

**RHETORICAL
STRATEGIES:**

REFUTATION

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- ❖ disprove a claim
- ❖ disagree with a claim
- ❖ question the assumptions made or suggested
- ❖ refutation does NOT prove that you are right
- ❖ refutation proves *only* that the other side is *probably* wrong

REFUTATION

I. Refutation through **DEFINITION**:

- o define, clarify, or redefine the key terms in the claim

II. Refutation through **QUALIFICATION**:

- o suggest that the claim is an overgeneralization that needs certain qualifiers
- o “*many*” or “*most*” or “*a preponderance*” or “*a majority*” or “*several*”
- o instead of “*all*” or “*none*” or “*every*”
 - (everyone, everything, every)

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III. Refutation through **EXAMPLES**: **

- o the most common method
- o use *specific* instances & examples
 - name names or titles
 - or dates & times
 - to demonstrate exceptions

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❖ Do NOT try to refute the claim

by *attacking the person*. **

- o argue the point, not the person making the point
- o ethos breakdown
- o *ad hominem*: logical fallacy

REFUTATION

WHY Use Refutation in Your Essay:

- ❖ **When sides are polarized on a controversial issue**
 - If there are only 2 sides & you demonstrate weaknesses in your opponent's argument, then **your side looks better**
 - BUT your side is NOT proven right
 - *gun control, politics, gay marriage, abortion, war, ...*

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WHY Use Refutation in Your Essay:

❖ “Deconstruction”:

- o “Decenter” your opponent’s argument by attacking its core, center, heart
- o Without a center, their argument cannot hold

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WHY Use Refutation in Your Essay:

- ❖ Similarly, pointing out flaws in your opponent's logic
 - o demonstrates your insight & logic
 - o builds your **ethos**
 - o forces them to reconsider or clarify or rethink

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WHY Use Refutation in Your Essay:

- ❖ Thoroughly examining your opponent's claims, grounds, and warrants
- ❖ Helps establish or build your **ethos**
 - Since you demonstrate careful analysis,
 - Your credibility rises

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WHY Use Refutation in Your Essay:

❖ Pointing out counter-arguments

- o Is not just criticizing
- o moves the argument along
 - Side #3
 - Clarification



END