### Refutation Paragraphs

The refutation paragraph is normally found ONLY in argument essays and argument research papers; it is also known as the *concession* paragraph. When students are writing an argumentative essay, they need to **acknowledge the valid points** of the opposing argument, otherwise writers sound narrow-minded and thereby less effective. So an effective refutation paragraph **establishes the ethos**, or the writer's credibility with his/her audience. Rather than weakening the paper, a good concession paragraph will actually strengthen the essay by showing that the writer has thoughtfully considered both sides of the argument before arriving at the final argumentative position.

Be careful though, writers don't want the other side of the argument to sound better than his/her own. One way of avoiding this is by answering or **countering** any of the points the other argument has.

*The refutation paragraphs typically:*  
- Introduce the Opposing Argument  
- Acknowledge parts of the opposition that are valid  
- Counter the Argument  
- Introduce the Conclusion

### Introduce the Opposing Argument

The writer **summarizes the opposition's** viewpoint openly and honestly. Ignoring the opposition is futile in that the audience is aware of the opposing arguments and will doubt the credibility of a presentation that chooses to ignore the opposition rather than deal with it.

*Ways writers can begin:*  
The claim _______ is not completely inaccurate.  
- It is often argued that...  
- It is true that...  
- Opposing views claim...

### Acknowledge parts of the opposition that are valid

The writer acknowledges that **some of the opposition's claims** may be valid, but the writer still shows that his **own claims are stronger**. The strength of the writer's claims are more convincing than the opposing viewpoints. A writer might explain the opposition’s weakest points, contrasting them with his argument’s strongest points.

*Ways writers can begin:*  
- Admittedly,  
- Certainly,  
- Of course,  
- One cannot deny that...  
- At the same time...
### Counter the Argument

Introduce the **rebuttal** of the concession argument. The writer **refutes the opposition's claims** showing they are incorrect or inconsequential--not a real problem.

**Ways writers can begin:**
- Nevertheless,
- However,
- On the other hand,
- Despite this argument,
- …, but... (only within a sentence!)

### Introduce the Conclusion

The conclusion should **summarize** why the counter argument is not a sufficient solution.

**Ways writers can begin**
- Thus,
- Therefore,
- As a result,

Sometimes writers might just want to restate his/her position simply.

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*Please note that these are not all-inclusive ways to write a refutation paragraph. There are many other transitions that can used within the paragraph, and there are other formats that can be used to construct the paragraph. It is important to use the transitions and format that best serve your purposes and to use this as a guideline and a starting point, not as a concrete example of what must be done.*
Charter Schools Vs. Public Schools (School Choice)
By Mark Liles

Thesis: School choice turns out to not only be a bad idea; it’s also a violation of our constitution.

Refutation: [Introduce Opposing Arguments] Considering the many challenges facing public schools, it's understandable that many people would be eager to pursue new options. Supporters of school choice point out that under the current public school system, parents with economic means already exercise school choice by moving from areas with failing or dangerous schools to neighborhoods with better, safer schools. Their argument is that school choice would allow all parents the freedom, regardless of income level, to select the school that provides the best education (Chub and Moe). Schools would then have to compete for students by offering higher academic results and greater safety. Schools unable to measure up to the standards of successful schools would fail and possibly close. [Acknowledge Valid Parts] Activists within the school choice movement can be applauded for seeking to improve public education, but the changes they propose would in fact seriously damage public education as a whole.

[Counter Arguments] One of the biggest dangers of school choice is the power behind large corporations specializing in opening and operating charter schools. Two notable companies are Green Dot, which is the leading public school operator in Los Angeles (Green Dot), and KIPP, which operates 65 schools in 19 different states [KIPP]. These companies represent a growing trend of privatization of public schools by large corporations. It is feared that these corporations could grow to a point that public control of education would be lost. Education policy would be left in the hands of entrepreneurial think tanks, corporate boards of directors, and lobbyists who are more interested in profit than educating students [Miller and Gerson]. [Begin Concluding] Education should be left in the hands of professional educators and not business people with MBAs. To do otherwise is not only dangerous, it defies common sense.

What I liked about this refutation: The writer calmly and clearly outlines the true concerns and reasons why people oppose the opinion. He makes sure the reader knows that he is outlining opposing viewpoints because he gives hints like "Supporters of school choice point out that..." or "Their argument is that..." This is a nice way for readers to be aware of what others think.

Also, towards the end of the first paragraph, and throughout the second paragraph, the writer spends time clearly attacking these opposing views. He helps the reader feel like the opposing views might SEEM good on the surface, but they are indeed not good enough. He helps the reader see this with hints like "One of the biggest dangers of school choice is..." or "It is feared that..." This paragraph particularly draws in any hostile readers; the writer cunningly draws them in by complimenting their views when he says "Activists within the school choice movement can be applauded for seeking to improve public education," but he immediately points out the flaws, saying that "the changes they propose would in fact seriously damage public education as a whole." Complementing the opposing argument really invites all your hesitant readers; they’re not threatened, and they’re now more willing to listen to the arguments. Finally, at the end of the refutation, there is a clear conclusion.