



## OBJECTIVES

Students will

- understand the concepts of concession and counterargument as components of argumentation.
- create effective concessions and counterarguments in their own arguments.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# Concession and Counterargument

Grade 9-10

## ABOUT THIS LESSON

The purpose of this lesson is to help students write an effective argumentative essay that includes a concession to the opposing view, followed by a strong counterargument. The lesson includes a prewriting strategy to guide students through a conversation map between opposing sides of an argument.

## TEXT COMPLEXITY

Passages for NMSI lessons are selected to challenge students while lessons and activities make texts accessible. Guided practice with challenging texts allows students to gain the proficiency necessary to read independently at or above grade level. The brief excerpt used in this lesson comes from an article with a readability measure in the 9-10 text complexity band.

**COGNITIVE RIGOR**

English lessons for NMSI are designed to guide students through a continuum of increasingly complex thinking skills, including those outlined in taxonomies such as the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Levels. The activities in this lesson require students to use reasoning and to cite evidence to support assertions (DOK 3); students also have to evaluate the reasoning of an opposing argument and offer counterarguments against a stated position (DOK 4). Students will engage in the Understand, Analyze, and Evaluate levels the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.

This lesson is included in Module 6: *Crafting an Effective Argument*.

**CONNECTION TO COMMON  
CORE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE ARTS**

The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

**Explicitly addressed in this lesson**

**RI.9-10.8** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

**W.9-10.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- a. Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

**Implicitly addressed in this lesson**

**SL.9-10.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with

diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- b. Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.
- d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

**CONNECTIONS TO AP\***

Recognizing concession and counterargument is an important college and career readiness skill in the rhetorical analysis of an argument essay. Teaching students to incorporate concessions and counterarguments into their own essays will strengthen those arguments and result in more effective and sophisticated written responses, especially for those essays written in response to the Argument Question on the AP Language exam.

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**MATERIALS AND RESOURCES**

- guided questions
- brief writing assignment

**TEACHING SUGGESTIONS**

**G**enerating ideas for the argument essay is often difficult for students. The strategy of creating a conversation map between opposing sides can be used as a prewriting technique.

Review the concepts of concession and counterargument with students, using the information included in the Student Activity as a starting point for discussion. You could show students websites or print articles that are structured around debate (e.g., The *New York Times*' series "Room for Debate") to illustrate concession and counterargument in professional writing.

**Activity One**

Ask a volunteer to read aloud the excerpt from Joel Stein's article "Pushing the Envelope." Have students determine the author's purpose and claim. Then, ask two additional volunteers to read aloud the Voice A and Voice B conversation, which presents an example of concession and counterargument. Model under the document camera how to write an additional concession or counterargument statement. Another option is to have students complete the frame statement independently and then share their responses under the document camera.

**Activity Two**

Consider having students complete the activity orally in response to a class topic. Students can complete the activity with a partner, or you might assign a larger group to address the pros or cons of a topic. Students should feel free to use the model to create concessions or counterarguments for any class topic.



# Concession and Counterargument

## Grades 9-10

A **concession** is an expression of concern for the feelings of those who may disagree with the speaker's or writer's position. Using a concession is a good way to overcome the reader's or listener's resistance to a controversial position. It may also lessen the effect of what the opposition may consider a key point.

- A concession shows the writer or speaker to be
- a logical thinker who knows and understands what the opposition believes.
- a concerned, fair-minded person who realizes that every argument has two sides.

A **counterargument** follows the concession and explains why the other side's argument is not accurate or appropriate.

**Terms of concession and counterargument:**

I concede that...; however,

Yes, ..., but...

I recognize that..., but I must point out that...

While I agree that..., I doubt that...

While it is true that..., we must remember that...

Although I understand that..., I still believe that...

Used correctly, the concession and counterargument can demonstrate your maturity and reasonableness. The failure to use a concession can show just the opposite—a mind that is closed and lacks insight.

In order to write an effective argument, you must consider all sides of the issue. To simply dismiss an idea because you disagree will weaken your argument and make you seem unreasonable or uninformed.

Coming up with valid arguments against your position will lead you to a more sophisticated view of the issue and make you aware of potential holes in your argument.

Imagining a dialogue between opposing sides of an issue is an excellent prewriting strategy for working through the complexity of an argument, developing concessions and counterarguments, and forcing yourself to search out the most sophisticated answer you can find.

**Activity One:**

Read the following paragraphs from Joel Stein’s article “Pushing the Envelope,” which offers possible reasons for the United States Postal Service’s budget deficit.

Part of the issue is that mail—like many things I will not list here because my editors will delete them—is something that people like getting but not giving. For me to mail something, I’d have to figure out how to get a stamp, then remember to put the envelope in my car and then, days later, figure out why this envelope is in my car. And I’d have to remember how to write with a pen.

So the post office is in danger of going under. UPS and FedEx, with tougher union deals and no obligation to deliver to the bottom of the Grand Canyon, control 85% of express-mail and package delivery. People are reading magazines on iPads and sharing pictures of the kids on Facebook, and companies are starting to charge for sending bills by mail. The post office has become a government-run spam delivery system.

Consider the following conversation between Voice A and Voice B.

**The argument:** For financial reasons, the US Postal Service should be eliminated.

**Voice A:** The USPS does not deliver enough letters and packages to compete with delivery services like UPS and FedEx.

**Voice B:** The USPS still provides a vital service to citizens living in remote areas where UPS and FedEx are under “no obligation to deliver.”

**Voice A:** People living in those areas can pay bills online and use email for correspondence.

**Voice B:** Not everyone has a computer and/or Internet access.

**Voice A:** With the money the government saves by closing the Post Office, it could open community centers with free public access to computers so citizens can check email and make online payments.

**Voice B:** Closing the Postal Service will add to the unemployment problem because so many employees will be out of work.

The following is an example of a concession and counterargument:

**Concession:** I recognize that many citizens in remote communities depend on the USPS to deliver their mail.

**Counterargument:** However, I must point out that without the USPS, other delivery businesses like FedEx and UPS would see the opportunity to expand their services to those areas of the country.

Practice creating another concession and counterargument on this topic.

While it is true that \_\_\_\_\_, we \_\_\_\_\_  
must remember that \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity Two:**

Pick a debatable topic and then write a concession and counterargument. Complete the following conversation map with the chosen topic.

**The argument:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Voice A:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Voice B:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Voice A:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Voice B:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Voice A:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Voice B:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Using the terms of concession and counterargument, write a one sentence concession followed by one or two sentences of counterargument. Remember that your goal is to demonstrate your knowledge of both sides of the issue while maintaining a position that supports your claim.

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