

Many times writers in high school or college must convey two contrasting ideas. This situation usually arises when students write about a controversial topic and they must take a position (**express their opinion**) about the two ideas.

Too often, students lack those **syntactic structures** or **containers** in which to “pour” their ideas. This worksheet provides students with some of these structures and exercises to practice expressing their ideas about controversial issues.

Two Examples That Indicate the Writer’s Opinion:

- A. Those who support legalizing marijuana claim that the recreational use of marijuana is less dangerous than alcohol and that the tax benefits are huge. However, a more accurate assessment of this issue would be that the recreational use of marijuana leads to serious developmental issues in teenagers and considerably more incidents of driving under the influence.
- B. Those who support keeping the recreational use of marijuana illegal claim that the use of marijuana leads to serious developmental issues in teenagers and considerably more incidents of driving under the influence. However, a more accurate assessment of this issue would be that marijuana is less dangerous than alcohol and that the tax benefits are huge.

In **example A**, the writer is **against legalizing marijuana**. We can tell by the words “a more accurate assessment.” Notice that two ideas are presented, the idea of those in favor of legalizing marijuana and the idea of those opposed to legalizing marijuana. By the words “a more accurate assessment” the writer in **example A** is clearly **against** it.

In **example B**, the writer is **in favor of legalizing marijuana**. Why? Because “a more accurate assessment” is that “marijuana is less dangerous than alcohol and that the tax benefits are huge.” The diction clearly indicates that the writer in **example B** is clearly **in favor** of legalizing marijuana.

Good persuasive or argumentative writing is not merely a matter of “pouring” ideas into an existing structure. The structures help, but in every case, you must think what you want to say about the issue, what makes most sense to you and to your reader.

Some Structures You Can Use to Communicate Contrasting Ideas:

- People who favor _____ suggest that _____. However, the truth of the matter is that _____.
- Proponents of _____ claim that _____. However, a more accurate view of this issue is that _____.
- Opponents of _____ argue that _____, but more realistically, _____.
- Those who are in favor of _____, but clearly, the more rational perspective is that _____.
- Well-meaning but misguided voters believe that _____. In contrast, those who have thought deeply about this issue believe that _____.
- Those who oppose _____, but a more pragmatic approach is to _____.

Exercises: Express two contrasting ideas about the given issue. Take a position and state it clearly.

1. Amnesty for illegal aliens (or undocumented immigrants – depending on your viewpoint)

2. Parental consent for underage women or girls having abortions (or terminating a pregnancy)

3. Marriage equality (or same-sex marriage)

4. Cell phones as educational tools

5. Use of uniforms in middle schools
