



Develop an argument for the possible cause(s) of phobias

Worksheet

Use this worksheet in conjunction with the [Google Slides](#). Download the worksheet to your device and complete it offline as you work through the slides.

This activity requires you to find out about the topic of phobias and develop your position (i.e. your informed view) on the topic. Developing a position, or argument, is an essential part of the research and discursive writing process.

Slide 4 – Developing an argument (your position on a topic)

Watch [the video](#), where Dr Paul Penn outlines the four key components of an argument, and add a piece of information to each of them:

- Proposition statement – the claim you are making.
- Supporting statement – the evidence that supports your claim.
- Opposition statement – the counterargument.
- Concluding statement – bring the components of the argument together.

Access the link and read this short text (2 minute-read) about [Using evidence to support your argument](#). Read to identify the main ideas and when you have finished write 3 or 4 sentences that summarise what you recall.

Slide 6 - Brainstorming

A phobia is a fear directed at objects, events or situations. Using your knowledge of the world, think of an example for each of the following (e.g. fear of an object includes fear of needles):

- Fear of an object
- Fear of a person
- Fear of an animal
- Fear of an activity
- Fear of a situation

Do you have any personal experience of a phobia (yourself or someone you know)?

Slide 8 –Theory

On slide 7 you were introduced to three theories that might explain where phobias come from:

- Biological approach - an individual may have a genetic or evolutionary predisposition.
- Behavioural approach (or learning-based approach, or modelling, or conditioning) - phobias develop when fear responses are reinforced, either positively or negatively.
- Modelling - phobias are learned through imitating others.

In this article Lara Farrell, Associate Professor and Clinical Psychologist at Griffith University answers the question [‘Where do phobias come from?’](#) Read the article and find out what Farrell says about:

- Modelling
- Direct conditioning

Slide 10 - Making a claim

As you read the articles linked to on slide 11 your aim is to decide whether you think one theory is better than another in explaining the phobia and reflect on how easy it is to decide.

When you have finished reading the articles you will be asked to make a claim about the topic of phobias. The claim should be something you believe to be true and that you can develop a persuasive argument for, supported with evidence from your reading.

Before you read, [watch the animation](#) on slide 10 (2 minutes) and write a definition for a claim.

Slide 11 – Doing some preliminary research

Choose two or more of the texts below and read them to find out what the researchers discovered in relation to the phobia mentioned.

- [Fear of the dentist](#)
- [Fear of spiders](#)
- [Fear of clowns](#)

- [Agoraphobia](#)

You have found out about several theories/psychological explanations for where phobias come from (slides 7 and 8). As you read make a few notes about each of these theories:

- Biological approach
- Behavioural approach (or learning-based, or modelling, or conditioning)
- Modelling

Decide which theory/theories you think best explains the phobia mentioned, and say why.

Slide 12 - Make a claim

Based on the information you have gained from these slides and from the texts you have read, make a claim about which theory you think best explains why some people suffer from phobias.

Your claim should be something you believe to be true and can develop a persuasive argument for, supported with evidence from your reading. If you decide to claim that no one theory can explain all phobias, explain why that is.

There is no right or wrong response when it comes to deciding on your position on any given topic, or the claim that you make. As long as you can find good quality evidence to support your claim you are welcome to take any position you believe in, and then attempt to persuade your reader that it is a credible one.

Develop your discursive writing

If you'd like to find out more about argumentation, and practice writing a discursive essay, visit the [Academic Writing Guide](#). The Psychology version of the Academic Writing Guide deals with the topic of phobias.