

# Understanding and Using Different Perspectives

When writing an argument-based text, writers will often incorporate perspectives that disagree with both fundamental and specific ways from their viewpoint. The question you may be asking here is “Why? Why would a writer give time to someone who they feel is wrong about the issue?” Here are some reasons why you want to include different perspectives into your commentary:

- Different perspectives help to establish your credibility as a writer. Including these perspectives shows both that you have done your homework (i.e. research) and that you are aware of what others are saying.
- Different perspectives help to ease the negative feelings some readers may have toward your commentary (i.e. readers who are against your position can’t argue that you don’t recognize their views on the topic).
- Different perspectives give you something to argue against (rather than just looking like someone with an ax to grind, you can introduce an opposing viewpoint and then methodically poke holes in it to prove your point)

There are different ways to involve these perspectives, including:

- Introducing perspectives you entirely disagree with (“In his editorial, John Doe argues that there is no parking problem on campus. I could not disagree more with his viewpoint”)
- Introducing perspectives you entirely agree with (“During an interview with Jane Doe, she stressed that there is a parking problem on campus and mentioned many reasons for this. I completely agree both with Doe’s viewpoint and with the reasons she outlines.”)
- Introducing perspectives you agree with in general, but which you disagree with in particulars (“I agree with Jane Doe that parking is a problem here on campus, but I don’t see her solution to the problem as one that can work here.”)
- Introducing perspectives you disagree with in general, but conceding some points you agree with (“I disagree with John Doe when he says there is not a parking problem on campus. But, I will admit that he raises some good points about students not making enough use of public transportation or not carpooling enough.”)

Incorporating outside perspectives involves three main steps:

- First, with all of the research, you should provide evidence that you understand these different perspectives. Make sure you fairly and accurately represent their viewpoints.
- Second, you should point out those areas where you disagree and provide evidence for why your position is the better one (poke holes in their argument; point out the problems within their argument.) Make sure to point out the areas in which you concede positions you agree on and discuss why you agree.

- Finally, bring out the sources you agree with (either in whole and in part) and use these as support for your eventual call to action.

## Rogerian Argument

- When using Rogerian Argument (developed by psychologist Carl Rogers) you seek common ground with your opponents and/or critics:
  - First, you show that you understand the different perspectives on the issue/problem
  - Then, establish points where you agree and disagree with these views
  - Finally, work towards common ground; rather than trying to “win” the argument, you work towards finding a middle ground where all perspectives are included