

Writing Arguments

Required Parts of an Argument

- **Claim**
- **Supporting Reason**
 - **Enthymeme:** Claim + Supporting reason (joined by the word “because”)
- **Grounds:** Evidence for supporting reasons
- **Warrants (Assumptions):** Often not included within an argument; however, for a better paper, they should be included.
- **Backing:** Evidence for the warrants

Example of an Argument: Indicating the Parts of the Argument

Claim: We should not elect Steve as the committee chair.

Supporting Reason: He is too bossy.

Enthymeme: We should not elect Steve as chair of the committee because he is too bossy.

NOTE: Claim + “because” + Supporting Reason

Grounds: (Evidence for Steve’s bossiness)

- Examples of the ways in which Steve dominates meetings.
 - Doesn’t call on people to participate
 - Talks too much
 - Interrupts others when they try to speak
- Testimony from committee participants about the bossiness of Steve
- Stories/anecdotes about his rude and abrasive style of conducting a meeting

Warrant (Assumption): Bossy people make bad committee chairs.

Backing: (Problems caused by bossy committee chairs)

- Bossy people do not inspire cooperation and enthusiasm in a meeting.
- Bossy people make others angry.
- Bossy people tend to make bad decisions because they do not incorporate advice or recommendations from others.

Considerations When Writing an Argument

The writer of an argument needs to think about how an informed skeptic would criticize the evidence/grounds and the backing of the argument.

- **For example:** Would the skeptic criticize the evidence/grounds by indicating they either do not constitute enough evidence, or the evidence is irrelevant?

- **Example:**
 - Evidence that Steve is not bossy
 - Evidence that he is only occasionally bossy
 - Testimony from those who have attended meetings in which Steve was the chair and found him to be cooperative
 - Anecdotes or cases in which Steve as fair and balanced in meetings

The writer of an argument needs to think about and have a good response(s) to how a skeptic would criticize the warrant (assumption)

- **For example:** Would the skeptic criticize the warrant by indicating that bossiness can be a good trait in a committee chair?

The writer of an argument needs to think about and have a good response(s) to how a skeptic would criticize the grounds of an argument.

- **For example:**
 - Sometimes bossy people make good chairs.
 - The committee needs a bossy chair, so things get done.
 - Steve has other positive leadership traits that outweigh his negative traits.

Additional Considerations about Possible Types of Evidence in an Argument

- Examples from personal experience (can be weak if it does not include other evidence)
- Data from observation or field experience
- Data from interviews, questionnaires, or surveys
- Data from library or internet research (beware internet research and carefully evaluate the sources)
- Testimony (weigh the possibility of bias)
- Statistical data
- Hypothetical examples, cases, and scenarios
- Reasoned sequence of ideas

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