

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS...

The basis for an effective argument is effective support. Therefore, an effective essay will have both. Once the topic and thesis of the essay have been refined it is time to think about the following:

HOW WILL I SHOW MY AUDIENCE WHY MY THESIS IS RIGHT?

There are many ways to begin doing this. Methods of support may include:

FACTS: Undisputable data from a reliable source that is also timely

REASONS: Anecdotal support that explains *WHY* something has been or should be done

EXAMPLES: Evidence that explains how something has been or could be applied or affected

Most essays use topic sentences in an introductory paragraph, which later become body paragraphs, to argue and support the thesis.

Basically, any time the writer of an essay makes a statement that can be agreed or disagreed with it needs to be supporting in some way. This generally occurs throughout the body paragraphs of the essay where the main argument is explained in different ways. The writer tells the reader **WHY** and **HOW** the statements are true and **WHY** and **HOW** they are connected to the thesis.

ORGANIZING & PLANNING ARGUMENTS...

The Toulmin Method of Planning is an essay way to set up arguments within body paragraphs:

The basic format for the Toulmin Method is as follows:

Claim: The thesis the writer is arguing.

Data: Evidence supporting the thesis. This could be facts, reasons, examples or other forms.

Warrant (also referred to as a bridge): Explanation of why or how the data supports the claim, the underlying assumption that connects your data to your claim.

Backing (also referred to as the foundation): Additional logic or reasoning that may be necessary to support the warrant. This is where you add to your argument to connect your ideas and link what you are saying with your thesis.

Counterclaim: A different viewpoint that disagrees with your argument.

Rebuttal: Evidence that proves the counterclaim wrong.

Including a well thought out warrant or bridge is essential to writing a good argumentative essay or paper. If you present data to your audience without explaining how it supports your thesis they may not make a connection between the two or they may draw different conclusions.

Don't avoid the opposing side of an argument. Instead, include the opposing side as a counterclaim. Find out what the other side is saying and respond to it within your own argument. This is important so that the audience is not swayed by weak, but unrefuted, arguments. Including counterclaims allows you to find common ground with more of your readers. It also makes you look more credible because you appear to be knowledgeable about the entirety of the debate rather than just being biased or uninformed. You may want to include several counterclaims to show that you have thoroughly researched the topic.

Example:

Claim: Hybrid cars are an effective strategy to fight pollution.

Data 1: Driving a private car is a typical citizen's most air polluting activity.

Warrant 1: Because cars are the largest source of private, as opposed to industry produced, air pollution switching to hybrid cars should have an impact on fighting pollution.

Data 2: Each vehicle produced is going to stay on the road for roughly 12 to 15 years.

Warrant 2: Cars generally have a long lifespan, meaning that a decision to switch to a hybrid car will make a long-term impact on pollution levels.

Data 3: Hybrid cars combine a gasoline engine with a battery-powered electric motor.

Warrant 3: This combination of technologies means that less pollution is produced. According to ineedtoknow.org "the hybrid engine of the Prius, made by Toyota, produces 90 percent fewer harmful emissions than a comparable gasoline engine."

Counterclaim: Instead of focusing on cars, which still encourages a culture of driving even if it cuts down on pollution, the nation should focus on building and encouraging use of mass transit systems.

Rebuttal: While mass transit is an environmentally sound idea that should be encouraged, it is not feasible in many rural and suburban areas, or for people who must commute to work; thus hybrid cars are a better solution for much of the nation's population.

SOURCE:

OWL at Purdue. Purdue University. Online. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/03/>
Accessed 17 November 2010.