do not agonize over the first sentences because you are likely to discover the best way to begin only after you have written a rough draft.

Draft your position argument.

By this point, you have done a lot of writing to

- Devise a focused, well-presented issue and take a position on it
- Frame your issue so that readers will be open to your argument
- Support your position with reasons and evidence your readers will find persuasive
- Refute or concede alternative viewpoints on the issue
- Organize your ideas to make them clear, logical, and effective for readers

Now stitch that material together to create a draft. The next two parts of this Guide to Writing will help you evaluate and improve that draft.

Evaluating the Draft: Getting a Critical Reading

Your instructor may arrange a peer review session in class or online, where you can exchange drafts with your classmates and give each other a thoughtful critical reading—pointing out what works well and suggesting ways to improve the draft. A good critical reading does three things:

1. It lets the writer know how the reader understands the point of the argument.
2. It praises what works best.
3. It indicates where the draft could be improved and makes suggestions how to improve it.

One strategy for evaluating a draft is to use the basic features of a position argument as a guide.

A CRITICAL READING GUIDE

A Focused, Well-Presented Issue

How well does the writer present the issue?

Summarize: Tell the writer what you understand the issue to be. If you were already familiar with it and understand it differently, briefly explain.

Praise: Give an example from the essay where the issue and its significance come across effectively.

Critique: Tell the writer where more information about the issue is needed, where more might be done to establish its seriousness, or how the issue could be framed or reframed in a way that would better prepare readers for the argument.
How well does the writer argue in support of the position?

**Summarize:** Underline the thesis statement and the main reasons.

**Praise:** Give an example in the essay where the argument is especially effective; for example, indicate which reason is especially convincing or which supporting evidence is particularly compelling.

**Critique:** Tell the writer where the argument could be strengthened; for example, indicate how the thesis statement could be made clearer or more appropriately qualified, how the argument could be developed, or where additional support is needed.

How effectively has the writer responded to others' reasons and likely objections?

**Summarize:** Identify where the writer responds to a reason others use to support their argument or an objection they have to the writer's argument.

**Praise:** Give an example in the essay where a concession seems particularly well done or a refutation is convincing.

**Critique:** Tell the writer how a concession or refutation could be made more effective, a reason or objection the writer should respond to, or where common ground could be found.

How clearly and logically has the writer organized the argument?

**Summarize:** Find the sentence(s) in which the writer states the thesis and forecasts supporting reasons, as well as transitions or repeated key words and phrases.

**Praise:** Give an example of how or where the essay succeeds in being especially easy to read, perhaps in its overall organization, clear presentation of the thesis, clear transitions, or effective opening or closing.

**Critique:** Tell the writer where the readability could be improved. Can you, for example, suggest better forecasting or clearer transitions? If the overall organization of the essay needs work, make suggestions for rearranging parts or strengthening connections.

Before concluding your peer review, be sure to address any of the writer's concerns that have not been discussed already.

**Making Comments Electronically**  Most word processing software offers features that allow you to insert comments directly into the text of someone else’s document. Many readers prefer to make their comments this way because it tends to be faster than writing on hard copy and space is virtually unlimited; it also eliminates the process of deciphering handwritten comments. Where such features are not available, simply typing comments directly into a document in a contrasting color can provide the same advantages.