



## Guidelines for Segmenting Persuasive Papers into Functional Elements

**The following guidelines can be used to insure that the functional elements of persuasive writing are addressed in persuasive papers.**

Functional elements include: (a) premise(s) for or against the topic, (b) reason(s) to support the premise or contrasting premise or to refute counterarguments, (c) elaborations on a premise, reason, another elaboration, or conclusion, and (d) conclusions. These elements may or may not occur in linear order in an essay. Nonfunctional elements include repetitions which do not serve some rhetorical purpose, and other information which is not relevant to the topic.

### Premise (P)

The premise represents the author's stated point of view about the topic. It is important to note that a premise should be able to stand alone (i.e., you should be able to infer the topic without looking at the essay prompt). Thus, an answer of "yes" and/or "no" without accompanying script to indicate what a yes or no means is not scored as a premise.

An essay can have more than one premise: an original premise (P) and a contrasting premise (cP). The original premise may be a statement that is: (a) affirmative ("I believe boys and girls should play sports together"), (b) negative ("Boys and girls should not play sports together" or "Boys and girls should play sports separately"), (c) combined ("I do and I don't believe that boys and girls should play sports together"), or (d) neither ("I don't believe that they should or they shouldn't be allowed to play sports together").

### Reason (R)

A reason is an explanation of why a writer believes a particular premise. Reasons can be stated to support an original and a contrasting premise. In addition, some reasons can refute a previously stated premise, reason, or elaboration.

### Examples:

"Children should not eat junk food (P) because it is bad for their teeth (R)."

"Children should not eat junk food (P) because it is fattening (R), messy (R), and will ruin their appetite (R). On the other hand, I think children should eat junk food (cP) because you need to have some comfort food (cR). Also, junk food is not really all that bad (cR), but you can't eat it all the time (rR)."

## Elaboration (E)

An elaboration is a conditional statement which modifies a premise, reason, another elaboration, or conclusion. Repetitions which serve a rhetorical purpose are also coded as an elaboration. Elaborations of nonfunctional text are also considered to be nonfunctional and are not counted.

### Examples:

“I think boys and girls should play sports together (P) as long as they are friendly towards each other (EP).”

“Girls and boys should not play sports together (P) because boys are better at sports (R). They are better at bowling, tennis, and football (ER).”

“Boys and girls should play sports together (P). It is good to play games together (R). If boys want to play soccer (ER), then girls should also be able to play (ER). Boys and girls shouldn't play sports together all the time (EP) because girls might play with dolls (EE).”

## Conclusion (C)

A conclusion closes the essay (“That is why I feel boys and girls should play sports together”). “The End” does not count as a conclusion.

### Example:

“They should definitely play sports together (C), then they'd be friends (EC).”

## Nonfunctional Units (NF)

Nonfunctional elements include repetitions which do not serve rhetorical purposes (NF/R) and other information that does not appear to be relevant to the topic or that cannot be coded as some type of functional element (NF/O). Thus, any unit of text that does not directly support or clarify an argument or counterargument is a nonfunctional text unit. Poor quality (i.e., weakness) of a reason or elaboration is not grounds for scoring it as nonfunctional.

### Examples:

“Children should have brothers and sisters (P). They should have sisters and brothers (NF/R).”

“It's better to be the only child (P). You can get a lot of toys (R) and a lot of shoes for Christmas (R). You can get a lot of shoes (NF/R).”

“I think boys and girls should play sports together (P). Here's how I would divide them into teams (NF/O).”

“It's good to be the only child (P). You don't have anybody telling you no all the time (R). I can play with my cousins (NF/O). So I can get more clothes (R) and shoes (R) and toys (R).”