Argumentation

1. What is the purpose of argumentation?

2. What should we consider when making (or testing) an argument?

   According to Toulmin (1964), the checking list can be outlined as follows:

   (1) The **Claim**                                    What am I trying to prove? What is my thesis?

   (2) The **support**                                What is the evidence (or data) for my claim?

   (3) The **warrant**                                What is the reasoning involved in my claim and its support? Are the parts of my argument logically connected?

   (4) The **qualifiers**                             How certain is my claim? When and where should I use qualifiers like mainly, mostly, probably, in many cases, etc.?

   (5) The **reservations**                            What are the counter-arguments? Can I be rebutted? How, and in what way(s)?

   (6) The **motivational appeals**                   How do I appeal to the values, needs, or emotions of my readers?

3. What could serve as the thesis of argumentation?

   Judge the following statements:
   (1) Bush is the president of the United States.
   (2) I prefer poetry to prose.
   (3) Scientists are more truthful than journalists.
   (4) Honesty is the best policy.

4. Once you have a thesis, how do you convince your reader that the evidence or data you provide for your claim is reliable?

   (A)

   (B)

   **Note:** The evidence or data cited should be impartial and up-to-date.

Judge whether these statements are good evidence or data:

(1) The big oil companies are sure out to get all they can out of the consumer.
(2) The United States alone is discharging 130 million tons of pollutants a year into the atmosphere, from factories, heating systems, incinerators, automobiles and airplanes, power plants and public buildings.
(3) “That some of the women’s brains looked like the men’s is true of all these sex studies,” says neuropsychologist Melissa Hines of UCLA. —From *Newsweek*, March 27, 1995

   **Note:** The more particular (vs. general) a fact is, the easier it is to be verified.
5. What is the reasoning involved in your claim and its support? Are the parts of your argument logically connected?

(A) What is wrong with the following generalization?
Young parents definitely do no know how to love their children appropriately.

(B) Inductive reasoning:

Fact 1: In 1999, John joined the Army and became a soldier after basic training.

Fact 2: My Father is a soldier now and he completed his basic training in 1985.

Fact 3: Mary, my girlfriend, became a soldier last year (2007) after she passed basic training.

Fact n:

(C) Deductive reasoning:

Syllogism

Generalization (major premise): All soldiers must complete basic training.

Fact (minor premise): Jane is a soldier.

Conclusion: Jane must have completed basic training.

Consider:

All politicians I know talk very convincingly.

Tom always talks convincingly about whatever he has to say.

Therefore, Tom can definitely be a politician.

(D) Avoid the following fallacies careless writers often make in their writing for argumentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fallacy</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hasty generalization</td>
<td>I saw a beggar here and two homeless people in the park, so undoubtedly this is a poor district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem: Fact 1</td>
<td>Fact 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotyping</td>
<td>City kids are good at computer or video games but ignorant of the wildlife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= generalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical Fallacy</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broad generalization</td>
<td>Playing football always results in injury. <em>Problem:</em> always means no exception, which is too broadly cover all possible situations. Avoid using <em>always, never, all, none, every, right, wrong,</em> etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversimplification</td>
<td>Being a successful politician requires many qualities. You can speak persuasively and you are calm, so you are a good politician. <em>Problem:</em> $X = {a, b, c, \ldots, z}$ $X = {a, c}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faulty either/or reasoning</td>
<td>Those who did not sign or claim to support this project obviously do not love our school. <em>Problem:</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post hoc argument</td>
<td>You said that Vitamin C will prevent cold. I agree. Since I started taking Vitamin C, I have never had any cold. <em>Problem:</em> Real causes: ${a, b, c, \ldots, z}$ The causes you see: ${a, \beta}$, which have nothing to do with the real causes but happen to occur right before you see the result.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non sequitur</td>
<td>Your father is a Doctor. You must know a lot about diseases that might be dangerous to us. <em>Problem:</em> The true: $\square$ The inference: $\square$ The inference = the true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circular argument</td>
<td><em>Cf.</em> His handwriting is hard to read because it is illegible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False analogy</td>
<td>John can never learn to be polite. How can you ask a pig to fly? <em>Problem:</em> The author assumes that because two circumstances or ideas are alike in some aspects, they are alike in all aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad hominem</td>
<td>Don’t believe whatever doctor White said. He graduated from a lousy medical school. <em>Problem:</em> Ignoring the point being argued and attacking a person’s character instead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad populum</td>
<td>But Mom, all the kids are wearing shorts to the prom!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red herring</td>
<td>American tax dollars must not be spent to support medical research and treatment that uses fetal tissue. Such hideous scientific experiments performed with the remains of unborn children simply play into the hands of criminal abortionists who encourage pregnant women to abort their unborn babies for profit. <em>Problem:</em> Introducing a false issue in the hope of leading the reader away from a real one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional appeals</td>
<td>I am your son. You won’t believe your son will hurt such an innocent person, will you? <em>Problem:</em> One refers to emotional appeal but not to reason.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. What are the counter-arguments? Can you be rebutted? How, and in what way(s)?
To test your argument, you can always follow the list below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro</th>
<th>Con</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Final grades encourage students to learn by rote</td>
<td>Many students need prodding. Final exams serve this purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Grades lead to harmful competition among students.</td>
<td>In our society, competition is inevitable and useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Low grades discourage some students.</td>
<td>Those students would probably be discouraged anyway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) There are adequate substitutes for final grades: (1) pass-fail system of grading; and (2) teachers’ written comments on students’ performance.</td>
<td>These are poor substitutes; they are not precise enough. Both might be a disadvantage to students competing for the sometimes limited openings in graduate schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Whenever you have to evaluate points opposed to your own, be honest and unbiased.

7. How do you appeal to the values, needs, or emotions of your readers?

8. The basic formats of organization in formal argumentation.

(A) Argumentation for fact (arguing the truth of an idea, opinion, occurrence, etc.)

**Introduction**
- State problem
- State thesis
- Define terms

**Body**
- First point + evidence
- Second point + evidence
- Etc.
- Evaluate points and evidence (optional)

**Conclusion**
- Written to fit the whole argument

(B) Argumentation for action (arguing that something should be done or taken)

**Introduction**
- State need for action (the problem)
- State thesis (proposed action)
- Define terms

**Body**
- Give as much fact argument as necessary
- Give details of proposed action; expand as necessary
- State why action is practical
- State why action is beneficial
- State why action is better than other proposed or possible actions (optional)

**Conclusion**
- Written to justify the proposal.
(C) **Argumentation for refutation** (arguing that another person’s argument is wrong, invalid, or fallacious)

**Introduction**
- State **errors** in opponent’s thesis or main argument
- Admit when opponent’s argument is **strong**; this is both **sensible** and **honest**

**Body**
- State **flaws** in opponent’s argument; arrange **flaws** in **graded/climactic** order, leaving greatest till last
- State your own argument of fact or action (optional)

**Conclusion**
Written to fit the whole refutation

— By Charlene Tibbetts & A. M. Tibbetts