

## 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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