

Step-by-Step: Counterclaim and Rebuttal

Step 1: Write a counterclaim.

Write a sentence that contradicts the claim. For example, if your thesis says, *“Everyone should eat chocolate ice cream,”* then your counterclaim might be, *“Some people are allergic to chocolate.”*

Practice: Write your claim here:

Now write a counterclaim for it:

Step 2: Explain the counterclaim.

The more “real” you make the opposing position, the more “right” you will seem when you disprove it. For example, *“People who are allergic will want to avoid eating chocolate ice cream.”*

Practice: Write one or two sentences elaborating on your counterclaim:

Step 3: Rebut the counterclaim.

Write a response to the counterclaim that shows why it is wrong or unimportant. For example, *“Ice cream manufacturers can use artificial ingredients to duplicate the flavor of chocolate. This makes it possible for people who are allergic to chocolate to eat “chocolate” ice cream without risking an allergic reaction.*

Practice: Write one or two sentences to rebut your counterclaim:

Some things to remember:

- **Make the counterclaim real.**

You will not fool anyone by misrepresenting people who disagree with you; in fact, you will only weaken your own position because you will appear to fear the truth. Bring up a counterclaim that represents a (seemingly) valid objection to your claim.

- **Never write a counterclaim you cannot rebut.**

Bringing up the opposing viewpoint and then failing to show why it is wrong will cause your audience to doubt that your position is the only right one (which is the point of persuasion, after all).

- **Make it clear that you do not agree with the counterclaim.**

Do not allow your audience to think you are simply contradicting yourself. How can you persuade someone to accept your claim if you sound like you do not completely accept it?

- **Do not repeat a reason you have already given to rebut the counterclaim.**

The rebuttal should focus specifically on the objection in the counterclaim. If you merely repeat what you have already said, your audience will assume you cannot think of an effective response.

- **You are allowed to have more than one rebuttal.**

The more reasons you can give to show that the counterclaim is wrong, the better.