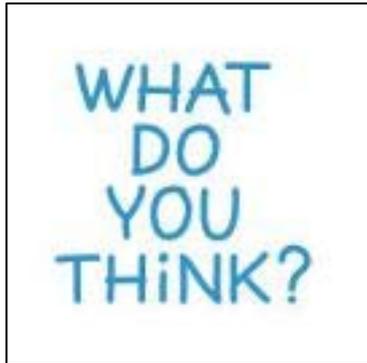


Developing Your Position Piece



Objective

This short guide will help you formulate a written piece to influence a broader audience, from your lecturer to a policy maker! It aims to help you make your case in a simple but compelling way by making you think about your argument and present it logically.

Developing Your Position Piece

An opinion piece's purpose is to persuade the reader to adopt your position, so the argument needs to be clear, succinct, persuasive, and supported by appropriate evidence.

Use the following questions, in this order, to help you formulate your position – we have used the problem of trying to understand voting behavior patterns in South Africa as an example for you here:

- Step 1.** Start with your **PROBLEM**:
- What problem affects voters in SA?
E.g. Do the majority of voters consistently vote for the ruling party in each election?
- Step 2.** Diagnose the problem.
- List 3 primary **CAUSES** for the problem (i.e. why do voters behave as your problem states?)

Step 3. For each cause you have listed, provide information from a reliable source to prove it – don't forget to reference your sources properly.

(i.e. you must cite a fact or a quantifiable example to prove your cause.)

- List at least 1 piece of **EVIDENCE** for each cause
- This can be a quote or statement from a source, or something you have written in your own words that can be traced back to the source

Step 4. Your next step is to develop a **plan of action** for each cause. Start by thinking of at least one way you can *solve the cause* you chose. This solution will be your **GOAL** for your chosen cause.

Do this by answering either of these questions:

- How can you improve a situation by acting on cause #1? **and/or**
- What do you want to see happen?

Step 5. Now that you have a solution or goal, fill in at least 3 steps you will need to take to realise each goal i.e. your **ACTION STEPS**. Ask yourself:

- What do we need to do to achieve each goal? What needs to happen or what do you need to do to achieve this goal?

Step 6. With your goal and action steps, think of any **RISKS** each **action step** might have. Ask yourself:

- What could undermine this action step? What could this step influence negatively? How will this step affect the outcome of the action?
- Also make sure that this step impacts the problem you are addressing.

Step 7. Once you have listed a potential risk for each action step, come up with a way to **RESPOND** to each risk. Ask yourself:

- How can we eliminate or contain this risk?
- If you cannot find a response to the risk, you might need to rethink your action step.

Step 8. Lastly, using all this information, tell me what your **POSITION** is!

i.e. Given the **PROBLEM**, the various **CAUSES**, the **EVIDENCE** you have gathered for your chosen cause, the **GOALS**, the **ACTION STEPS**, the **RISKS** and the **RESPONSES** you have found:

My position on the issue is (i.e. South Africans vote using long term influences)

This example shows you what a completed position statement outline will look like:

Position Statement:						
YES, OLDER SOUTH AFRICANS VOTE BASED ON LONG TERM INFLUENCES BUT WITH SOME WORK POLITICAL PARTIES CAN USE SHORT TERM INFLUENCES TO AFFECT YOUNGER VOTERS' BEHAVIOUR.						
<u>Problem</u>	Cause	Evidence	Goal	Action Step	Risk	Response
In SA, voting behaviour tends to reflect the country's political history	<u>Cause #1:</u> Voters rely on party loyalty rather than issues to make their voting choice	1. Voters use liberation symbolism to help them identify the party they vote for	1. Get the youth involved in these local government elections by talking to them about short term influences such as an issue that currently affects them e.g. Rising costs of public transport	1. Hold rallies on university campuses to explain the problem and propose solutions	1. No one will attend	1. Send out invites on Facebook, Twitter, Email
				2. Conduct a Twitter campaign highlighting why transport costs are so high	2. UP students do not use Twitter; they do not have access	2. Circulate the Twitter posts via email to students or announce the Twitter posts on campus radio
				3. Write Facebook posts about other political parties and their plans to solve rising transport costs	3. No one reads or follows our Facebook page	3. Ask student representatives to encourage their classes to "friend" the Facebook page so they will receive new posts notifications
	<u>List Cause #2</u>					
<u>List Cause #3</u>						

- Don't forget that you need to have a bibliography at the end.
- You need to have hyperlinks (where possible) to texts that you are referring to
- You won't actually submit this outline for publication, you will instead use the outline to write your opinion piece i.e. your argument that justifies your position.