Guided argumentative outline practice

Use a fictional brief to build a supported argument, examine a worked outline, then revise your own plan. For individual writing practice; follow your actual assignment requirements. No grading or learning outcome is guaranteed.

Read a brief before choosing a position

Practice task: Write an outline for a 500–700-word proposal to the coordinator of a fictional community study room. Recommend one booking policy. Use only the brief below. Address a reasonable objection. You are planning an argument, not writing the final essay.

Fictional practice brief — invented solely for this exercise:

- The room is open from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and holds one group at a time.
- During one fictional five-day observation, four groups arrived to find the room already occupied. The log does not say how many total groups visited or how long each group stayed.
- A volunteer can update a paper booking sheet at the entrance, but cannot supervise the room continuously.
- Some groups need a full hour. Others want a short discussion. Nobody has surveyed which option most users prefer.
- The coordinator will consider a two-week trial. No new software or paid staff can be added during that trial.

Option A: First come, first served, with no advance booking.

Option B: Thirty-minute bookings on a paper sheet, with one adjacent slot allowed if nobody else has reserved it.

Before outlining: Name the reader, decision and constraint. Underline what the brief establishes. Circle what remains unknown. Do not turn four unsuccessful arrivals into a percentage: the denominator is missing. Do not claim most visitors prefer booking: preferences were not measured.

Examine a worked argumentative outline

Working thesis: The coordinator should trial thirty-minute paper bookings for two weeks, allowing an adjacent unreserved slot, because this gives visitors a visible way to plan access while accommodating longer sessions without adding staff or software.

This is a recommendation with limits. It does not claim that booking has already improved access.

I. Introduction: establish the decision

- Context: a shared room has two hours of weekday availability and can serve one group at a time.
- Problem: four groups in the observation log found it occupied; overall demand is unknown.
- Thesis: trial Option B, including the adjacent-slot rule and a review date.

II. Make access visible

- Claim: a paper schedule would let a visitor see reserved periods before committing to a session.
- Evidence from the brief: volunteers can update a sheet at the entrance; four groups found the room occupied.
- Reasoning: visible reservations provide planning information absent from a first-come arrangement. This is a proposed mechanism, not a measured reduction in failed visits.
- Limitation: people who do not visit the entrance may still lack the information.

III. Accommodate different session lengths

- Claim: a thirty-minute base slot plus an available adjacent slot can accommodate short discussions and some hour-long sessions.
- Evidence from the brief: groups have different stated session needs; the room is open for two hours.
- Reasoning: four base slots fit the two-hour window. A group can use two adjacent unreserved slots for an hour, but cannot take time already reserved by someone else.
- Limitation: the brief does not establish that thirty minutes is the most popular or most effective slot length.

IV. Address an objection and specify a trial

- Objection: a paper schedule can be ignored, and an unstaffed room may have overruns.
- Fair response: the proposal does not eliminate those risks. Post the rules beside the sheet and let users record arrival conflicts or overruns voluntarily. Do not promise enforcement the volunteer cannot provide.
- Trial review: after two weeks, count recorded conflicts and overruns, collect optional comments, and compare cautiously with the earlier log. Differences in attendance and incomplete voluntary reporting limit the comparison.

V. Conclusion: restate the bounded recommendation

- Ask the coordinator to approve the trial and review date.
- Restate the low-resource planning benefit, without presenting expected benefits as proven results.
- Explain that the policy can be revised if the trial reveals persistent conflicts or unsuitable slot lengths.