



# Pro/Con Arguments

## How Do I... Undergraduate Research Guides

Part of the "Finding Specific Kinds of Information Series"

### In this guide you will learn how to:

- Explain why you should use a pro-con argument
- Know when to use a pro-con argument
- Locate information about pro-con arguments in a variety of sources

### Need More Help? Ask a Librarian!

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## Why use pro or con arguments?

Readers are forced to confront multiple points of view when analyzing pro and con arguments. This enables readers to consider more facets of an issue and to develop a better understanding of the issue.

## When to use pro/con arguments?

Pro or Con arguments often deal with current, controversial topics. As you begin to search for information keep in mind the dates when your topic was of particular interest. You are most likely to get the best results in your search for topics of national, rather than local or regional, interest.

## General Search Tips:

- Avoid using the terms pro and con in your search, unless the issue frequently uses pro- or con- to identify supporters of the position (i.e. pro-life or pro-choice).
- Read the abstracts, when available, as these will provide you with a brief summary of the writer's viewpoint.
- Finding resources that support a given position might require a familiarity with the discourse surrounding the issue.
- As you become more familiar with the arguments for both sides, reconsider your search terms and keywords.
- Remember that pro/con stakeholders may be arguing or emphasizing very different points.
- An article that supports one side of an issue might contain valuable information about the other; don't rule out an article simply because it's not written from "your side".

# Finding Pro/Con Arguments:

## The Undergraduate Library

Several books compile materials that support either or both positions of a given issue. Search for these in the Online Catalog. Examples include the titles in these series:

- Contemporary World Issues
- Current Controversies
- Information Plus
- Opposing Viewpoints
- Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial...

## Online Databases

Located via the Undergraduate Library Find Articles Guide: <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/ugl/find/articleguide.html>

To enter the databases:

- From the Undergraduate Library home page, click on Articles in the Find category on the left side of the screen.
- The databases included under Starting Points (Multi-Subject Databases) and Newspapers will provide good starting points for finding pro/con sources. But you can explore some of the others, depending on your topic.

Recommended databases for locating Pro or Con Arguments:

- CQ Researcher
  - Every CQ Researcher Report includes a Pro/Con section.
- Periodical Abstracts
  - Use the Limit to: feature and select either Commentary or Editorial under Article Type.
- Academic Search Premier
  - Go to the Limit your results section of the page and in the Document Type category select Editorial.
- Business Source Premier (under Business)
  - Go to the Limit your results section of the page and in the Document Type category select Editorial.
- JSTOR (under History)
  - Click on the Advanced Search link and In “Limit by”, select Editorial

## On the Internet

You may be tempted to rely solely on websites for pro/con arguments. While there is certainly no lack of opinions available online, you'll still need to consider the author's profession, political alignment, and obvious biases.

Before you begin, see the Undergraduate Library's Guide to Evaluating Internet Sources for tips (<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/ugl/howdoi/webeval.html>).

- Electronic Policy Network click on the For the Press tab to: "Get facts, quotes, and breaking information... on issues ranging from health care to childcare and economics to foreign policy." <http://www.movingideas.org/>
- Ethics Updates compiles several valuable resources for several topics of applied ethics. <http://ethics.acusd.edu/index.asp>
- Issues and Press of the U.S. Department of State lists issues of national interest and provides information to contextualize the issue. <http://www.state.gov/issuesandpress/>
- Radical Religious Right includes the websites of groups both opposed to and aligned with "the religious right." This will provide ample opportunity to read for bias! <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/www/RRR/rrrpage.html>
- Social Issues provides the websites of several pro/con advocate groups for a number of topics. <http://www.multcolib.org/homework/sochc.html>

**Check out other How Do I... Guides in this series, Finding Specific Kinds of Information:**

- Finding Criticisms
- Finding Current Events
- Finding Editorials
- Finding Local & Regional Information
- Finding Primary Sources
- Finding Reviews
- Finding Statistics