

# Refuting an Argument

Read the following argument:

*Life was better before industrialization. To begin with, in the past, people lived in the countryside. They breathed clean air and so they were healthier. These days, people get cancer and other diseases from the pollution of factories and cars. Furthermore, people suffer from stress and depression. Everybody is so busy that they don't have time to relax. The suicide rate has increased within the last century and many people take drugs for depression. But above all else, people have lost their freedom in the last two hundred years. Governments have created numerous laws to control people. People need I.D. cards and licenses to do anything. In conclusion, TVs and cars are being paid for with our health, our sanity, and our freedom, and therefore, we are better off without them.*

**What is the thesis statement?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What are the main supporting points and examples?**

(1)

(2)

(3)

**Look at the three main points and decide if they are strong arguments or weak arguments.**

(1)

(2)

(3)

**Examine the three arguments and make counter arguments:**

(Fill in the blanks with more, fewer, less, higher, lower...)

**Argument (1): People were healthier in the past.**

More pollution? True/False

More cases of cancer? True/False

**Counter Arguments:**

In the past, the infant mortality rate was \_\_\_\_\_.

These days, the average lifespan is \_\_\_\_\_.

These days, medicine is \_\_\_\_\_ advanced.

\_\_\_\_\_ diseases can be cured.

\_\_\_\_\_ people have Medicare.

**Argument (2): People suffer from stress.**

More stress? True/False

More depression? True/False

### Counter Arguments:

There are \_\_\_\_\_ holidays and vacations now.

The average workday is \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ people travel abroad.

### Argument (3): People have lost freedom.

More laws to control people? True/False

### Counter Arguments:

\_\_\_\_\_ people have the right to vote these days.

People have \_\_\_\_\_ opportunity to get an education.

\_\_\_\_\_ people have freedom of speech.

Racial and sexual discrimination is \_\_\_\_\_.

## The Three Steps to Refuting an Argument

- (1) Introduce your opponent's argument.
- (2) Decide whether it is strong, weak, true or false.
- (3) Provide counter arguments and counter evidence.

### Example:

Some people argue that our quality of life is decreasing. They feel that life was better before industrialization. They claim that people were healthier, happier, and freer in the past. However, their argument is weak because they do not examine all the facts.

People who think life was better before industrialization argue that pollution has caused more cancer and other diseases. While it is true that cancer is increasing, modern medicine has improved our health in general. Over the past two hundred years, the infant mortality rate has declined. As well, people live longer now and doctors can cure more diseases. Also, more people have Medicare and so more people can receive medical

treatment.

People who think the standard of living has declined, also argue that people have more stress and depression than in the past. This maybe true, but people also have longer vacations, shorter workdays, and more opportunity to travel within their country and abroad.

Finally, those who think the past was better argue that people were freer in the past. They claim that the governments of the world have created too many laws to control people, but in fact people are much freer now. More people have the right to vote, freedom of speech, and an opportunity to get an education. As well, racial and sexual discrimination are decreasing.

In conclusion, while it is true that industrialization has some drawbacks, it is not true that our quality of life has decreased. In fact, in many ways, we are healthier and have more opportunity and freedom.

Now, look at each sentence and decide if it is step 1, 2, or 3.

### Phrases for Given a Counter Argument

**When your opponent's argument is true but yours is better:**

While it's true that ... but

There is some truth to the argument that ... However

It is true that ... However,

**When your opponent's argument might be true but you are not sure:**

It may be true that ... but

Even if ...

Even if it's true that ...

**When your opponent's argument is false:**

It's not true that ...

They claim that ... but in fact ...

*Now, reread the counter argument and underline any of these phrases that you find.*

## Refuting an Argument

Cutting down rain forests is a necessary evil. In many of the countries where rain forests are disappearing, the people are very poor. Logging the rain forests provides many jobs, which help these poor people. The loggers, the truck drivers, and the shippers all receive work because of the logging industry. As well, once the land is cleared it can be used for more productive things. Farmers can grow crops on the land and ranchers can raise cattle. Finally, the wood itself is very useful. People use the wood for housing, fuel, furniture, and many other everyday items.

**Argument (1):**

**Counter Argument:**



**Argument (2)**

**Counter Argument:**

**Argument (3)**

**Counter Argument**

## For the Teacher

### Some possible counter arguments:

#### Argument 1: Jobs

The jobs aren't sustainable. Once the forest is gone, there will be no more logging jobs. Tourism could provide alternative jobs. Jobs from tourism could be sustainable. Also, often the loggers are paid only a very small amount.

#### Argument 2: More Productive uses:

The soil under rain forests is poor for farming, and also not very suitable for raising cattle for any long period of time. Within a few years, it becomes difficult to farm or raise cattle.

## Argument 3: Useful

Wood is useful, but the rain forests have many species of plants and animals. Some of these species could provide us with cures for diseases etc. That is also useful. As well, rain forests help keep the air clean and the environment healthy.

How you introduce the counter arguments is up to you.

You may wish to do an internet search for resources.

The above are just the tip of the iceberg.