

AI and Persuasion: Anticipating Objections

Why?	
A common element of persuasion is identifying possible objections or differing points of view, and then refuting or diminishing them. This lesson helps students with the challenging process of brainstorming likely objections. By mastering the skill of anticipating and addressing objections, students strengthen their own arguments and develop a deeper understanding of the topic at hand. This AI-aided critical thinking exercise encourages them to explore various perspectives, enhancing their ability to engage in nuanced discussions and debates.	
Materials Needed	Time needed
Computers or tablets with internet access for each student or pair of students. Access to a generative AI application, such as ChatGPT.	Approximately 45 - 60 minutes
Objectives	
Students will be able to identify potential objections to their argumentative positions using generative AI tools like ChatGPT. Students will be able to construct well-reasoned responses to anticipated objections, demonstrating critical thinking and problem-solving skills.	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Counterargument: An argument made to oppose another argument, typically used in persuasive writing or debates to anticipate and refute potential objections. Rebuttal: A response to a counterargument, where the original argument is defended against the objection.	
Lesson	
This lesson would be most effective as a part of a lesson in which students are preparing persuasive speeches or essays. The ideal point to use this lesson is when students have identified their topics and compiled several supports for their position. (see example at end of plan.) Objective Sharing: Briefly outline the lesson's objectives and the importance of anticipating objections in persuasive arguments. Rhetorical Strategy Brief: Explain the concept of identifying and countering objections as part of building a strong argument. Live Demo: Use a projector or shared screen to demonstrate how to use a generative AI app, such as ChatGPT. Choose a simple topic, state a position, and then input it into the chat to generate potential objections. (sample prompt attached)	

Response Generation: Show how to ask the chatbot to suggest responses to the generated objections, emphasizing the importance of reasoning and evidence.

Topic Selection: Have students write down their positions.

Anticipating Objections: Students will use the AI chatbot to identify potential objections to their positions. Encourage them to seek different perspectives to cover a range of counterarguments.

Crafting Responses: Guide students to work with the chatbot to develop reasoned responses to each objection. They should aim for clarity, conciseness, and persuasiveness.

Pair and Share: Have students pair up to present their position, anticipated objections, and responses. Partners can offer feedback and suggest additional objections or improvements to responses.

Class Sharing: Select a few pairs to share their findings with the class, discussing the strengths of their arguments and the effectiveness of their responses.

Explaining the Next Step: If this lesson is offered as a part of a persuasive speech or essay unit, explain that students will incorporate the AI-aided ideas into their outline.

Lesson Summary: Highlight the key takeaways from the lesson, emphasizing how anticipating objections can strengthen arguments and improve persuasive skills.

Discussion Questions

What did you find most challenging about anticipating objections to your position? How did considering potential objections change your perspective on your original position?

In what ways did collaborating with an AI chatbot influence your approach to formulating responses to objections?

What strategies did you find most effective for constructing strong responses to objections?

Did any of the objections or responses surprise you? Why or why not?

What role do you think emotion plays in persuading others? Was it easier or harder to counter emotional objections with logic?

Supplemental Activity Ideas

Debate Club: Organize a debate club where students can choose or be assigned positions on various topics, encouraging them to use logos, ethos, and pathos to construct and defend their arguments, as well as to anticipate and counter objections from their opponents.

Persuasive Blog Post: Assign students to write a blog post on a topic of their choice, aiming to persuade their readers using a balanced mix of logos, ethos, and pathos. This activity enhances their written persuasive skills and understanding of audience engagement.

Types of Persuasive Appeal: Have students create a multimedia presentation on a topic that they are passionate about, using logos, ethos, and pathos to persuade their audience. This activity allows students to explore persuasive techniques across different media formats, such as slideshows, videos, and audio recordings.

Example

User: Given this topic and supports, provide me with three brief likely objections that might be raised.

Topic - Homework should be eliminated.

Supports -

1. Homework contributes to student stress and burnout, detracting from their well-being and overall quality of life.
2. Research shows that excessive homework does not significantly improve academic outcomes for students in elementary and middle school.
3. Eliminating homework would allow more time for extracurricular activities, family engagement, and rest, leading to a more balanced and productive student life.

ChatGPT: Given the topic and supports for eliminating homework, here are three brief likely objections that might be raised:

1. Homework is essential for reinforcing learning outside the classroom and helps students practice and understand the material better.
2. Homework teaches students important life skills such as time management, responsibility, and self-discipline.
3. Without homework, students might spend their free time on unproductive activities, missing out on valuable educational opportunities.

User: Give me a brief statement (no more than 10 words) that gives me an idea to counter each of those arguments, ideally in line with the topic and supports already stated above.

ChatGPT:

1. Classroom strategies can effectively replace homework for reinforcement.
2. Project-based learning teaches life skills without homework stress.
3. Free time fosters creativity and personal growth beyond academics.