

5. BUILD YOUR ETHOS WITH COUNTERARGUMENTS

Good writers understand that their success relies on not alienating their readers. The Greeks called this *ethos*: the writer's ability to establish credibility with the reader. They knew that an audience was more easily persuaded if they felt that the writer had good sense, good will, and good character.

A writer builds credibility in a counterargument by anticipating and answering objections that a reader might have. To do this, the writer must look at both sides of an issue, instead of just the side that he or she is arguing. Writers who acknowledge the opposition are seen as more confident, more comprehensive, and more cogent by their readers because they are not afraid to take on opposing viewpoints. By anticipating and addressing the opposition, they reassure their readers that they have a broad perspective on the entire issue, instead of a narrow focus on only one side.

In the following examples, a writer is arguing against legalized gambling. Instead of focusing on just arguments for his point of view, he rebuts opposing viewpoints by including arguments that the other side might make.

[Opposing viewpoint] *Although gambling provides some economic boost in jobs and tourism, [rebuttal] this boost is offset by the loss of profits and jobs it causes in small businesses that offer non-gambling pastimes.*

[Opposing viewpoint] *Although some people argue that gambling increases tax revenues for a community, [rebuttal] the reality is that gambling actually decreases revenues because of the increased crime and bankruptcies that come to any community that adopts legal gambling.*

Directions

Imagine that you are writing on the topic of gun control, arguing that it should not be further tightened. Use the information in the following chart to write two counterarguments. First state a pro argument, and then refute that argument with a rebuttal from the con side.

Topic: Should gun control be further tightened?

PRO	CON
Large numbers of Americans die or are injured each year by gun violence.	Law-abiding citizens should be able to have guns to protect themselves against criminals with guns.
The 2 nd Amendment applies to state militias, not an individual's right to bear arms.	The 2 nd Amendment is rightly interpreted to guarantee the individual right to bear arms.

Counterargument 1:

Counterargument 2:
