

ARGUMENTS

INTRODUCTION□

The process of arguing (in college) is essentially an intellectual exercise which allows for the comparison of other people's opinions and hypotheses, and their support. We use this process to compare our own assertions with the assertions of others in order to make decisions about professional and philosophical beliefs, and, most importantly: To learn.

ARGUMENTS HAVE OPPOSITION□

When we first create an argument, we recognize that there are always two opposing viewpoints (perhaps even more, depending on the topic). However, most of us accept that arguments are "two-sided" (or binary).

We recognize opposing viewpoints on topics:

For or Against

□Pro or Anti□

I Believe or I Do Not Believe

Yes or No□

Guilty or Innocent

Topics:

Birth Control

Medical Marijuana

Existence of God

Argumentative Position

For/Against□

I Believe/I Do Not Believe

CHOOSING AN ARGUMENTATIVE TOPIC□

Both "good" and "bad" topics exist. Good topics are "good," because they allow two sides to debate. Bad topics are "bad," because they do not allow for debate. Consider these examples.

EX: (Poor Argument Binary)□Child Abuse... This topic is definitely not a "good" topic. Why?

Think of this: One can be "against" child abuse. However, typically, one is not "for" child abuse.

Therefore, this binary for this topic is very poor, and it would not make a very "good" argument/debate.

EX: (Good Argument Binary)

□Illegal Immigration... this topic has a very good argumentative binary. Why? People can

choose a "for" or "against" position in the argument/debate. Both may be deemed "acceptable" by the larger population (when asked to make a determination on the topic). Let's examine how both of these positions might work.

CLAIMS□

In a collegiate environment, we tend to call a well-developed and well-informed opinion (on an argumentative issue) a CLAIM (some people refer to a claim as an assertion, hypothesis, or a thesis statement – this depends on your instructor).

Put simply: □Your opinion = the CLAIM

Usually, in an academic argument, you begin with a CLAIM.

This claim is made to attempt to change the minds of those who believe the COUNTERCLAIM (the other side of the argumentative binary):

SUPPORT

□In order for a reader/audience to make a determination on which claim is the best, the argument must have SUPPORT. Now, SUPPORT is basically what it sounds like: proof. If you make a statement, then you better have some proof, although academics tend to call it SUPPORT.

Support refers to any type of evidence that can be found and brought to help to persuade an audience that your CLAIM is correct and acceptable.

THE REALITY OF "WINNING ARGUMENTS"

□Fallaciously, many people claim that people win arguments or arguments can be "won." However, not all arguments can be "won."

Likewise, most arguments are not necessarily about winning or losing. Most arguments are about choices (e.g., good choices, moral choices, logical choices, choosing employees, deciding which technique to use, etc.).

Let's put these ideas into perspective (covering a bit of terminology):

An academic argument is an intellectual argument (something ancient Greeks referred to as dialectic -- a space of thinking where two arguments meet or where two claims converge... a type of informed conversation).

EX: In most cases, the death penalty is an unethical way to deal with violent criminals (counterclaim would be: In most cases, the death penalty is an ethical way to deal with violent criminals).

Arguments of Personal Preference are not intellectual arguments, although they may contain preferences (overtly personal opinions) and support (or proof).

EX: It is your turn to take out the trash tonight. EX: I do not like X person...

Note: Some readers/audiences ignore proof/support in favor of the communal thinking or popular beliefs (Academics call this "bandwagon" thinking). Know your reader/audience and their assumptions/beliefs/norms, before you make a claim. Otherwise, you will have no audience for your argument.

CREATING A CLAIM

□ In most early college courses, you will find instructors asking you to make judgments on the value of something or to ask you to suggest your personal opinion. In making a CLAIM, you pick a side to the argument. Then, you defend it. You draw on support for your argument from a variety of sources and attempt to persuade the reader that your position is the best.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF (BASIC-LEVEL) ARGUMENTS □

Components of your argument should never be placed arbitrarily (that is, without reason).

You should be strategic in placing the components of your argument (that is, taking advantage of your arrangement in order to help your work to be logical and easy to understand).

In the Classical Greek/Roman traditions, writers often used a 5 stage method to construct arguments; this model is still used today in science, industry, law, and even in college debate.

The parts included: □

1. An Introduction
- 2. A Statement of Fact
3. A Confirmation
- 4. A Refutation □
5. A Conclusion

For writers, this model has evolved into what we know as The "Five-Section" form, which contains 5 sections:

1. The Introduction (an opening designed to grab the reader's attention) with a CLAIM.
2. A Supporting Idea
3. Another Supporting Idea
4. And, another Supporting Idea (later, you will learn that this section is replaced by a counterargument).
5. Finally, the Conclusion

Note that you can add more points of support or ideas, and you can even make them longer and more detailed.

See an example of a Five-Section form below:

ARRANGEMENT

EX: □ Introduction (Introduces the topic and your claim)

Vegetarianism is one of the most substantial ways to promote health. Vegetarians do not consume meat; however, they may consume some animal products. Vegetarians do not rely on eating animals, making the lifestyle/diet very economical and very diverse. Generally, vegetarians have reduced instances of heart disease, cancer, and other ailments. Most everyone should consider becoming a vegetarian for these reasons.

Supporting Idea #1 (Develops an important thought or idea supporting your claim in this paragraph)

Vegetarians do not consume meat. Vegetarians consume mostly fruits, vegetables, grains, milk, cheese, and other dairy. Vegetarians may choose this diet in respect of animals or simply for health reasons alone; regardless of their reasons, vegetarians tend to find many combinations which make eating a delightful experience. In many supermarkets, Meat substitutions are available (many substitutes are made from grains and beans).

Supporting Idea #2 (Develops an important thought or idea supporting your claim in this paragraph)

The vegetarian lifestyle is very economical. The cost of a pound of meat (and side dishes) compared to the cost of a vegetable, beans, and rice for a single meal is considerably less. Of course, vegetarians like to mix things up (keeping things diverse in the kitchen), so they try different recipes with different ingredients (after all, beans and rice are not for everyone). But, the average grocery cost (after a few weeks of acclimation) is significantly lower.

Supporting Idea # 3

–or- Counterargument

(Develops an important thought or idea supporting your claim in this paragraph; in addition, this section might also convey a counter argument, which might be a requirement of some instructors)

On average, vegetarians suffer from few diseases of the heart, liver, and other organs. They often maintain much healthier weights, and they often live longer on average than meat eaters. In addition, vegetarians suffer from fewer cancers and other ailments. In all, vegetarians are generally healthier than people who eat meat.

-OR-

Some people may think that eating meat is healthy. For example, a “high protein” diet typically depends on a person eating mostly meat. However, on average, vegetarians suffer from few diseases of the heart, liver, and other organs. They often maintain much healthier weights, and they often live longer on average than meat eaters. In addition, vegetarians suffer from fewer cancers and other ailments. In all, vegetarians are generally healthier than people who eat meat.

Conclusion (Recapitulate your claim, and leave the reader pondering the topic)

Most everyone should consider become a vegetarian. Consider becoming a vegetarian for a week, and see how the process goes. See how you feel. Try some simple dishes with beans, cheese, and rice. Then, incorporate some more elaborate recipes (e.g., eggplant pasta, macaroni and cheese with asparagus, etc.). Consider some meat substitutes as well. Try some non-meat chicken nuggets, and consider the taste (in most cases, the taste is almost the same).