

Argument is an essential component of every day human affairs. Speakers use arguments to generate knowledge and to seek agreement by analyzing the available facts, warrants, and conclusions of each other's arguments. Argument is also responsible for producing conceptual changes in people.

The Toulmin system is a series of steps designed to help build an argument. The steps help us to understand and how to discuss arguments we study as well as help us frame our own arguments more effectively. Reasoning "is a collective and continuing human transaction, in which we present ideas of claims to particular sets of people within particular situations or contexts and offer the appropriate kinds of reasons in their support. Claims linked to evidence of good reasons are what we mean when we use the term argument" (p. 91). Toulmin identifies two types of reasoning.

Formal reasoning also referred to as formal logic is predominately used with formal logical thinkers. This form of reasoning deals with certain truth that already exists. Mathematicians, astronomers, and formal logicians use this reasoning because the ideas are already agreed upon.

Practical reasoning also referred to as substantive logic, involves the rational exposition and criticism of arguments. When people evaluate these types of arguments they are not considered correct or incorrect. They are evaluated if they are relevant or irrelevant, strong or weak, or reasonable or unreasonable. Practical Reasoning through argument involves the movement through a specific set of goals in order to build an argument. Everyday persuasion requires argumentation, but it must be developed in a proper manner and sequence to increase the likelihood of effectiveness.

First it is necessary to determine your claim if you plan to build a credible argument. This can be considered the thesis of your argument. What is the claim that I'm going to make? "The most common claims in the realm of persuasion are judgmental" (p. 97) the words we use in these types of claims will involve opinions and feelings and these ideas will inevitably be debated. So a solid warrant will be especially necessary in developing an effective argument.

After you have established your main point of your argument you need to have a warrant. A warrant will complete the logical structure. By identifying a warrant to our argument early in the argument's development, we can anticipate any possible objections to assumptions.

As with every argument that we construct you have to have a backing. Some rationale and credentials designed to verify the assumptions expressed in the warrant. What backup evidence do I have I have of can I find to add further support?

It is evident inevitable in human nature that someone will question the validity of your argument. You must be prepared to acknowledge and respond to possible counterargument. Toulmin would call this Rebuttal or Refutations. Conditions for rebuttal include acknowledging any parts of the argument, which might not hold true in certain cases, of which might be disagreed upon in any way. Rebuttals can be directed against the reasons and the grounds or against the warrant and the backing. Your ability to anticipate any rebuttals will increase your chances of producing an effective argument. First you need to identify what refutations could possibly be made against your developed claim. A rebuttal is used to qualify the claim in the anticipation of certain objections.

Finally a qualifier is used to strengthen the claim. This basically ends the argument with force and impact and makes the speaker more credible if he or she stands by their claim even after harsh refutations. If they defended their argument well people will notice, their reasoning and their premises for that claim. Qualifiers answers our condition for rebuttal, and most qualifiers are usually created in response to potential rebuttals.

Denton, R.E. & Woodward, G.C. Persuasion and influence in Modern Life. Waveland Press, Inc. Prospect Heights, IL. 2000.