

The Elements of Argument

Structure

1. The **introduction**, which warms up the audience, establishes goodwill and rapport with the readers, and announces the general theme or thesis of the argument.
2. The **narration**, which summarizes relevant background material, provides any information the audience needs to know about the environment and circumstances that produce the argument, and set up the stakes-what's at risk in this question. In academic writing, this often takes the form of a literature review.
3. The **confirmation/supporting details**, which lays out in a logical order (usually strongest to weakest or most obvious to most subtle) the claims that support the thesis, providing data/evidence for each claim. Each minor claim that supports the thesis becomes a topic sentence in an argumentative essay.
4. The **refutation and counter-argument**, which looks at opposing viewpoints to the writer's claims, anticipating objections from the audience, and allowing as much of the opposing viewpoints as possible without weakening the thesis.
5. The **summation/conclusion**, which provides a strong conclusion, amplifying the force of the argument, and showing the readers that this solution is the best at meeting the circumstances.

A good argument begins with looking at the data that is likely to become the evidence in an argument and which gives rise to a thesis statement (main idea) or major claim. That is, the thesis statement arises from an essential question, which in turn rises from the examination of information or data of some sort.

1. Choose an issue/problem that interests you
2. Examine data
3. Ask questions based on data – **essential question**
4. Re-examine data
5. Try to answer the questions
6. Develop a **claim/thesis statement/main idea** that sums up the problem and the solution
7. Use data that supports the answer = Evidence

Appeals

- **Logical appeals** (logos) persuading by the use of reasoning
 - Deductive argument-begins with a generalization and moves toward a specific conclusion.
 - Ex: When it rains, John's old car won't start. It's raining. Therefore, John's old car won't start. (Applies a broad generalization to a specific case.)
 - Inductive argument-begins with pieces of specific evidence and draws a general conclusion from this.
 - Ex: John's old car won't start. It's raining. Therefore, John's old car won't start when it's raining. (Uses a specific case to reach a generalization.)

Beware of logical fallacies

- **Hasty Generalization:** This is a conclusion based on insufficient or biased evidence. In other words, you are rushing to a conclusion before you have all the relevant facts. Example:
Even though it's only the first day, I can tell this is going to be a boring course.
- **Post hoc ergo propter hoc:** This is a conclusion that assumes that if 'A' occurred after 'B' then 'B' must have caused 'A.' Example: I drank bottled water and now I am sick, so the water must have made me sick.
- **Circular Argument:** This restates the argument rather than actually proving it. Example:
George Bush is a good communicator because he speaks effectively.
- **Either/or:** This is a conclusion that oversimplifies the argument by reducing it to only two sides or choices. Example: We can either stop using cars or destroy the earth.
- **Red Herring:** This is a diversionary tactic that avoids the key issues, often by avoiding opposing arguments rather than addressing them. Example:
The level of mercury in seafood may be unsafe, but what will fishers do to support their families?
- **Straw Man:** This move oversimplifies an opponent's viewpoint and then attacks that hollow argument. Example:
People who don't support the proposed state minimum wage increase hate the poor.

Ethical appeals (ethos) persuading by character of author

Beware the fallacies:

Ad Hominem (Argument to the Person): Attacking the person instead of the argument. For example, "You say I shouldn't drink so much, but you drink every day."

Argument from False Authority: Using an expert in a specific field as an expert in all related fields. For instance, if I am writing a paper about heart disease and I quote my chiropractor, Dr. Wallace,

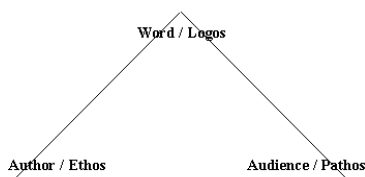
Appeal to Anonymous Authority: Using appeals to nonspecific groups (e.g., doctors, scientists, researchers, and so on). For example, "Research shows that all women are inferior to men."

Emotional appeals (pathos) persuades audiences by arousing the emotions

Beware the fallacies:

- **Ad populum:** This is an emotional appeal that speaks to positive (such as patriotism, religion, democracy) or negative (such as terrorism or fascism) concepts rather than the real issue at hand. Example:

If you were a true American you would support the rights of people to choose whatever vehicle they want.



Rhetorical Devices

Rhetorical Question: A rhetorical [question](#) is one that requires no answer because the answer is obvious and doesn't need to be stated. The speaker (of the rhetorical question) is not looking for an answer but is making some kind of a point, as in an argument.

Anaphora: the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses

- Ex: "To those old allies... To those new states... To those people..."

Irony: expression of something which is contrary to the intended meaning; the words say one thing but mean another.

Syllogism: A form of [deductive reasoning](#) consisting of a major [premise](#), a minor premise, and a conclusion.

- Ex: No philosophers are evil. All Greeks are philosophers. No Greeks are evil.
- Remember: There is a difference between asserting that a premise is untrue, and asserting that the logic of the argument is faulty. "All dogs can fly. Fido is a dog. Fido can fly." That is a perfectly valid argument in terms of logic, but this flawless logic is based on an untrue premise. If a person accepts the major and minor premises of an argument, the conclusion follows undeniably by the sheer force of reason. If in an argument, the logic reaches a conclusion that seems absurd, it behooves you to analyze each sentence separately.

Alliteration: repetition of the same sound beginning several words in a sequence

- Ex: "Pay any price, bear any burden..."

Parallelism: the arrangement of words, phrases, clauses, or larger structures placed side by side, making them similar in form

- Ex: "United there is little we cannot do in a host of cooperative ventures. Divided there is little we can do..."

Antithesis: contrast of ideas or words in a parallel structure

- Ex: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

Arnold Schwarzenegger is Elected Governor of California

Directions: Highlight the main idea in yellow. Highlight the supporting details in blue. Highlight the rhetorical devices in pink and then identify the rhetorical devices.

I want to thank also all the people on this campaign, all the people that volunteered, the hard work they've put in there. All of you people here. I wouldn't be standing up here today if it wouldn't be for you all. I want to also thank the people of California. From the time I came over to this country, you have opened up your arms to me. You've received me. You've given me opportunities, an endless amount of opportunities. Everything that I have is because of California. I came here with absolutely nothing. And California has given me absolutely everything. And today California has given me the greatest gift of all. You have given me your trust by voting for me. Thank you very much to all the people of California for giving me their great trust. And let me tell you something. I will do everything I can to live up to that trust. I will not fail you. I will not disappoint you. And I will not let you down. For two months, I've been speaking out about the needs of bringing back fiscal responsibility to this state, bringing back the positive business atmosphere, bringing back businesses, bringing back jobs, and bringing back our education. It's very important that we bring back the trust in the government itself. For two months, I went up and down the state and listened to the people. I met good, honest, and hard-working people, people that want to raise their families here, people who want to do business here, who want to have jobs here, who want to educate their kids here, people that want to enjoy the clean air and the clean water. And I have heard your voice. I have heard your voices loud and clear. We have tough choices ahead. The first choice that we must make is the one that will determine our success. Shall we rebuild our state together? Or shall we fight amongst ourselves, create even deeper division and fail the people of California? Well, let me tell you something, the answer is clear: For the people to win, politics as usual must lose. I will reach out to Republicans, to Democrats, and Independents, to those who supported the recall and those who did not, those who supported me today, and those who did not. I want to reach out to everybody, to young and old, rich and poor, people of all religions, all colors, and all nationalities. I want to be the governor for the people. I want to represent everybody. I believe in the people of California, and I know that together we can do great things. I know that together we can make this again the greatest state of the greatest country in the world.

campaign: v/n-to run for a political job, the work of running for one

volunteer: v/n- to work without pay, someone who works without pay

fiscal- economic

atmosphere- the feeling in a place or the air

determine- decide

recall- a type of election where one person in a political job takes the place of another who disappointed the people.

Reflection: Is this speech persuasive? Did it use rhetorical appeals? Which ones and where?