Position Paper

ENG 1013: Composition II, Arkansas State University

A Position Paper is a common type of academic argument that is written after reading about and discussing a particular issue in which you should state and defend your position on the issue as well as to illustrate how your opinion relates to similar or opposing opinions about the same issue. When writing your essay, remember that your thesis still needs to be both arguable and supported with details and evidence. Also continue to use transitions, which provide cues for the reader and improve coherence. We will also introduce the following skills:

* collecting information from readings on a particular issue
* positioning one's claim in relation to other positions on the issue
* documenting sources using MLA in-text citations and works cited
* choosing an effective organizational strategy
* researching the library and Internet for sources

**Purpose of the paper**: To argue your position on an issue raised in at least two of the articles we have read, showing how your position relates to those of the authors

**Audience**: An academic audience that includes the authors of the readings and others interested in the issue upon which you are focusing.

**Strategies**:

* *Focus* on a narrowly defined issue. Use a specific, clearly stated thesis to introduce the focus. Introduce the issue early in the discussion.
* *Develop* your argument by defending your claim and showing how it relates to the positions of your sources. Show the positions of the four authors. Use clearly stated reasons and relevant, effective evidence. Reasons should represent sound logic. Evidence may be drawn from personal experience, and outside sources such as interviews, surveys, or written sources.
* *Organize* your paper in a way that effectively conveys information to your readers, is easy to follow, and presents your position in relation to those of the authors.
* *Document* all outside sources (both written and the optional field sources) using MLA in-text citations and works cited.
* Write in a *style* that is clear, readable, appropriate to audience, and free from distracting errors in spelling, grammar, and usage.

**Content and Audience**

To focus your Position Paper, you should consider how your own insights add something new to a conversation on an issue of cultural, political, or humanitarian significance. That issue may be happening on our campus, in your hometown, in our nation, or in the larger world. Then, reflect on this issue, taking notes on perspectives that you feel are missing or on viewpoints that you feel are incompletely or inaccurately expressed. Even if you are writing about an issue with which you are already familiar you will want to read several sources pertaining to the issue before you begin writing. Some questions for you to consider as you read your sources are as follows:

* What voices are missing from the conversation?
* How do your own experiences influence an alternative perspective on the issue?
* Do the writers currently covering this issue or the public, in general, seem to be misinterpreting or unfairly representing certain points of view?
* Do the writers currently covering this issue or the public seem to be “getting it right,” but still leaving important perspectives out of the conversation?

As you write and revise your Position Paper, you will integrate relevant research that will allow you to both support your views and distinguish them from the views of others who have written on the issue. Be aware that typically, strong Position Papers do not simply take an “either/or” argument, but rather concentrate on nuances about the issue that may have been missed or underdeveloped. In other words, powerful Position Papers say something new rather than rehashing the same tired arguments. Finally, remember that your Position Paper should develop a strong, well-supported argument, and that it should address the Arkansas State University first-year community—that is, fellow students and faculty, who are bright, but may have little knowledge of the particular conversation you are entering.

**Organization and Format**

There are many ways to organize your Position Paper and, as a class, we will analyze sample Position Papers in order to articulate a general understanding of the conventions of the genre. Considering these conventions, you will have to decide the best way to arrange your Position Paper to make your argument clear and persuasive.

Further, to practice the skills necessary for success in Composition II and beyond, you are expected to engage with outside sources in your piece, using summary, paraphrase, and direct quotation as effective and appropriate. You are also required to incorporate in-text parenthetical citations and develop an end-of-text Works Cited for all sources cited within your paper or consulted in developing your position. You should read and cite (Works Cited or Works Referenced) no fewer than four recent sources. As with other essays written in this class, please follow MLA guidelines for citation and format. Your Position Paper must be no fewer than three full pages, but no more than four.