

ARGUMENT

What is an argument? When we hear the word “argument,” many images flash into our minds. We think of people yelling, screaming, and attacking each other, like on Jerry Springer. Or maybe we think of soap operas...or wrestling. We generally don’t think of organized debates or organized anything for that matter. It has been engrained in us that arguments are fights, complete with name-calling and flying fists, when in actuality, an argument is a very effective and useful way to express an opinion. But it is more than that. It is a way to express and support an opinion in a non-threatening, objective manner that demands respect and contemplation.

Effective Argument: The Three Appeals

Ethos: Influencing through authority; establishing credibility

- Appeals to a reader’s sense of the individual as a reliable source
- Is achieved by:
 - presenting your position clearly
 - anticipating the opposition
 - offering examples
 - providing evidence
 - using sources as opposed to personal knowledge alone

Logos: Influencing through reason; the foundation of effective argument

- Appeals to a reader’s logic and reasoning abilities
- Is achieved by:
 - providing evidence, facts, and examples
 - presenting the issue fully

Pathos: Influencing through emotion; gets reader’s attention

- Appeals to a reader’s emotions
- Is achieved by:
 - drawing on shared values, fears, and experiences

There must be a *balance between these three appeals* in order to have an effective argument.

- Influencing through authority and credibility alone would not provide enough information to effectively argue a point.
- Influencing through reason alone will not interest or move the reader to commitment on a personal level.
- Influencing through emotion alone will promote passion rather than rational thinking, which is not conducive to an argument.

Elements of Argument

C.R.O.W. – These four elements are crucial to writing an argument.

Claim: What is your position on the issue? What are you trying to prove? Is your claim an arguable point?

Example of a non-arguable point: Many parents force their children to go to college.

- This is a true statement, and it cannot be argued against.

Example of an arguable point: Parents who force their children to go to college are only hindering their child's progress.

- This is an arguable statement because many people feel that a child who is forced to go to college will rebel, and therefore, the child will not do as well as he/she potentially could.
- HOWEVER, it could also be argued that children must be forced to go to college, or they will never live up to their potential.

Reason/Support: What makes your claim the correct one? What evidence do you have to back up your statement? This part can contain the following:

- facts
- statistics
- examples
- personal experiences
- expert opinion
- any other supportive evidence

Opposition to the claim: What are the arguments against your position?

- Acknowledge opposing views
- Refute them by writing, "Yes, but..." explanations
- "Yes, someone may say X, but..."

Warrant: What do you want your readers to get out of your argument?

- The warrants of an argument are the accepted values, assumptions, and beliefs related to the issue.
- A warrant is implied rather than stated flat out.
- A warrant asks, "So what?" about your claim.
- A warrant shows how your claim fits in the bigger picture. This gives your claim merit and meaning.

Example: If parents who force their children to go to college are only hindering their child's progress, then:

- What does this say about people who do such a thing?
- What does this say about the success rate of these students once they graduate?
- What does this say about social pressure for parents to send their children to college?