Everything's An Argument: Argumentation Vocabulary Guide

Welcome to English 110! As a student, you may be familiar with some of the terms used in your textbook *Everything's An Argument*. This resource has been created to help you navigate through unfamiliar terms in your textbook and to show how they can be used in your future writing. As you read these definitions, you can click on the blue words to jump to another definition. If an entry is highlighted in blue, clicking on it will take you to an example. There are five categories: Basic Argumentation, Showing Proof, The Rhetorical Triangle, Evaluating Evidence, and Language Style. Most of the information compiled here was taken from Lunsford's and Ruszkiewicz's Everything's an Argument (your textbook) and was edited by Jacob Zuiderveen.

Basic Argumentation

<u>Argument</u> – An argument is a discussion involving two opposing parties. In writing, an argument involves an author and his or her critics. The goal of the argument is to win over the audience so they will support what you support. When making an argument, you usually start with a <u>thesis</u>. The thesis will have several <u>claims</u>. Each claim has a <u>reason</u> which is supported by <u>evidence</u>. The <u>warrant</u> is the general principle that makes the evidence useful to the reason. The claims form the <u>premises</u> of the argument, while the <u>thesis</u> is the <u>conclusion</u> that you are trying to prove.

<u>Causal Arguments</u> – These <u>arguments</u> are concerned with the question "why"? Why do things happen the way that they do?

<u>Claims</u> – This is the basic building block of an <u>argument</u>. Claims are statements that the writer must prove within the argument. They can function as <u>premises</u> but must be supported by <u>reasons</u> or <u>evidence</u>. Supporting claims is one of the most important parts in building an argument. (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Definitions by Example</u> – Definitions by example define a thing by listing specific examples commonly accepted by most people. Because of this, the definition can be narrowly defined by comparing elements of the "correct" definition and contrasting them with elements of the "incorrect" definition.

<u>Empirical</u> – This means using <u>hard evidence</u> to make logical <u>inductive</u> arguments. Scientists use empirical methods to test <u>hypotheses</u> so that scientific theories are correct. This involves making observations, collecting and organizing data, and forming conclusions based on the data.

<u>Fallacies</u> – These are <u>incorrect arguments</u>! There are both <u>inductive</u> and <u>deductive</u> fallacies. <u>Deductive</u> fallacies fail because the structure of the premises does not support the conclusion. <u>Inductive</u> fallacies fail because the premises do not relate to or do not sufficiently prove the conclusion. This may be because they use <u>circumstantial evidence</u> or because they unfairly attack the other side. (For a tip on avoiding fallacies, see our fallacy handout at The Writing Center!)

<u>Formal Definitions</u> – These are the kinds of definitions found in dictionaries. They define the thing and describe what makes it different from similar things.

<u>Operational Definitions</u> – Similar to <u>definitions by example</u>, Operational definitions describe the circumstances that create a particular word or idea. These definitions are not only concerned about objects and actions, but also the after-effects, the motives of specific people, the final outcome, or other details about the situation. (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Qualitative Arguments</u> – These <u>arguments</u> do not rely on <u>hard evidence</u> as much as they do on language, definitions, and abstract ideas. Qualitative arguments show how something can be good, bad, related to something else, superior, likeable, inconclusive, or illogical based on *language alone* and not on empirical data. These arguments mostly rely on abstract words or phrases. (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Quantitative Arguments</u> – These <u>arguments</u> use <u>empirical data</u> to form a conclusion. These are widely used in the sciences and social sciences. Many of these arguments are used to develop or discredit the theories used in an field of study. Like in the scientific process, quantitative arguments use many "experiments" to test a "<u>hypothesis</u>." (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Stasis Theory</u> – This system was used in ancient Greek and Roman law to determine the issue in a legal case. Judges would try to understand the causes of the dispute, what happened in the dispute, or whether something should be done. From here, both sides could develop <u>factual</u> <u>arguments</u>, <u>definitional arguments</u>, or <u>evaluative arguments</u> to meet the needs of the case.

<u>Toulmin Logic</u> – This method of argumentation was developed in Stephen Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* (1958). The key components of this method are <u>claim</u>, <u>reason</u>, <u>warrant</u>, <u>simile</u>, and <u>analogy</u>.

<u>Arguments of Fact</u> – These arguments gather <u>hard evidence</u> to prove or disprove a certain fact. They always attempt to establish a fact based on evidence.

<u>Arguments of Definition</u> – Unlike <u>arguments of fact</u>, arguments of definition debate how something should be defined. What is a specific thing? Does this object or event match the definition we are looking for?

<u>Arguments of Evaluation</u> – These arguments judge things by measuring them against a list of criteria stated in the argument. Was this person's opinion fair? Why or Why not? Did the local government handle a specific issue in a beneficial way? Why or why not? Arguments of evaluation show how people should think about the subject in the future.

<u>Proposal Arguments</u> – These arguments boldly state what should be done. They rely on <u>arguments of facts</u> to show that a problem exists and should be dealt with. On the other hand, using an <u>argument of evaluation</u>, the author might advocate reform. Proposal arguments do not just state that *something* should be done, but show what steps should be taken and why.

Showing Proof

<u>Conclusion</u> – The conclusion is what the <u>argument</u> proves. It is a statement that is controversial or not obvious to the audience. The conclusion cannot stand by itself, so it must be defended by <u>claims</u> and <u>evidence</u>.

<u>Deductive Reasoning</u> – Deductive reasoning starts with a premise and draws conclusions from new premises. In order for deductive reasoning to work, the audience must agree on the truth of all the premises, and the premises must support the truth of the conclusion. Because *deductive reasoning* relies mostly on the structure of the argument instead of *hard evidence*, they work well with <u>qualitative arguments</u>. (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Enthymeme</u> – This term was used by Aristotle to describe ordinary sentences which have a <u>claim</u> and a <u>reason</u> but hide the assumption that connects the two. The success of the enthymeme depends on the how much the audience agrees with the hidden assumption. (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Evidence</u> – Evidence uses facts about the world to support claims. These facts may be a statistic, an observation, a quote from another author, a video, or anything else that verifies or supports your claim. *Evidence* helps turn abstract <u>hypotheses</u> into concrete theories.

<u>Hypothesis</u> – A hypothesis is a kind of claim that you intend to prove using <u>empirical</u> methods. By testing a hypothesis with <u>empirical evidence</u>, the author attempts to explain how (and sometimes why) something works the way that it does.

<u>Inductive Reasoning</u> – Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, starts with several examples and derives a principle based on similarities with the <u>evidence</u>. Inductive reasoning focuses less on proving and more on showing correlations based on evidence. This makes inductive reasoning a vital part of <u>empirical research</u> and other <u>quantitative arguments</u>. (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Premise</u> – A premise is a statement that supports a conclusion or <u>claim</u>. Every claim has premises; these are the *assumptions* that your audience must agree on to believe your conclusion. The structure of an argument is the *list of premises* and the *conclusion*. (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Quantitative Data</u> – Quantitative data refers to a collection of known facts. Usually, quantitative data is collected in extremely large groups according to specific guidelines. Surveys create quantitative data by revealing the opinions of a large section of a population. Also, tax information is a kind of quantitative data because it can be used to make accurate statements about personal finances.

<u>Reason</u> – Reasons justify <u>claims</u>. When you make a claim, there must be a reason. The reason can be <u>evidence</u> or another claim. Reasons always provide support by explaining, defining, or testing parts of the claim. (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Thesis</u> – The thesis is the main point of your paper or essay. In writing, this is the largest <u>claim</u> that you make, so it must be supported by the main ideas in your body paragraphs. Typically, your thesis comes at the end of the introduction.

<u>Warrants</u> – Warrants judge the importance of <u>evidence</u>. Generally, we use evidence to support <u>claims</u>. If the evidence has a strong warrant, then it is better able to support the claim. *Warrants* can be simple or complex; they are principles that justify evidence. Some warrants will be different depending on your audience; they can be social, cultural, religious, or academic. In popular culture, warrants could be the catch phrases or values that the group most strongly believes. In religion, warrants will be theological standards. In academic writing, warrants will be the axioms or assumptions of the discipline, so each science will have different warrants. (see <u>example</u>.)

The Rhetorical Triangle

<u>Ethos</u> – This part of the <u>rhetorical triangle</u> uses the credibility or authority of the author or another source to support the argument. The author builds his or her reputation so the audience will listen to the argument. Authors who have not established ethos will not have a

wide audience because the public does not trust the author. In academic writing, the peer review process helps to ensure that whatever is published has a high degree of ethos. (see example.)

<u>Kairos</u> – This Greek word describes the ability to understand the circumstances of the <u>argument</u>. Should one form a <u>hypothesis</u> now? Should the opponent's <u>ethos</u> be questioned here? Will a <u>definition of example</u> work here? Having *Kairos* will help the author make that judgment.

<u>Logos</u> – This part of the rhetorical triangle focuses on logic alone. Is the argument valid? Is there enough <u>inductive evidence</u> for the claim? Does my evidence have warrant to support my <u>claim</u>? Are there any <u>fallacies</u>? Logos is all about the logical structure of the argument. (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Pathos</u> – This is part of the <u>rhetorical triangle</u>; it uses emotion to appeal to the audience or to help them sympathize with your <u>argument</u>. Do people see the moral consequences of particular side? Can they emotionally understand the rightness of your cause? Can they **feel** same way about an issue as you do? (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Rhetoric</u> – Rhetoric is the language used to make an <u>argument</u>. It also refers to how an argument is made. A person's rhetoric can be emotional, logical, filled with <u>analogies</u>, authoritative, or poor. Your rhetoric will improve as you practice making arguments and thinking about argument form. Learning how rhetoric works is the first step in improving arguments.

<u>Rhetorical Triangle</u> – The rhetorical triangle is way to think about rhetoric; it is divided into <u>pathos</u>, <u>ethos</u>, and <u>logos</u>. Each of these elements has a different way to defend an argument. In English, we think about them in order as *emotion*, *authority*, and *logic*. A good argument will have all three elements.

Evaluating Evidence

<u>Circumstantial Evidence</u> – This is considered *indirect evidence*. Although this <u>evidence</u> suggests what happened, it is not necessary or sufficient to prove what happened.

<u>Conditions of Rebuttal</u> – These are possible objections that an opponent to an argument would make. One can address these conditions by refuting them, acknowledging them, <u>qualifying your own claim</u>, or changing your claim completely.

<u>Criteria of Evaluation</u> – These are the standards that we use to judge claims. The can be social or cultural standards, religious standards, scientific or <u>empirical</u> standards, medical standards... and the list goes on. Several standards can be used at once; each <u>argument</u> will be evaluated based on the standards of the community that the argument involves.

<u>Evaluations</u> – Evaluations simply judge between two or more options. In writing, this may involve accepting or rejecting the author's <u>argument</u> or proposal. This process is used to decide on what to do and what to believe.

<u>Hard Evidence</u> – This is <u>evidence</u> that can be measured, gathered, or discovered. Hard evidence includes eye-witness testimony, physical evidence, statistical data, or other <u>empirical</u> facts.

<u>Indirect Evidence</u> – Indirect evidence supports a <u>claim</u> without proving it. It is unrelated to what is trying to be proved, but <u>inductive reasoning</u> based on the evidence may lead to a <u>hypothesis</u>.

<u>Necessary Causes</u> – This describes causes that *must* occur for the desired effect to happen. If something is a necessary cause, then an effect cannot happen without it. This does not mean that if the necessary cause happens, then the effect must absolutely happen too. For example, you must attend your classes in order to earn a passing grade in them, however, this does not mean that if you attend your classes, you will automatically pass those classes (it take more work than that!). So, attending your classes is a *necessary cause* of passing them.

<u>Precedent</u> – A precedent is an example that justifies a decision or action. Lawyers use precedents to argue how the law should apply to a particular case or how a circumstance contributes to earlier rulings.

<u>Qualifying a Claim</u> – This happens when a strong <u>claim</u> is reduced to a slightly weaker but more defensible claim. You might make qualifications to a claim as a response to criticism or to give a more precise definition. Qualified claims can be very useful in arguments, but if there are too many qualifications, the claim will not be useful.

<u>Rhetorical Analysis</u> – This refers to how the language and style of an <u>argument</u> is analyzed. Rhetorical analysis can look at the argument's logical structure, how the language sounds, what specific words mean, or any number of things related to the use of language in the argument.

<u>Sufficient Causes</u> – Unlike a <u>necessary cause</u>, a sufficient cause guarantees that the effect will happen. If the sufficient cause happens, then the effect will happen. For example, a

sufficient cause of passing your classes is passing all the assignments in your classes. If you pass all your assignments, you will pass the class.

Language Style

<u>Analogies</u> – An analogy is a complex comparison of two things that seem unrelated. Usually, an idea or aspect of one thing is used to describe another thing.

<u>Antithesis</u> – Antithesis is a writing style that uses <u>parallel structure</u> to show strong contrast between two things. (see <u>example</u>.)

<u>Antonomasia</u> – Antonomasia is the <u>trope</u> that uses a nickname (also called an epithet) to describe a person or thing.

<u>Hyperbole</u> – This <u>trope</u> deliberately uses overstatement or exaggeration to make a point. It's simply the best tool ever!

<u>Metaphor</u> – A metaphor directly compares a thing to something else without using "like" or "as." Metaphors create strong associations between words, creating **pathos** for or against the subject.

<u>Parallel Structure</u> – Parallel structure uses sets of repeated words or phrases to make a point. By using almost identical kinds of sentences, a parallel structure strongly emphasizes the differences or similarities in the different words.

<u>Rhetorical Questions</u> – A rhetorical question is a question that is not supposed to be answered. The answers to these questions are in the question itself, and the author asks them so the audience will think closely about the answer.

<u>Schemes</u> – These are stylistic devices that rely on word order to make their point. Would be effective to reverse the word order? Would a <u>parallel structure</u> get you point across? Would repeating a key phrase or idea bring the point home?

<u>Simile</u> – This basic <u>trope</u> uses "like" or "as" to compare two things. How fast was the car going? Was it as slow as a turtle or as fast as a runaway train? Similes are useful when making comparison, but be careful that what you are claiming seems reasonable. If not, you may lose some of your <u>ethos</u>.

<u>Tropes</u> – Tropes add style to language by changing the meaning of words. <u>Metaphors</u>, <u>similes</u>, <u>analogies</u>, <u>hyperbole</u>, and <u>understatement</u> are kinds of tropes that have their own unique purpose in writing.

<u>Understatement</u> – Understatement uses softer language to make a point even though the point may be huge. Usually, understatement paints the author as humble. This can help increase the author's credibility if the understated point is important.

Examples of Selected Terms

Antithesis – Probably the most famous example of Antithesis in English literature is Charles Dicken's opening line to A Tale of Two Cities: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." This highlights the tension during the French revolution. It was an age of enlightenment, but it was an age of human cruelty and ignorance. It was the birth of a nation; it was the death of another. All of these statements point to the kinds of changes France was experiencing during their civil war. A good antithesis shows how something that appears good can be really bad or shows how good and evil can be present simultaneously.

<u>Claims</u> – A claim about climate control could be: "<u>Over the past five years, the carbon emissions</u> within the United States have risen significantly." This helps your argument by establishing a fact that supports your opinion about climate control. However, in order for this claim about carbon emission to be useful, you must support it with evidence!

<u>Deductive Reasoning</u> – Deductive reasoning about role models could start: "<u>If a person</u> shows leadership and actively supports other people's success, he or she is a role model." From here, you could use evidence to show how <u>your teacher, Mr. Smith, has strongly</u> advocated for a good cause and actively pushes you toward success. Then, you can conclude that <u>Mr. Smith is a good role model</u>. Notice that the first sentence ("If a person...") is our premise, and it has several complicated parts. In order for this argument to work, the audience must agree that the first sentence is true. Otherwise, the audience could agree that Mr. Smith is a good role model, but they may disagree as to *why* he is a good role model; this would destroy this deductive argument.

<u>Definitions by Example</u> – To establish a good definition of a "role model," you might include examples like <u>Martin Luther King Jr., Franklin D. Roosevelt, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, your parents, a favorite teacher, a favorite musician or actor. Most people agree that these people are good leaders or role models. Because of this, it will be easier for you to make a more general **claim** about role models using examples from these people's lives.</u>

<u>Enthymeme</u> – A good example of an enthymeme would be the following warning: "<u>Beware of politicians because most politicians started as lawyers.</u>" The hidden premise of this warning is that "you should be careful of lawyers" or "most lawyers are corrupt." If your audience shares your view on lawyers, they will probably agree with your statement.

Inductive Reasoning – Inductive reasoning about the weather could start: "In the past, bad weather occurred when dark clouds gathered on a warm, windy day." Then, you could make a remark about today's weather: "When I left the house today, it felt warm and windy outside, and I now see dark clouds gathering in the distance." You can conclude inductively that "The weather in the near future will probably be bad." A famous example of an inductive argument goes: "Since we have observed that the sun always rises in the morning and sets in the evening, tomorrow (and every other day) the sun will rise in the morning and set in the evening."

<u>Operational Definition</u> – Operational definitions tend to be more rigorous then a <u>definition</u> by example because they examine the circumstances that create what needs to be defined. An operational definition of a "role" model will include qualities that role models share. For example, <u>Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. both overcame social prejudice to promote a just cause</u>. <u>Also, Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy provided leadership during the Cold War and the Great Depression. A parent or teacher may provide good advice or support while you work your way through college.</u> From this list, we can say that being a role model involves standing up for what is right, providing leadership during tough times, and supporting those who need help.

<u>Premise</u> – A premise can be a tricky thing to find since they are often the unquestioned assumption made in an argument. For example, the argument: "The current legislation on immigration limits the freedom of specific classes of people living the in United States," contains the premise "<u>Limiting people's freedom is wrong</u>." This is a commonly held belief that is grounded our nation's founding principles. Another example is in the slogan "Democrats serve the people." Whether true or not, the slogan assumes "<u>A good government serves the people,</u>" supporting the idea "If the Democratic Party controls the government, then it will be a good government."

<u>Qualitative Arguments</u> – A qualitative argument against the production of genetically modified food might be, "<u>The use of genetically modified food indicates an over-reliance on human will, while ignoring the balance nature creates. We, as a species, should learn to adapt to nature and her methods instead of relying on our own industry." This argument does not attempt to prove that genetically modified food *is dangerous for consumption*. Instead, it</u>

focuses on our role within nature and how overdependence on human industry destroys will nature's natural balance.

Quantitative Argument – A quantitative argument about the production of genetically modified foods would focus on hard evidence: "Despite the positive effects on overall crop yield and disease resistance, the emerging risks of collateral genetic mutation and the increased allergic reactions to genetically modified food strongly illustrate why using genetically modified food is dangerous." Unlike the qualitative argument, the quantitative includes claims that can be proven or disproven using empirical data. Studies can be produced describing how genetic mutation causes unpredictable changes in an organisms DNA. Statistics showing the correlation between food allergies and the introduction of genetically modified food could be used to support the second claim.

<u>Reason</u> –There can be several reasons for the claim, "I prefer cats over dogs." It could be that <u>dogs tend to be more hyper than cats.</u> You might like cats <u>because they are always keeping</u> <u>themselves clean</u>. In the past, <u>you might have had bad experiences with dogs</u>. All of these reasons would support why you prefer cats over dogs.

<u>Pathos</u> – A good example of *pathos* can be found in the gun control debate. <u>Using the</u>
<u>Columbine High School and the recent Sandy Hook school shootings as proof of poor gun control policies appeals to the protective instincts of parents, and it implies that guns <u>automatically lead to violence.</u> Here, you are using emotion to persuade the audience instead of statistics about gun violence or a *qualitative argument* about the problems associated with guns. Instead, this tactic draws your audience to your side using the most emotionally-charged example.</u>

<u>Ethos</u> – An author builds his or her *ethos* by backing up statements with credible, appropriate sources or by appealing to the ethical values of the audience. In the case of the gun control debate, <u>appropriate sources might include law enforcement professionals relating real world experience with gun violence, lawyers or law professors discussing the law, social scientists <u>analyzing crime statistics</u>, and psychologists talking about criminal psychology related to gun <u>crimes</u>. These kinds of sources have authority to speak on the pros and cons of gun control because the gun control debate involves issues in their professions. The author builds credibility by using these kinds of sources if the audience believes that the sources are credible.</u>

<u>Logos</u> – Logos deals with the logical integrity of an argument. Suppose your thesis about gun control was: <u>The increase in the number of gun crimes using high capacity gun magazines</u> <u>justifies more regulation on the legal number of rounds used in civilian magazines.</u> If you want your audience to agree with this conclusion, your argument needs to answer critical questions,

like "Is there proof that the number of high capacity gun magazine shootings is increasing? If so, can you demonstrate why an increase in high capacity magazine gun violence justifies increased regulation?" For this argument to have good logos means that the facts must be accurate and relevant to the thesis and the premises must adequately prove the conclusion.

<u>Warrant</u> – A warrant in a debate about preserving the environment might be: <u>the danger of destroying our natural habitat is so great that it justifies sacrificing short-term economic goals.</u> This principle influences the speaker completely, and all of his or her argument will attempt to steer the audience towards the highlighted conclusion. On the other hand, an opposing businessman may feel that <u>strengthening economic and technological advantages is the only way to secure American interests in the long term</u>. Although the businessman may even agree that protecting natural resources is important, he or she will not support any laws that might have negative consequences to American businesses. Here, we would say that the two speakers' <u>warrants</u> conflict.