

Four-Step Refutation

Step 1: Restate (“They say...”)

Step 2: Refute (“But...”)

Step 3: Support (“Because...”)

Step 4: Conclude (“Therefore....”)

Step 1: Restate. The first part of refutation is for a student to restate the argument being challenged. You concisely and fairly summarize the opposing argument; the cue “They say...” (or “Some say...” or “Mary said...”) is helpful. Don’t use the second person (“You say...”) when restating arguments to avoid becoming too personal. You do not need to restate in detail the argument they’d like to refute; a summary is fine.

- Speaker 1: “School should be year round.”
- Speaker 2: “Speaker one says that school should be year round.”

Step 2: Refute. Here, state their objection to a point in a simple sentence. Use the verbal cue “but....” You can also say “But I disagree...” for simple disagreement.

- Speaker 1: “School should be year round.”
- Speaker 2: “Speaker one says that school should be year round, but school should last for only nine months.”

Step 3: Support. This part of refutation parallels the “RE” (reasoning and evidence) in ARE. Use “because,” to try to provide examples to support your reasoning:

- Speaker 1: “School should be year round.”
- Speaker 2: “Speaker one says that school should be year round, but school should last for only nine months, because students need time off to do other things like play sports and go on family vacations.”

Step 4: Conclude. You attempt to wrap up their refutations with a comparison, a contrast or some kind of statement that resolves two opposing ideas. The verbal cue “therefore” in this part of the process helps you approach the argument logically.

- Speaker 1: “School should be year round.”
- Speaker 2: “Speaker one says that school should be year round, but school should last for only nine months, because students need time off to do other things like play sports and go on family vacations. Therefore, year-round school is bad for students.”