Argument Writing: Claims, Reasons, Evidence, and Counterclaims

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

A Grade 7 argument (1) introduces a CLEAR CLAIM, (2) ACKNOWLEDGES alternate or opposing claims (a COUNTERCLAIM), (3) supports the claim with logical REASONING and RELEVANT EVIDENCE from credible sources, (4) uses precise TRANSITIONS to clarify the relationships among claim, counterclaim, reasons, and evidence, and (5) closes with a conclusion that follows from the argument. A counterclaim is NOT the writer's own claim restated - it is what the OTHER SIDE would say.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Student draft - Should Our School Ban Phones in Hallways?

Our middle school should ban student phones in the hallways between classes. A hallway phone ban would cut down on collisions during passing time, protect students from secretly recorded videos, and return four short minutes to the actual social life of the building. The phones would still be available at lunch and after school - only the four-minute passing periods would change.

First, hallway phones cause real collisions. Last spring our principal collected one month of nurse-office data and found that 14 of 22 minor injuries (sprained wrists, bumped foreheads, one broken pair of glasses) happened during passing periods to students who were looking down at a screen. That is not a feeling. That is a measurable safety problem with a measurable cause.

Second, hallway phones make it easy to record and share videos of classmates without their permission. A 2023 Pew Research survey of U.S. middle schoolers found that 46 percent had been recorded by a classmate at school without being asked, and most of those recordings happened in hallways or stairwells. A four-minute pause from screens would shrink that window.

Some students argue that a hallway phone ban would cut them off from family during the school day in case of emergency. That concern is real, and families deserve a way to reach their children. However, the school's front-office phone is already designated for family-to-student messages within five minutes, and a brief four-minute screen pause does not remove that channel. The problem is solvable without keeping phones in the hallways.

Phones are useful tools, and nobody is asking students to give them up. The proposal is narrow: lock the screens for four minutes between bells. For the safety, the dignity, and the rebuilt hallway conversations of every student in the building, our school should adopt a hallway phone ban for the next school year.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Read the student draft. Answer the questions about argument structure, claim, evidence, counterclaim, and revision.

1. Which sentence states the writer's MAIN CLAIM?

A. Phones are useful tools, and nobody is asking students to give them up.

B. Our middle school should ban student phones in the hallways between classes.

C. A 2023 Pew Research survey of U.S. middle schoolers found that 46 percent had been recorded by a classmate at school without being asked.

D. Some students argue that a hallway phone ban would cut them off from family during the school day in case of emergency.

2. Which sentence in the draft ACKNOWLEDGES A COUNTERCLAIM (an opposing position the writer must respond to)?

A. A hallway phone ban would cut down on collisions during passing time.

B. Last spring our principal collected one month of nurse-office data.

C. Some students argue that a hallway phone ban would cut them off from family during the school day in case of emergency.

D. Phones are useful tools, and nobody is asking students to give them up.

3. Why is the writer's RESPONSE to the counterclaim (paragraph 4) effective?

A. It mocks the other side until they stop arguing.

B. It admits the counterclaim is real, then OFFERS A SPECIFIC SOLUTION (front-office phone for family messages) that addresses the concern without abandoning the claim.

C. It pretends the counterclaim was never made.

D. It restates the writer's claim word for word as a response.

4. A peer suggests adding this sentence to paragraph 4: *Also, a hallway phone ban would cut down on collisions during passing time.* Why would this WEAKEN the counterclaim paragraph?

A. It uses the word *also*, which is too informal.

B. It is too long for a counterclaim response.

C. It RESTATES the writer's own first reason instead of RESPONDING to the family-emergency counterclaim - so the opposing concern is left unanswered.

D. It contradicts what the writer said earlier.

5. Which piece of EVIDENCE in the draft is STRONGEST because it is specific, recent, and from a credible source?

A. Students looking down at screens have caused collisions.

B. A 2023 Pew Research survey of U.S. middle schoolers found that 46 percent had been recorded by a classmate at school without being asked.

C. Hallway conversations would be rebuilt.

D. Many parents have said phones are a problem.

6. Read this sentence the writer is considering: *Hallway phones are the WORST thing ever and it is honestly disgusting how addicted everyone is.* Why would this WEAKEN the argument?

A. It uses too many vowels in a row.

B. It is an EMOTIONAL APPEAL with judgment words (*worst, disgusting, addicted*) rather than evidence a reader can verify.

C. It is too short to be a full sentence.

D. It repeats data from paragraph 3 word for word.

7. Which transition would BEST INTRODUCE the counterclaim paragraph in this argument?

A. For example,

B. In conclusion,

C. On the other hand, some students argue that...

D. First,

8. Read this addition the writer is considering for paragraph 3: *A 2022 American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement urged schools to limit unstructured phone use during the school day to protect adolescent mental health.* Where does it BEST fit the LOGIC of the draft?

A. Inside paragraph 2, with the collision data.

B. Inside paragraph 4, in the family-emergency counterclaim response.

C. At the end of the conclusion, after the call to action.

D. Inside paragraph 3, supporting the claim that hallway phones expose students to privacy and well-being harms.

9. Which sentence would be the STRONGEST CONCLUSION for this argument?

A. So basically everyone should think about phones I guess at some point soon maybe.

B. Did you know the first cell phone call was made in 1973 in New York City?

C. For the safety, the dignity, and the rebuilt hallway conversations of every student in the building, our school should adopt a hallway phone ban for the next school year.

D. Many people have many different opinions about phones, and that will continue to be true.

10. A classmate confuses COUNTERCLAIM with the writer's own CLAIM. Which sentence is actually the writer's CLAIM, NOT a counterclaim?

A. *Some students argue that a hallway phone ban would cut them off from family during the school day in case of emergency.*

B. *Our middle school should ban student phones in the hallways between classes.*

C. *Families deserve a way to reach their children.*

D. *Phones might be needed in case of emergency.*

Answer Keys

1	A	**B**	C	D	6	A	**B**	C	D
2	A	B	**C**	D	7	A	B	**C**	D
3	A	**B**	C	D	8	A	B	C	**D**
4	A	B	**C**	D	9	A	B	**C**	D
5	A	**B**	C	D	10	A	**B**	C	D

Explanations

1. B	B states a debatable position (ban hallway phones) and signals what the rest of the draft will defend - the textbook argument claim. A is a concession, not the claim. C is evidence for reason 2. D names a counterclaim, not the writer's own claim.
2. C	C names what the OTHER SIDE believes (a ban would cut students off from family) before the writer answers it - that is counterclaim acknowledgment. A is the writer's own reason. B is evidence. D is a concession the writer adds, not an opposing position.
3. B	Strong counterclaim work acknowledges the opposing concern AND offers a workable answer that protects the original claim - exactly what paragraph 4 does. A is rude and unsupported. C ignores the counterclaim. D adds no real response.
4. C	The job of a counterclaim paragraph is to answer the OPPOSING concern (family emergencies). Repeating the writer's own collision reason doesn't answer that concern. A is irrelevant. B is irrelevant. D is false - it doesn't contradict the earlier reason.
5. B	B names the SOURCE (Pew Research), the YEAR (2023), the SAMPLE (U.S. middle schoolers), and a SPECIFIC measured result (46 percent) - the markers of strong, verifiable evidence. A is a general claim. C is an outcome, not evidence. D cites unnamed parents.
6. B	Arguments are strengthened by facts and named sources, not by judgment words and exaggeration. *Worst, disgusting, addicted* are emotional language a reader cannot check. A is irrelevant. C is false. D is false (no repeat).
7. C	*On the other hand* signals a shift to an opposing position - exactly the move a counterclaim paragraph makes. *For example* introduces evidence. *In conclusion* closes. *First* opens an additional reason of the same kind.
8. D	Paragraph 3 is about phones harming students socially and through unwanted recording; a pediatric policy statement on adolescent mental health and unstructured phone use directly extends that reason. A is about collisions. B is about emergencies. C drops new evidence after the close.
9. C	C restates the claim with force, ties back to all three reasons (safety, dignity, social life), and ends with a clear call to action - the work of an argument conclusion. A hedges. B is an off-topic historical fact. D is neutral and gives up the position.
10. B	B is the writer's MAIN CLAIM (ban hallway phones) - what the writer is arguing FOR. A names what the other side argues. C and D state concerns that BELONG to the counterclaim side, not to the writer's own position.

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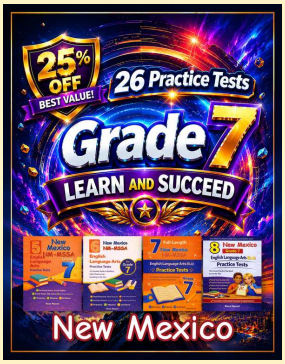

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