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| Communication Skills: Building an Argument | |
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| When you express an opinion, you also have to back it up with supporting points to build a strong and persuasive argument. In Canada, we first express our opinion, then we provide supporting points for that opinion. We then conclude with our opinion again. This structure is different from cultures, in which people first provide background information and supporting points and then express their opinion.  Here are phrases to use for your supporting points.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * For example…. * Here is why…. | * Let me explain… * To illustrate… |   We often put sequence markers in front of our supporting points.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * First… * Second… * Next… | * Also… * In addition… * Finally… |   Here are phrases to use with your conclusion.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * Anybody can see that… * Obviously * It’s plain to see that… * Therefore… | * If …….. is true, then…. * We can conclude that… * Evidently… * The evidence clearly suggests…. | | |

*A. Underline the phrases for supporting points in the argument below.*

Claude: Which *Star Wars* movie do you think is the best?

Kate: I think the Return of the Jedi is the best.

Claude: Why?

Kate: Well, first, it has something for everyone---humour, action, romance and special effects. For example, there is great interplay between Luke Skywalker and Han Solo. And there is romance between Princess Leia and Han Solo. And of course, it has the usual George Lucas special effects.  
  
Claude: Anything else?

Kate: Yeah. It is also the most optimistic of all the movies. We left the theatre thinking that the world was going to be a better place. Most of the other episodes are pretty dark when you think about it.

Claude: I would have to agree on that.

Kate: And finally, you just can’t beat the great scenes between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader.

*B. Put the groups of sentences in order to make a good argument. Note that more than one order may be possible. Compare your order with a partner and discuss your choices. Then rewrite the sentences into a paragraph and add words and phrases from above to create a strong argument.*

1. Meryl Streep

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ She has been nominated for an Academy Award twelve times and won twice.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ She has been nominated for a Golden Globe Award four times and won four times.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Meryl Streep is the most accomplished actress of the 1980’s and 1990’s.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ She is most well-known for her ability to take on different accents.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ She has worked in TV and film and also on the stage.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Meryl Streep’s accomplishments are unrivalled by any other actress in recent years.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ She has done all kinds of films, including comedy, drama and adventure movies.

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2. Downtown versus the Suburbs

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ You can walk every in the city so you get a lot of exercise.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ It is better to live in the downtown part of a city than in the suburbs.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ There is a wide selection of stores.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ You use less money because you can walk or take public transportation to different places.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Studies show that downtown living is a healthier lifestyle.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Living downtown is much better than living in the suburbs.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ There is a wide selection of restaurants and pubs.

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3. Cats and Dogs

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ They don’t need to be taken for a walk.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ They can be trained very quickly in how to use kitty litter.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Cats make better pets than dogs.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I pity anyone who gets a dog rather than a cat.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ They don’t bark whenever there is a noise outside.

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*C. Write a good argument about the statements given below. Start by agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. Write at least one paragraph for each topic.*

1. High school students should wear a uniform.

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2. Success in your career is more important than your family.

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3. Music at a live concert is better than recorded music.

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*D. Find someone in the class who has a different opinion from you on one of the statements above. Debate the topic with this person.*