

Present Two Sides of an Argument

If you read some of the examples of excellent review articles you have collected you will find that many are addressing a topic about which there is some controversy or debate. Often, the review will present the two sides of an argument that is currently “raging” in the scientific literature.

This is a good way to get better grades in the review articles that you write. If possible, identify an area of controversy or disagreement in the topic you are being asked to review and present the evidence on both sides of the argument. If you want you can also stick your neck out in the concluding paragraph and venture an opinion on which side of the argument you favour and the evidence that convinces you. Be careful not to be too dogmatic about this. If the lecturer or professor set this assignment there is a good chance they are involved in studying or researching this area. It is also possible that they are on the other side of the argument to the position you have adopted in your conclusion. That is not to say you should not state your opinion. Just don't be dogmatic about it. Best to avoid phrases such as “Obviously...”, “It is clear...” or “Any fool can see...” when you are stating your less-than-expert opinion on the issue.

In this book, in the chapter on “formatting a word processed document” the subsection on justification (page 17) is an example of this concept of presenting both sides of an argument.

Key point: *Try and present a discussion of two sides of an area of controversy.*

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