

Argumentative Essay Rubric

Grades English I-IV

Key Argumentative Elements: Arguable claim · Evidence with commentary · Counterargument · Concession/Refutation · Audience awareness

Score Point	Organization / Structure	Development & Support	Critical Thinking	Language & Conventions
Score Point 4 – Accomplished	Skillfully structured with a clear, compelling introduction that establishes context and a focused, arguable claim. Body paragraphs are logically sequenced and unified around the claim. At least one counterargument is identified and substantively refuted or conceded and qualified. Conclusion reinforces the claim and extends thinking rather than merely restating. Transitions are purposeful and enhance the progression of argument.	Claim is fully developed with specific, well-chosen evidence (textual, experiential, or reasoned) that is thoroughly explained and clearly linked to the claim. Commentary goes well beyond surface-level interpretation, demonstrating sophisticated analysis of why and how the evidence supports the position. Writer clearly distinguishes between claim, evidence, and commentary.	Outstanding critical thinking throughout. Writer takes a nuanced position, anticipates opposition, and engages with complexity rather than oversimplifying. Reasoning is logical, consistent, and persuasive. Writer demonstrates clear awareness of audience and rhetorical purpose.	Word choice is purposeful, precise, and rhetorically effective. Sentences are varied in structure and length, contributing to voice and persuasive impact. Consistent command of standard English conventions. Minor errors, if present, do not disrupt fluency or meaning.
Score Point 3 – Proficient	Clear introduction establishes the claim. Body paragraphs are generally organized and focused on the argument. A counterargument is acknowledged, though the refutation or concession may not be fully developed. Conclusion addresses the claim. Transitions are present and mostly effective.	Claim is developed with relevant evidence that is explained and linked to the argument. Commentary is present and analytical but may occasionally be surface-level or incomplete. Writer generally distinguishes between evidence and interpretation.	Competent critical thinking. Writer maintains a consistent position and recognizes at least some complexity in the issue. Reasoning is mostly sound, with only minor lapses in logic or persuasive development.	Word choice is generally clear and appropriate to an argumentative purpose. Sentences demonstrate some variety. Adequate command of conventions. Some errors may appear but do not significantly disrupt fluency or meaning.
Score Point 2 – Developing	Recognizable structure, but the introduction may be weak and the claim may not be clearly arguable. Body paragraphs may lack internal organization or drift from the central argument. A counterargument may be absent or simply listed without refutation. Conclusion may only restate the introduction. Transitions are attempted but weak or formulaic.	A claim is present but underdeveloped. Evidence may be vague, insufficient, or not clearly explained in relation to the argument. Commentary is minimal or missing. Essay may rely heavily on summary or assertion without analysis.	Limited critical thinking. Writer takes a position but does not engage with complexity or opposing views in a meaningful way. Reasoning may be simplistic, circular, or inconsistently applied.	Word choice may be general or imprecise and does not consistently establish a persuasive tone. Sentences show limited variety. Errors in conventions are present and occasionally disrupt fluency, though the reader can generally follow the writing.
Score Point 1 – Beginning	Essay lacks a functional organizational structure. Claim may be absent, unclear, or not arguable. Ideas are presented randomly or repetitively. Essay lacks a clear introduction, body, or conclusion. Transitions are absent or ineffective.	Development is weak or absent. Little or no evidence is provided, or evidence is irrelevant and unexplained. Essay amounts to unsupported assertion or a list of opinions with no analytical connection to a claim.	Minimal critical thinking. Writer fails to sustain a position or engage seriously with the issue. Reasoning is flawed, absent, or largely circular.	Word choice is vague, limited, or inappropriate to the task. Sentences may be awkward, simplistic, or uncontrolled. Persistent errors in conventions create disruptions in fluency and may interfere with meaning.

Vertical Differentiation Note: The criteria above remain constant across English I-IV. Grade-level calibration lives in the task and text complexity – not the rubric. A Score Point 4 in English I reflects grade-appropriate mastery; a Score Point 4 in English IV reflects the heightened analytical, evaluative, and rhetorical demands of TEKS E4. Score holistically: determine which score point best describes the overall performance, then confirm against individual dimensions.