

## Analyzing Viewpoints on Current Controversies

**Assignment:** Students will find, read, and analyze opposing viewpoints on a current controversy. After carefully reading and taking notes on articles that present these opposing viewpoints, students will write two paragraphs—one summarizing the main points of each side. They will conclude with a third paragraph explaining which argument they found most convincing, and why. (It is possible that the most convincing argument is one with which students disagree.)

**Preparation:** Present a list of possible relevant topics about which students can find opposing views. Consulting the databases *Points of View Reference Center* and *Issues and Controversies* may help you identify controversies with readily available sources. Consider modeling the summarizing skills in class by handing out two articles and then summarizing positions in outline form on the board. Ideally this can be integrated into a discussion of actual course material.

**Library session:** During the library session, a librarian will introduce students to databases, such as *Points of View* and *Issues and Controversies*. The librarian will show students how to find articles by using these databases. Students will be given time to work on the assignment during the library session; they should be able to find the necessary information by the end of the session. In addition, the librarian will show them tools that will help students cite their sources properly. If you don't have time for an entire session, a librarian can visit your class and show students the basics in a 15-minute demonstration. Students would then have to conduct research outside of class.

**Tips:** Urge students to jot down the main points of each argument. They should look for logical transitions (therefore, consequently, thus) that might signal the connection between facts and conclusions. Challenge students to carefully distinguish between the facts and the arguments the facts are supporting. Students should ask if the two articles are actually arguing about the same topic or are addressing related but different subtopics. Have students jot down three reasons why they find one position weaker than the other.

**Information Literacy Learning Outcomes:** This assignment requires students to demonstrate proficiency in the following outcomes:

- Choose appropriate resources to search for relevant information
- Implement a variety of search strategies to find information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate resources critically
- Cite research in an appropriate documentation style