understands the paragraph.

Go over the second page of the worksheet with connecting language. Briefly explain how each connecting phrase is used and then have the students go back to the paragraph and find all the examples of the connecting language.

Finally, write *Thesis Statement: People should use public transportation* on the board. The students will now do similar analysis of this issue on their own. The teacher will walk around the room providing help and suggestions.

For homework, you might want to have the students do a second paragraph with the thesis that alcohol causes many problems in society.



## Preparatory Homework:

*Do vocabulary worksheets on smoking and public transportation.*

## In Class

*Go over the homework.*

*Build an argument for banning smoking in all public places..*

**Smoking should be banned from all public places.**

### Main points:

- (1) Smoking is bad for health.
- (2) Smoking bothers people.
- (3) Smoking is dangerous.
- (4) Smoking is dirty.
- (5) Smoking influences teenagers.

*Students build their own argument for using public transportation.*

## Sample Student Writing:

### Building an Argument

**Thesis statement: People should use public transportation.**

Using public transportation is good for many reasons. First of all, cars waste time. Many people who drive cars spend time looking for parking and they get stuck in traffic jams. Also, cars waste space. They need many roads and parking lots. More importantly, public transportation is safe because every year thousands of people die in car accidents. Especially, our country has more accidents than any other country. Most of all, public transportation is cheap. For example, cars need gas, repairs, and tolls. And it costs a lot to buy a car. As well, public transportation is environmentally friendly. Cars, on the other hand produce smog and acid rain. It isn't good for our health either. And many trees are cut down to make roads and parking lots. In conclusion, we should use public transportation instead of cars.