Toulmin Method of Argumentation

Stephen Toulmin (1922-2009) – British philosopher who noticed that effective, realistic arguments typically consist of 6 parts.

This information is posted, so you may use Notability or Liquid Text to highlight important aspects.

You need to know this formula!
What Does it Look Like?

The Toulmin Model identifies that there are six parts to an argument & that each is dependent on the other parts.

- Grounds, Reasons or Evidence
- Qualifier
- Claim
- Warrant
- Rebuttal
- Backing
The Parts of the Toulmin Model

**Claim**
- *Claim:* the position or stance being argued for; the conclusion of the argument.

**Grounds**
- *Grounds:* reasons or supporting evidence/data that bolster the claim.

**Warrant**
- *Warrant:* the principle, provision or chain of reasoning/bridge/explanation/logic that connects the grounds/evidence to the claim.
The Parts of the Toulmin Model

- **Backing**: additional logic/justification/reasoning to back up the warrant.

- **Rebuttal**: evidence that disagrees with the counterclaim.

- **Qualifier**: specification of limits to claim, warrant and backing. The degree of conditionality asserted. (E.g. most, should, unless, except, etc.)
Simple example to demonstrate:

- **Claim** – My father should use a hearing aid.
- **Grounds** (evidence) – Over 70% of all people over 65 years old have a hearing difficulty.
- **Warrant** (bridge/logic) – A hearing aid helps *most* people hear better. (most = qualifier)
- **Backing** – Hearing aids are available locally.

Counterclaim = Hearing aids have technical problems.

- **Rebuttal** – There is a support desk that deals with technical problems.
- **Qualifier** (see above)
The Warrant... All the Need to Know Details

**Definition:** Warrants are chains of reasoning/explanation that connect the claim and evidence/reason/grounds. (Explains how evidence/grounds/data supports the claim.)

Warrants operate at a higher level of **generality** than a claim or reason (*see simple example*), and they are **not normally explicit**.

**Example:** “Needle exchange programs should be abolished [claim] because they only cause more people to use drugs.” [reason]

The **unstated warrant is:** “when you make risky behavior safer you encourage more people to engage in it.”
Warrants

There are SIX main argumentative strategies that can be used to help establish the relationship between evidence and claim.

They have the acronym “GASCAP.”

- Generalization
- Analogy
- Sign
- Causality
- Authority
- Principle

They are rarely used neatly on their own… you will typically have to use them together in some fashion in order to effective establish the relationship between the evidence and claim.
1. **Argument based on Generalization**
   It assumes that what is true of a well chosen sample is likely to hold for a larger group or population, or that certain things consistent with the sample can be inferred of the group/population.

2. **Argument based on Analogy**
   Extrapolating (extending application to an unknown situation) from one situation or event based on the nature and outcome of a similar situation or event. Has links to 'case-based' and precedent-based reasoning used in legal discourse. What is important here is the extent to which relevant similarities can be established between 2 contexts. Are there sufficient, typical, accurate, relevant similarities?

3. **Argument via Sign/Clue**
   The notion that certain types of evidence are symptomatic of some wider principle or outcome. For example, smoke is often considered a sign for fire. Some people think high SAT scores are a sign a person is smart and will do well in college.
4. **Causal Argument**
Arguing that a given occurrence or event is the result of, or is effected by, factor X. Causal reasoning is the most complex of the different forms of warrant. The big dangers with it are:
- Mixing up correlation with causation
- Falling into the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (logical fallacy) trap (e.g. I had the flu shot and got sick, so the flu shot caused my illness). Closely related to confusing correlation and causation, this involves inferring 'after the fact, therefore because of the fact').

5. **Argument from Authority**
Does person X or text X constitute an authoritative source on the issue in question? What political, ideological or economic interests does the authority have? Is this the sort of issue in which a significant number of authorities are likely to agree on?
Common Warrants

6. *Argument from Principle*
Locating a principle that is widely regarded as valid and showing that a situation exists in which this principle applies.

- Evaluation: Is the principle widely accepted? Does it accurately apply to the situation in question? Are there commonly agreed on exceptions? Are there 'rival' principles that lead to a different claim? Are the practical consequences of following the principle sufficiently desirable?
Dealing with counterclaims and objections is thus a key part of the process of building arguments, refining them, interpreting and analyzing them. There are several main reasons for introducing counterarguments and objections.

Why do you need to do this?

1. It shows you are aware of your surroundings… it makes you seem fair (think ethos)
2. Demonstrates your intelligence by conveying that you have already thought of the possible negative/opposing views
3. Clarifies your own position

One more slide…😊
Rebuttal

When dealing with objections or counterarguments, authors tend to take one of three approaches.

**Strategic concession**: acknowledgment of some of the merits of a different view. In some cases, this may mean accepting or incorporating some components of an author’s argument, while rejecting other parts of it.

**Refutation**: this involves being able to show important weaknesses and shortcomings in an opponent's position that demonstrate that his/her argument ought to be rejected.

**Demonstration of irrelevance**: showing that the issue in question is to be understood such that opposing views, while perhaps valid in certain respects, do not in fact meet the criteria of relevance that you believe define the issue.

*Discussion of tasks tomorrow – begin reading article!*