



Writing an Argument

Elements of an Effective Argument



Claim

- The **claim** comes in the opening section of your paper.
- It states your belief and what you wish to argue.
- It should be straightforward and clear.
 - For example, “The minimum wage should be raised to \$10.”
 - Without evidence, this is just a claim, not an argument.



Reasons

- **Reasons** are statements that support the claim.
- Reasons blend together logical (logos), emotional (pathos), and ethical (ethos) appeals.
 - Logical support refers to facts, or something that can be verified.
 - Emotional support stirs strong feelings within the audience.
 - Ethical support establishes credibility and authority of speaker.



Evidence

- **Evidence** supports the reasons provided, ultimately strengthening the argument.
- Evidence consists of:
 - Facts
 - Statistics
 - Experiences
 - Comparisons
 - Examples (Anecdotes)



Opposing Claim

- The opposing claim addresses the other point of view.
- Your argument is strengthened when you can give reasons for why the opposing viewpoint is wrong.

Common Misconceptions



Myth

You have to totally believe in what you are arguing.

Reality

Making an argument has nothing to do with how you feel. It has everything to do with whether or not you can support your argument.



Myth

Every argument has a right and wrong side.

Reality

A lot of great arguing takes place on paper, where you can take as much time as you need to think everything through.



Myth

You can't be good at arguing unless you can think fast on your feet.

Reality

Most of the time, the two sides of an argument are just different points of view. Neither side is really right or wrong.



Myth

An argument is just people yelling at each other.

Reality

Arguments can be very calm. In fact, an argument in writing is silent!

**So why do I need to know how
to write an argument?**

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Imagine This...

- Your state legislature is thinking about passing a law that says teens can't drive until they are 18. You want to write a letter to convince your state senator to vote against the idea. What would you say?



Or This...

- Your city decided to close the park where you always hang out and play basketball. The city officials say there was too much trouble at the park and there was trash everywhere. Would you know what to write in a letter that would convince them to reopen the park?



Writing an Argument

Evaluating Source Credibility



Why is Evaluating Websites Important?

- Anyone can put something on the Internet.
- No one oversees what is put on the internet for accuracy.
- Documents can easily be copied with omissions and errors.

CRAAP

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Currency

Currency refers to the time that the information was produced.

- When was the information added?
- When was it last updated?
- Do the links work?

TIP: For certain topics you might be able to use information that was published long ago, but for many contemporary, scientific, or health-related topics, you'll probably want to use information that was published recently.



Relevance

Relevancy has to do with the connection between the source and your topic.

- Does it relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level? Too advanced? Too easy?

TIP: Try to identify the scope of the source. Once you have done this, make sure that it aligns with your topic.



Authority

Authority refers to the reliability and credibility of the source's author.

- Who created the Website?
- Is there an “About” or “Contact” page that tells about the author?
- What qualifications does this author have to write on this topic?
- Where is this information being published from?

TIP: If the source is a webpage, you may have to look around to find information about authorship. Try scrolling down to the bottom of the page.



Accuracy

Accuracy refers to the reliability of the information.

- How well is the site developed?
- Can the information be verified?
- Are there typos?

TIP: The peer-review process used by many scholarly journals is designed to guarantee a certain amount of accuracy and quality in the publication of scholarly information



Purpose

The purpose is the reason that the source was created.

- What is the purpose of the information?
- Is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and unbiased?

TIP: Decide whether the source was made to inform, teach, sell, entertain, or persuade. A credible source should present information without ulterior motives.



Practice

Use CRAAP to evaluate these three websites:

- [http://www.answers.com/Q/why can't humans live on Mars](http://www.answers.com/Q/why_can't_humans_live_on_Mars)
- <http://www.astronomy.com/news/2017/05/could-we-live-on-mars>
- <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/09/elon-musk-spacex-exploring-mars-planets-space-science/>