

## PARTS OF ARGUMENT

The three main elements—**claims, reasons, and evidence**—are the foundation for most academic arguments.

<p>1. <b>Claim</b></p>	<p>Debatable statement that forms the main point of an argument. (Sometimes called a thesis statement.) <b>What do you think?</b></p>	<p>Mr. X was an incredibly lazy anthropology teacher.</p>
<p>2. <b>Reasons</b></p>	<p>Arguments that help support the main claim. (These allow you to break a broad claim into smaller, more precise sections.) <b>Why do you think so?</b></p>	<p>Most every class, while Mr. X sat at his desk, we watched movies that had very little educational value.</p> <p>Mr. X used old tests that seemed to be designed to save him time rather than to gauge our knowledge of material.</p>
<p>3. <b>Evidence</b></p>	<p>Personal experience, outside authorities, facts, and statistics that support subclaims. (Stands by itself; the evidence is not debatable, though its interpretation may be.) <b>How do you know you're right?</b></p>	<p>Some of the movies we watched included <i>Little Big Man</i> and <i>Last of the Mohicans</i>.</p> <p>During two tests, I had to show him as many as eight questions that covered material he had never assigned. Both times, he told the class to skip those questions.</p>

## PARTS OF ARGUMENT

The three main elements—claims, reasons, and evidence—are the foundation for most academic arguments. If you at least have a solid claim in your paper, support it up with insightful reasons, and back up those reasons with sound evidence, you are virtually guaranteed to generate a reasonably good paper, both in this course and others. **Additional elements:**

<p>4. Acknowledgement and Response</p>	<p>Admission of <b>possible counterarguments</b>, reassertion of your argument. (Strengthens your argument by adding subtleties.) <b>It may be argued that ____.</b> <b>However, I'm still right because ____.</b></p>	<p><b>Acknowledgement:</b> It's true that half the class named him as their favorite teacher.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> The same half of the class slept through class every day.</p>
<p>5. Warrants (RULE)</p>	<p><b>Assumptions</b> that underlie your argument. (Usually left unstated, if you can assume your reader shares them). <b>What am I assuming?</b></p>	<p>Teachers ought to be engaged, attentive, and hardworking.</p> <p>Teachers should only test students on material covered in class.</p>

# Video Parts of an Argument:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04UA2YwDpc4>

## Big Fat Review

- 1.) The goal of the argument essay is to persuade your reader of your point of view.
- 2.) The basic structure of an argument essay is: introduction, thesis, supporting points, and conclusion.
- 3.) The key to a good argument is not yelling, but having evidence and support that your reader will find interesting and convincing.
- 4.) The argument essay is the most important kind of essay because it pops up in most kind of writing.

### The main parts of an argument



- claims
- counterclaims
- reasons
- evidence

CREATED USING

# Slip or trip?



# Slip or trip?



Queenie, who met them at the door and said, “Something terrible happened. Arthur slipped and fell on the stairs. He was coming down for another drink—he still had the glass in his hand—and I think he’s dead. Oh, my God—what shall I do?”

# Slip or trip?

Evidence	Rule (Warrent)	Conclusion

Your group is an investigative team that must determine what may have happened. You can either agree or disagree with Queenie's version.

1. Do you think Queenie is telling the truth?
2. Find all the evidence you can that indicates whether or not Queenie is telling the truth. Make a list of all the evidence. Evidence includes concrete, observable information; personal testimony; written documents; and material objects and their condition or appearance.
3. Next explain how each piece of evidence supports your claim that Queenie is or is not telling the truth. Each explanation will be a generally accepted rule, which may begin with a phrase such as, "As a rule. . . ." If other members of your team disagree with you, find evidence that will convince them.
4. Be prepared to explain why your evidence supports your case. Eventually you will write a report to convince the others in the class that your analysis makes the most sense.



# Argument

A claim is a statement that

persuades, argues, convinces, proves, or suggests something to a reader who may or may not initially agree with you.

# Argument

The claim excludes the following as support:

—Because it is my personal opinion

—Because my friends or relatives think so or most people think so

—Because it's always been, it's tradition

—Because it's obvious

—Because it's morally right

A claim defines your essay's goals, direction, scope, and attention to urgency as well as is supported by evidence, quotations, argumentation, expert opinion, statistics, and telling details.

A claim must be argumentative. When you make a claim, you are arguing for a certain interpretation or understanding of your subject.

A good claim is specific. It makes a focused argument (MTV's popularity is waning because it no longer plays music videos) rather than a general one (MTV sucks).

## Opinion vs. Arguable Claim

### Opinion:

- Twinkies are delicious.
- I like dance music.
- I think Virginia Woolf is better than James Joyce.
- The governor is a bad man.

### Argument/Arguable claim:

- Twinkies taste better than other snack cakes because of their texture, their creamy filling, and their golden appearance.
- Dance music has become popular for reasons that have nothing to do with the quality of the music; rather, the clear, fast beats respond to the need of people on amphetamines to move, and to move quickly.
- Virginia Woolf is a more effective writer than James Joyce because she does not rely on elaborate language devices that ultimately confuse and alienate the reader.
- The governor has continually done the community a disservice by mishandling money, focusing on frivolous causes, and failing to listen to his constituents.

What are the differences?

—An argument is supported by evidence, which can be debated/challenged. Opinion is supported by more opinion (and ultimately you end up with something along the lines of “Well, just because, okay?”).

—A claim can be substantiated with research, evidence, testimony, and academic reasoning.

—A claim is something more than statement and support: an arguable claim also goes on to address the “so what?” question, the implications and why we should care in the first place.

—Remember that not all claims are created equal, and though a claim may be arguable, the best claims are focused, specific, complex, and relevant.

## Counterclaims

In arguing a claim, you should always consider potential counterclaims and counterarguments.

For instance, in response to the above claim about the Seahawks, someone might say: “You’re wrong. The Hawks defensive problems last year were a result of poor coaching on the part of the defensive coordinator.”

This counterclaim denies the validity of my claim. Usually, it’s important to address counterclaims in your writing.

## Myth #1:

A claim should be general so that lots of evidence in the text will support its argument. Correction: Usually, a really broad claim can only be supported by really broad evidence, which ends up describing rather than arguing. So be specific, be concrete, be focused. Think carefully about what you are trying to argue, what the stakes of your argument are, and use relevant quotes from your supporting material to help you generate a specific claim.

## Myth #2:

A claim shouldn't include everything the paper is going to say because then it "gives it all away" and eliminates the suspense. Correction: An argument essay is not a mystery novel—you want to be clear about where you are going with your argument so the reader can follow and understand and believe you. This is not to say that you need to make your claim an obvious road map nor does it have to be paragraphs long. State what it is you are trying to do, what it is you are trying to argue, and how you plan to accomplish it. The rest of your paper can flesh out your main claim with subclaims, specific quotes, telling details, examples, and evidence.

### Myth #3:

A claim should be true or correct beyond a doubt so the reader “buys” the argument. Correction: Constructing an argument and substantiating a claim is rarely entirely black-or-white, on-or-off, all or nothing. Argumentative writing is about being able to articulate a position and argue it using academic evidence. In fact, in your research you may find yourself disagreeing with sources at one point and agreeing with them later in the same essay. Arguments are often a mixture of assertion, acknowledgement, confirmation, refutation, and concession. Complex claims rarely have a single right or wrong answer; rather they are provocations, analyses, or applications of concepts, theories, and ideas.