**Argumentative Essay Sample**

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Composition I

Argumentative Essay

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Internet Piracy: Why All the Fuss?

Internet piracy refers to the practice of using the Internet to create a copy of a work of digital media (such as a movie, song, book, or software) without permission from the publisher or owner of that media, or to acquire such media, legally or otherwise, and make it available via file sharing networks for other people to access. This practice is commonly called piracy or file sharing, and the people who engage in these practices are often referred to as pirates. However, Internet piracy is also a larger social issue, and many of these so-called pirates represent a growing international political movement called the Pirate Party. Members of this movement promote Internet neutrality, the free exchange of information without censorship, freedom of unhampered technical innovation, and copyright and patent reform (“What is a Pirate?”).  Understanding the term is helpful, but the larger question is why is Internet piracy so significant to United States taxpayers right now?

Internet piracy has become a major political issue in the U.S. over the last several years, eliciting various legislative responses to try to combat it, all at taxpayer expense. It has become such an important concern largely due to political contributions from the powerful movie and music publishers who wish to protect their economic interests. In fact, according to public records, the entertainment industry has provided four times as much in contributions supporting current U.S. anti-piracy legislation than the technology industries that oppose it (Earnst-Friedman). Aside from political contributions, the entertainment publishers have also spent huge sums of money on bringing lawsuits against consumers accused of piracy and in creating anti-piracy advertisement campaigns that predominately portray pirates as criminals in order to garner public support. Yet, despite the legislation, litigation, and negative commentary, piracy continues. Perhaps this is because the Internet piracy problem is less about legislation or ethics and more about ignorance and avarice. Internet piracy is actually beneficial because it creates additional exposure for authors and artists, inspires technical innovation, and forces the entertainment publishers to understand why they must evolve in order to satisfy changing consumer needs in the post-Internet world, despite unproven claims that piracy damages the U.S. economy.

Internet piracy provides many benefits to authors and artists, such as increased exposure, free advertising, and improved sales. This is hugely important to many lesser-known authors and artists because it can help them find their own place in the market. For more established authors and artists, file sharing can help to create new markets and foster a more robust fan base, resulting in additional sales. Several prominent authors have spoken out in favor of Internet piracy on this basis. For example, Tim O’Reilly, author and founder of O’Reilly Media publishing, says, “obscurity is a far greater threat to authors and creative artists than piracy.” Even the internationally celebrated author Neil Gaiman has been quite vocal in his support of Internet piracy, seeing it no differently from people lending books or movies to each other;  moreover, he claims to have documented a 300% improvement in sales that can be directly linked to piracy of his books. In addition to the exposure for artists and authors that piracy provides, many people do not realize that piracy can also be a driver for innovation in digital media technology.

Next, Internet piracy can be viewed as inspiration for technical innovation because it provides a valuable insight into the market needs of consumers. Many of the services we know and use today are here in part because they were created to fulfill those consumer needs. Napster was one of the first companies that tried to do this, but it failed to consider its legal obligations and met its demise at the hands of the court system. Other companies have been more successful in creating alternative ways to provide on-demand access to digital media; some of the notable current offerings are Netflix, Hulu, Apple (iTunes), and Amazon. In many ways, Netflix is leading the charge to reduce the need for movie and television piracy by creating a service that provides unlimited access to television shows and movies for a low monthly subscription. Companies like Spotify, Pandora, and Rdio are attempting to do the same thing for music. On the applications side, Steam is providing streamlined access to game software. Unfortunately, none of the above can entirely fulfill consumer needs because publishers are not yet cooperating as much as they should be. For example, Netflix still has a very limited selection primarily due to the lack of solid publisher support. Once the publishers stop resisting and realize they can adapt to consumer demands without destroying profits, these technology innovators will likely find they have all the support they need.

Finally, Internet piracy will eventually force publishers to accept that they must adapt to evolving consumer media requirements and technologies in order to stay viable in the digital age, just like they had to do when videocassette recorders presented an equivalent problem in the early 1980’ s. The current business model the publishers employ is antiquated. It is still based on a physical media standard where there is a fixed cost associated with replication and distribution, and availability is limited by market and geographic location. Humanity is transforming into a global digital society where the demand for physical media is rapidly fading away along with the limitations associated with pre-digital media publishing. However, despite a huge reduction in publishing overhead, digital media continues to be priced like physical media, which is great for publisher profit margins but not for the consumer. From a societal perspective, the entertainment publishers need to recognize that the tech-savvy and younger generations are accustomed to a world where the Internet provides unlimited instant access to everything digital. This demographic is generally not willing to abide by limitations based on market agreements or geography. For example, when a new episode of a popular TV show is aired in the U.S., tech-savvy consumers in other countries expect to be able to watch it immediately rather than wait for it to air locally, which could be months later or never. Additionally, when these consumers pay for a movie, song, or book, they expect that it will be portable to any other format so they can access it from their computer, mobile phone, or any other device. However, many publishers limit portability by blocking digital works from being copied, expecting everyone to purchase the media again for each format they wish to use and compelling some consumers to pursue piracy to solve this dilemma. The combination of limited distribution, excessive pricing, limited reuse, and reduced ease of access is really at the heart of why piracy is so widespread. If the entertainment publishers wanted to eliminate piracy, it would be as simple as making all their current and past products available in digital form via a simple interface with a commodity-priced subscription model, no restriction on reuse or media format, and available in every market simultaneously. That may slightly reduce profits, but the entertainment publishers will need to adopt that type of business model soon. Otherwise, they will lose their competitive edge against independent studios and individual artists publishing directly to these consumers.

Unfortunately, the publishers still believe that backing anti-piracy legislation is a better way to protect their inflated profit margins than educating themselves and adapting to change. Case in point, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) is trying to convince legislators that Internet piracy is so harmful to the U.S. economy that taxpayers must pay for anti-piracy legislation and enforcement. According to MPAA estimates from a 2007 report, more than  $58 billion is lost to the U.S. economy every year due to piracy, including more than $3 billion in lost tax revenue. However, the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report noting that the MPAA figures “cannot be substantiated or traced back to an underlying data source or methodology” (18). One reason for this is that the MPAA estimates include an assumption that every instance of piracy results in a lost full price retail sale. The MPAA figures suggest that if a pirate is interested enough to download a copy of something for free that they would be interested in paying full price for it. However, there is no evidence to support that claim. Logic suggests most pirates are unwilling to pay full price, or they would have done so already. The United States Government Accountability Office report goes on to say that any "effects of piracy within the United States are mainly redistributions within the economy for other purposes and that they should not be considered as a loss to the overall economy" and "the money does not just vanish; it is used for other purposes" (28 ). Without proof of economic harm, why should U.S. taxpayers pay for anti-piracy legislation that they do not need?

 Interestingly, the Federal Institute of Intellectual Property in Switzerland commissioned its own study on the impact of Internet piracy on the Swiss economy in 2011 that supports the GAO statements. The Swiss study confirmed  that Internet piracy has no adverse effect on their national economy; in fact, they determined that piracy actually improved their economy since it results in increased money spent on alternative entertainment products (Swiss Federal Dept. of Justice). File sharing for personal use is now legal in Switzerland. Perhaps the Swiss have the right idea about eliminating anti-piracy laws; it would certainly be less costly.

While Internet piracy is portrayed by the entertainment publishing industry as an ethical and economic blight on U.S. society that needs to be cured at taxpayer expense, piracy itself is not really an issue for anyone other than the publishers themselves who appear unwilling to risk their increasing profit margins to keep pace with technological innovation and societal demands. Notwithstanding the legislative and perceptual barriers, Internet piracy has proven to be beneficial in many ways, such as expanding the reach of authors and creative artists, inspiring technical innovation, and helping to educate our legislators and the wayward entertainment publishers. Given time, Internet piracy will eventually lead to an even greater variety of new digital technologies, expanded convenience options, and more reasonable pricing on entertainment media. Although pirates may currently acquire their digital media content free, history has demonstrated that most people would welcome a low-cost high-quality paid service over free access if it requires less effort to acquire and still meets their needs. Consequently, once the media publishers create better consumer-focused alternatives, the need for Internet piracy will become negligible and may even disappear entirely.

Works Cited

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 Good in-text citation format: a parenthetical citation with the first element of the related works cited entry. Please remember that each entry needs at least one parenthetical citation or signal phrase within the essay. Use the left navigation menu on the page to locate the type of reference you need: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/

 Avoid questions in academic writing. Speaking to the reader directly in general is not ideal.

 Good thesis that includes the student’s stance on piracy; three arguable supporting elements; and the counter-argument/refute’s focus. All of the claims are strong because they are debatable.

All of the claims in your thesis and/or essay should be strong, debatable arguments. For example, saying, “Watching pirated movies is unethical because it is illegal,” is an opinion/claim supported by an undeniable fact, leading to a very weak overall argument. While “watching pirated movies is unethical” is debatable because the practice is widely accepted in society currently, “because it is illegal” is not a piece of arguable support. A strong claim may also be determined if it has an equal amount of pros and cons, benefits and pitfalls, etc. For example, could you stand at opposite podiums during a debate and argue your claim or supporting points equally?

http://www.roanestate.edu/owl/Argument.html

http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/argument/

http://www.usca.edu/asc/pdf/writing%20room/arguessays.pdf https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/01/

 A semicolon separates two independent clauses.

 There is a fine line between hinting at the next paragraph’s topic in a concluding sentence and introducing it. This sentence introduces the next paragraph’s topic and, therefore, reads too much like a topic sentence.

Please be sure to end your paragraph with a sentence that synthesizes--which takes summarizing to the next level--the paragraph’s main ideas. You do not want to simply copy the topic sentence.

Synthesizing tips: http://guides.library.harvard.edu/content.php?pid=215451&sid=1852510

Concluding sentence tips: http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m3/m3u2/m3u2s5/m3u2s5\_1.htm

 Please keep in mind the difference between possessive and plural forms. Common possessive mistakes include adding an apostrophe to abbreviations and years when the simple plural form should have been used. See below.

PLURAL: The 1960s were a time of great social unrest.

POSSESSIVE: The 1960's document proves his innocence.

PLURAL: All the SUVs on the lot are for sale.

POSSESSIVE: The SUV's front door has a mark.

Helpful: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/621/01/. Please apply this concept throughout your essay.

 Be sure to incorporate your source(s) throughout the essay for support. Only including a source or sources in the introduction and/or conclusion does not provide strong support because your body paragraphs contain your details and arguments. Remember, the support and research rubric sections are linked, so if you don't incorporate research in the essay much, both mentioned sections will suffer reduced points. Strive for a mix of cited quotes, cited paraphrases, and cited summaries in your body paragraphs.

 Good use of “than.”

"Then" is used for a variety of purposes: a point in time, in place of "therefore" (usually paired with "if"), and in place of "also," etc. However, "than" is ONLY used in comparisons.

 Signal phrase at the beginning of the sentence with the page number at the end in parentheses.

 Please use the literary present throughout the essay. The past only really works well in some cases when you specifically mention a time in the past that an author made a comment or when you clarify an event in a literary piece happened before other events in that work. Please review http://vanderbilt.edu/writing/manage/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Literary%20present%20tense.pdf

 The conclusion not only summarizes the main points, but it also synthesizes the discussions.

First, sum up each of the specific main points from the paper. One easy way to do that is to use a reworded version (with fresh wording) of the thesis in the conclusion, especially near the beginning. If you don’t sum up the specific key terms from the essay in the conclusion, you can either sum up the examples, related definitions/meanings, etc. In any case, be sure all the assignment objectives are summed up. In addition, offer either a "looking ahead" element or draw a new conclusion, and spend a few sentences on this component of your choice. The conclusion should be just as intriguing and developed as the rest of the essay. According to Mesa Community College, be sure to never…

**1. oversimplify** the message
2. use **clichés,** which sound good but mean nothing
3. introduce **new arguments**, evidence, or details you might have forgotten
4. incorporate blatant **repetition** of the thesis
5. sound repetitive or **list-like; in other words, once you summarize the key terms in the conclusion, do not summarizes their meanings, definitions, or examples, and vice versa (this is the most common error among students, so do one or the other, and then build your conclusion by adding one more discussion of substance)**

Helpful resources: http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/conclude.html and http://www.mesacc.edu/~paoih30491/Conclusionpgphs.html

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