



- When sharing emailed writing with co-authors, save your work as rich text format (RTF) or HTML so that it can be read and edited across platforms (PC, Macintosh, Linux) and word processors. When all else fails, copy and paste your document directly into an email message.
- Give credit where credit is due. In an online discussion, remember the name of the writer whose ideas you are referring to, and credit him or her. In team projects, acknowledge all members' contributions as well as any help you receive from outsiders.

2 Analyzing and Constructing Arguments

In one sense, all language use has an argumentative edge: even when you greet friends, you want to convince them that you are genuinely glad to see them. In much academic and professional writing, however, **argument** is more narrowly defined as a text — whether verbal or visual — that makes a claim and supports it fully.



Identifying basic appeals in an argument

Identify emotional appeals. Emotional appeals stir our emotions and remind us of deeply held values. In analyzing any argument, look for what the writer or creator is doing to tug on the audience's emotions, and you'll be on your way to identifying the emotional appeals.

Identify ethical appeals. Ethical appeals support the credibility, moral character, and goodwill of the writer. To find these appeals, ask yourself what the writer or creator is doing to show that he or she is knowledgeable and has really done homework on the subject. Ask what kind of character the writer or creator builds and how he or she does so. Most important, ask if the writer or creator seems



For additional help with argumentation, go to **Links and click on Argument**. To read a complete sample argument essay, click on **Student Writing**.



CHECKLIST

Analyzing Verbal and Visual Arguments

- What cultural contexts — the time and place the argument was written; the economic, social, and political events surrounding the argument; and so on — inform the argument? What do they tell you about where the writer or creator is coming from?
- What is the main issue of the argument?
- What emotional, ethical, or logical appeals is the argument making?
- How has the writer or creator established credibility?
- What sources does the argument rely on? How current and reliable are they? Are some perspectives left out, and if so, how does this exclusion affect the argument?
- What claim does the argument make, and what evidence supports it?
- How has the writer or creator used visuals to support the argument? How well do words and images work together to make a point?
- What effect do highlighted or foregrounded visual details, words, or images have on your response to the argument?
- How effectively does the argument use color, sound, or video to convey a message?
- What overall impression does the argument create? Are you convinced?

trustworthy and has the best interests of the audience in mind.

Identify logical appeals. Logical appeals are often most persuasive to Western audiences — as some say, “the facts don’t lie.” In addition to checking the facts of any argument, look for firsthand evidence drawn from observations, interviews, surveys or questionnaires, experiments, and personal experience as well as secondhand evidence drawn from the testimony of others, statistics, and other print and online sources. As you evaluate these sources, ask yourself how trustworthy they are and whether terms are clearly defined.



Analyzing the elements of an argument

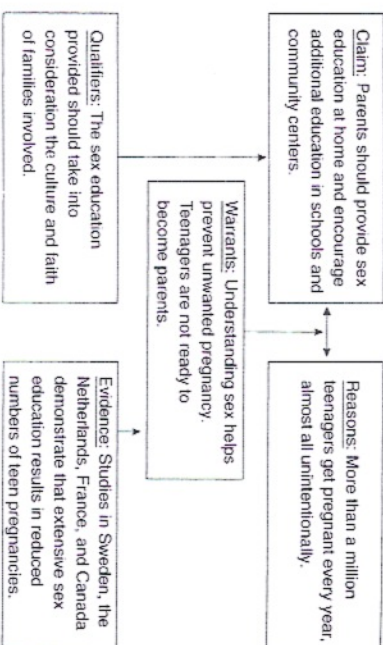
According to philosopher Stephen Toulmin, most arguments contain a **claim** or claims; reasons for the claim(s); warrants (often in the form of assumptions, whether stated



or not); **evidence** (facts, authoritative opinions, examples, and so on); and **qualifiers**, which limit the claim in some way. Nailing down the major claim(s) and these other elements will put you well on your way to a good, strong analysis.

Suppose you have read a brief argument about providing sex education for children. The following diagram shows how you can use the elements of argument for analysis:

Toulmin's System Applied to Sex-Education Argument



Making an argument

Chances are you've been making convincing arguments since early childhood, and your family slowly learned to respond to these arguments. But if family members and friends are not always easy to convince, then the job of making effective arguments to those unfamiliar with you presents even more challenges. It is especially difficult to argue constructively with people who are thousands of miles away and are encountering your argument in cyberspace.

Arguable statements. An arguable statement should meet three criteria:

1. It should seek to convince readers of something, to change their minds, or to urge them to do something.
2. It should address a problem that has no obvious or absolute solution or answer.
3. It should present a position that readers can have varying perspectives on.



ARGUABLE STATEMENT

Video games lead to violent behavior.

UNARGUABLE STATEMENT

Video games earn millions of dollars every year.

Argumentative thesis or claim. To move from an arguable statement to an argumentative thesis, begin with an arguable statement:

ARGUABLE STATEMENT

Pesticides should be banned.

Attach at least one good reason.

REASON

because they endanger the lives of workers

You now have a working argumentative thesis.

ARGUMENTATIVE THESIS

Because they endanger the lives of workers, pesticides should be banned.

Develop the underlying assumption that supports your argument.

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION (WARRANT)

Workers have a right to a safe working environment.

Identifying this assumption will help you gather evidence in support of your argument. Finally, consider whether you need to qualify your claim in any way.

Ethical appeals. To make any argument effective, you need to establish your credibility. Here are some good ways to do so:

- Demonstrate that you are knowledgeable about the issues and topic.
- Show that you respect the views of your audience and have their best interests at heart.
- Demonstrate that you are fair and evenhanded.

Logical appeals. Audiences almost always ask, "So where's your proof," and by this question they are pointing

