

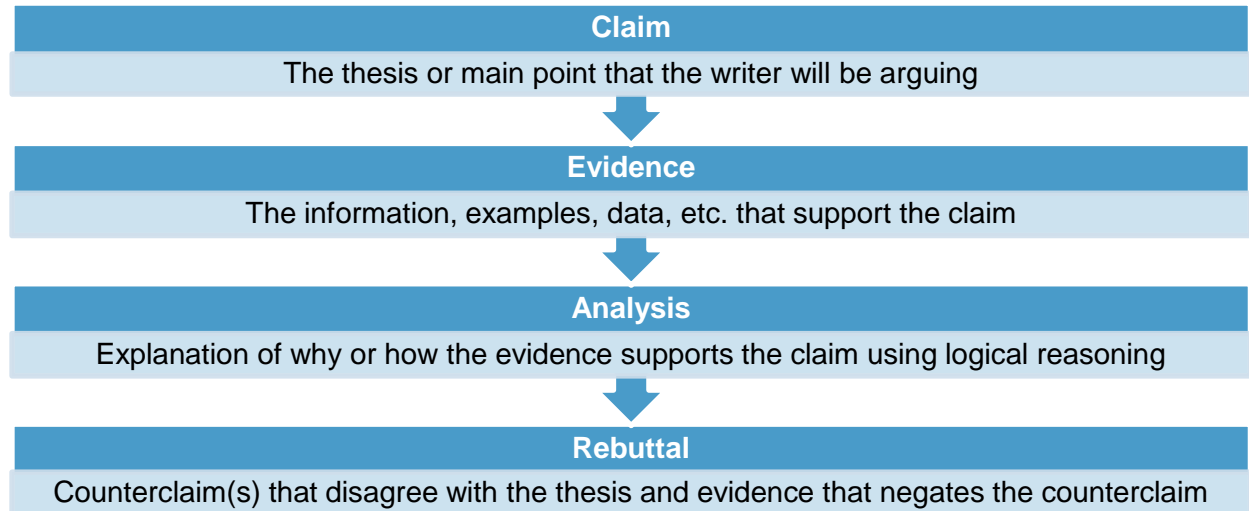
Argument

An **argument** begins with a debatable claim and uses evidence to support that claim.

Arguments must have a purpose—some main idea that you can argue. A strong argument goes beyond simple or obvious statements. Ask yourself:

What is my point?

Structure of an Argument



Rhetorical Strategies

Logos	<i>appeal to logic</i> Academic arguments are based on logic. This includes rational claims, a sufficient amount of reliable evidence, and logical reasoning (inductive or deductive).	
	Inductive reasoning takes a specific representative case and draws conclusions from it	Deductive reasoning begins with a generalization and then applies it to a specific case
Ethos	<i>appeal to ethics</i> To maintain credibility, an academic argument must treat its claims and counterclaims fairly, use reliable sources, and avoid cherry-picking evidence to misrepresent a point. A credible writer builds common ground with the reader rather than manipulating them.	
Pathos	<i>appeal to emotion</i> In some cases, appeals to emotion and values can be used effectively, such as using interviews or anecdotes to illuminate a situation in a more personal way than a statistic would. However, emotional appeals should never replace logical reasoning or distract from the real issue.	



Win or Lose?

You may think that the point of an argument is to “win,” but in academic writing, there are no winners or losers. There might even be multiple different viewpoints on the same topic that are equally valid. Instead of trying to win the argument, work towards building a conversation and using logic to develop a point.

Problems with Arguments

Inarguable Claim

Essays that begin with a claim that is obvious, fact, or generally agreed upon end up having nothing to argue. There must be a possibility for disagreement with your claim or for multiple legitimate points of view on the topic. Test your claim by thinking of one or more opposing views; if you can’t think of any, you’ll need to change your thesis.

Ignoring Opposition

Avoiding the opposing side of an argument can actually weaken your own argument. Instead of ignoring opposing views, include counterclaims as well as *your rebuttal of those counterclaims*, which lends you more credibility because you demonstrate knowledge of all sides of the debate rather than appearing either biased or uninformed.

Emotional Manipulation

Employing appeals to emotion must be done with great care so as not to be manipulative. It is especially important that the overall argument be based on fact or logical reasoning rather than emotion. Instead of trying to scare the reader into agreeing with you, gain their trust by using thoroughly researched evidence.

Logical Fallacies

Good arguments avoid flaws in logic or reasoning. Logical fallacies occur when writers make false cause and effect claims, provide insufficient evidence, or oversimplify points.

False cause and effect

- *Slippery slope* – the belief that one event will lead to a chain of other events, eventually leading to a disastrous outcome
- *Post hoc* – the belief that if one thing happens after another, then the first thing caused the second thing to happen

Insufficient evidence

- *Circular argument* – restates the argument’s claim rather than providing evidence to prove it
- *Red herring* – diversionary tactic of redirecting the conversation to avoid the issue or opposing arguments

Oversimplification

- *Straw man* – oversimplifies opposing viewpoint and then attacks the hollow argument
- *Either/or* – reduces a complex issue with many sides to only two opposing sides or choices

