
UNIT 8 ARGUMENTATIVE COMPOSITION-2

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Inductive and Deductive Methods
- 8.3 Fallacies
- 8.4 Non-rational Ways of Writing
- 8.5 A Model Passage
- 8.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.7 Key Words
- 8.8 Answers to Self-check Exercises

8.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall help you to write argumentative compositions by

- i) discussing inductive and deductive methods of writing an argument,
- ii) considering some of the non-rational modes of writing an argument, and
- iii) presenting a model composition to illustrate some of the features discussed in this and the preceding unit.

After completing the unit you should be able to (i) understand the logical presentation of an argument, and (ii) avoid some of the pitfalls in building up your own arguments.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the preceding unit, there is a difference between informing someone or communicating something to someone and convincing someone to accept your point of view. To be able to convince another person one has to follow a logical sequence of thought. In this unit we shall illustrate the different methods of building up an argument logically, and also point out the pitfalls in an argument, to help you to write effective arguments.

8.2 INDUCTIVE AND DEDUCTIVE METHODS

Logic is defined as the science of reasoning. When we talk of logical argument, we imply the ordering of ideas in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome. Look at the passage below:

Example 1

Each of these things bought from the Super Bazar is cheaper than what we get at other places. We can, therefore, say that most items at the Super Bazar are cheaper than elsewhere.

In the above passage *specific* examples have been used in support of a general statement. This is called inductive reasoning, where the argument proceeds *from the particular to the general*. We use known facts to produce general laws.

Now read the next example.

Example 2

Super Bazar items are cheaper than the same items elsewhere. I bought this tea at the Super Bazar. Therefore, it must be cheaper than tea of the same quality at other shops.

In the above example we have deductive reasoning, that is, we move *from the general to the particular*. We reason from a general idea or set of facts to a particular idea or fact.

Self-check Exercise 1

- 1 Read the following passages and say whether the reasoning is inductive or deductive. Find out the topic sentence in each of these passages.

Passage 1

The facilities at this club are not satisfactory. In the park the children's swings are not properly hung and they are not high enough, with the result that children skin their knees when they try to swing. The basketball field is too small for the use of teenagers. The card tables and the ping-pong tables are not of the standard size.

.....

.....

Passage 2

A person commits a crime because he is basically insecure, because he hated his stepmother at nine, or because his sister needs a surgical operation. A policeman loots a store because his salary is too low. A city official accepts a bribe because he cannot resist the offer. Members of minority groups, racial or otherwise, commit crimes because they can't get a job, or are unacceptable to the people living around them. We find a truckload of excuses to absolve the individual from responsibility of his actions.

(Passages 1 and 2 adapted from 'The Thin Grey Line' Copyright © Marya Mannes, from *But Will it Sell?* 1964)

Glossary

inse'cure : not confident or certain

ab'solve(v.) : pronounce free from guilt or blame

.....

.....

.....

- 2 In Passage 1 above, does the writer talk assertively or is he proving his point by illustrations?
-

- 3 What type of argument is given in Passage 2 above?
-

- 4 Read the following and say whether these examples have inductive or deductive reasoning:

i) No politician is honest; he is a politician, so he cannot be honest.

.....

- ii) Mohan, Sohan and Anil succeeded because they worked hard. We can, therefore, say that work brings success.

.....

- iii) People who are good are charitable. Ram is a good man, so he must be charitable.

.....

- iv) Each of us felt sad when we visited the graveyard. Sad thoughts trouble everyone when one visits a graveyard.

.....

8.3 FALLACIES

There are reasons which account for flaws in argument. When writing an argumentative composition one should be careful to avoid the following types of fallacies or false reasoning

i) Hasty Generalisation

Examples

No woman should be free.

I know Americans. They are all materialists.

All Indians are spiritualists.

Everybody should learn Hindi.

In all these statements the writer has made generalisations without sufficient evidence, perhaps on the basis of a few observations, or maybe he is prejudiced. Such generalisations are not based on facts, but are the result of bias or limited experience.

Self-check Exercise 2

Give two examples of hasty generalisation.

.....
.....
.....

ii) Hasty Predictions

Examples

In another three months' time, everyone in India will be literate.

The recent bye-election shows that people are going to reject the present leadership at the centre.

Women will no longer be required to bear children. Test tubes will take over the job.

These predictions do not generally turn out to be true, as they are not based on the evidence of facts.

iii) Stereotypes

A stereotype is a fixed pattern which is believed to represent a type of person or event

Examples

Women make bad drivers.

Indian women are self-effacing.

India is a land of snakes and rope tricks.

Every American is rich.

When a stereotype image is projected, the discriminating reader begins to suspect the claims made by the writer and his motives for doing so.

Exercise 3

Give two examples of stereotypes.

.....

.....

.....

.....

iv) Dogmatic Statements

Examples

The king can do no wrong.

Everybody is trying to persecute the negro.

India will go to the dogs if the Presidential form of government is not introduced.

In the above statements you find that the writer argues as if his conclusions were unalterable. Such an attitude is bound to antagonise any rational reader. The writer should try to reason with his reader. He should not appear as a fanatic.

v) Appeal to Questionable Authority

Example

According to Subhalakshmi cigarette smoking causes lung cancer.

When a writer argues a case on the basis of another person's opinion, he should think of a person whose authority cannot be questioned. Since in the above example Subhalakshmi has not made a special study of lung cancer, her statement does not bear the stamp of authority.

vi) Non Sequitur

This term refers to a statement which does not follow from the facts or arguments which are given.

Example

If you have a long nose, you will get a good job.

From experience we know that all those occupying enviable positions are not necessarily long-nosed. Therefore, the reader is likely to view statements like these with scepticism.

8.4 NON-RATIONAL WAYS OF WRITING

A non-rational way of writing is that which appeals to emotion rather than to reason. By playing upon feelings such as happiness, pity, moral indignation, anger, ambition, fear, self-love, and boredom, the writer intends to change the beliefs and behaviour of his reader.

Example

We weep for the true victim, the black American. His wounds are deep. But along with their scars, black people have a secret. Their genius is that they have survived. In the adaptations they have developed a vigorous style of life. It has touched religion, music, and the broad canvas of creativity. The psyche of black men has been disturbed. For white America to understand the life of the black man it must recognise that so much time has passed and so little has changed.

(from Grier and Rice M. Cokks, 'The Shadow of the Past' in *The Writing Commitment*)

Glossary

wound: a damaged place in the body, usually a hole or tear through the skin

scar: a mark remaining on the skin or an organ from a wound

adaptation: the act of changing oneself so as to be suitable for new conditions

psyche: the human mind at all its levels

The above passage is from an argument for learning the history of black people in the United States.

Self-check Exercise 4

Read the passage given above and answer the following questions:

1 In emotional argument the appeal is to emotion rather than reason. What feeling is the author playing upon here?

- i) happiness
- ii) pity
- iii) anger

2 Which words in the passage arouse the feeling of pity?

3 Words such as *weep*, *wounds*, and *scars* are not used here in the literal sense. They are used to evoke our sympathies. Make sentences of your own using these words in the same way.

Satire and Irony

Satire is a form of writing that is intended to show the foolishness or evil of some establishment or practice in an amusing way. It aims at invoking moral indignation by revealing the difference between how things should be and how they are. One of the devices used in satire is irony. Irony refers to the use of words which are clearly opposite to one's meaning, usually with an amusing purpose. When we say of a chicken-hearted person, "He's a brave guy", 'brave' really means cowardly. Here are some examples of satire.

- 1 Since teachers work with children all day, they need no children of their own and are thus spared the expense of raising a family.
- 2 Teachers must spend their evening reading books and marking papers, so they cannot watch T.V. They are thus spared the cost of buying a T.V. set.
- 3 Since teachers must spend their vacation preparing lectures for the future, they do not need to spend on holiday travel.

As can be seen here, the writer is, in fact, supporting teachers' claims.

8.5 A MODEL PASSAGE

Read the following passage and answer the questions given at the end.

STEP IN TIME

- 1 Walking is the key to fitness for people of all ages. Started at an early age and continued till later years, it is a sort of life insurance that can have significant preventive effects on some major health problems.
- 2 Says Dr. Manoj Bansal, a senior resident in Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital, "People generally have the misconception that vigorous exercise (for which they have no time) is the only way to keep fit. What they don't realise is that walking, which requires less effort, can be as beneficial as any exercise".
- 3 Walking can be especially beneficial to cure obesity, from which many of us suffer. Though it happens mostly in the middle age, it can occur at any stage of life. Obesity in childhood and adolescence is likely to be followed by obesity in adult life. "More than 90 per cent of the housewives lead sedentary lives and are found to be obese," complaints Dr. Hari Ram, a dietician in a reputed Delhi hospital. "We recommend regular walking as a first step towards weight reduction because housewives also find it an easier form of exercise. An hour's walk at three miles per hour will expend about 300 calories (or more for a heavy person). This may seem a small amount, equivalent to about 30 grams of fat, but if the daily walk becomes a habit it will add up, other things being equal, to a weight loss of 9 kg. in a year."
- 4 A misconception about walking (or exercise in any form) and its effect upon the heart is that it is 'harmful and strenuous'. This is a myth. There is no evidence to support this contention. In fact walking and mild exercise are prescribed as part of the recuperative phase in cases of heart and coronary disease, provided it is done within the predetermined cardiovascular limits. It helps reduce weight, improves work tolerance, and allows more physical activity to be undertaken with relatively less strain on the heart.
- 5 Seema Bhandari, an M.A. student, sees no reason why walking should be considered a less active exercise for the younger generation. She would rather go out for regular walks than visit the health clubs which "deprive one of the fresh air so very necessary to clear the lungs, and greenery, and the open sky which is soothing to the eyes, mind and soul."
- 6 Walking seems to have caught the imagination of people who are keen on 'looking good and feeling good with a trim body'. An encouraging sign is the sight of 'walkers' who throng public parks and gardens in the early hours of the morning regardless of the heat.
- 7 This just goes to show how fast walking is picking up among people of all ages who want to 'live to be fit and be fit to live'. (Navraj Gandhi)

(Adapted from *The Times of India*, 22 August 1987)

Glossary

'life insurance': an agreement between a company and a person by which in return for regular payments either that person will receive a certain sum of money on reaching a certain age, or if he dies, another person will receive it

pre'ventive: serving to keep (something) from happening

o'besity: the state of being very fat

'sedentary: used to long sitting and only slight activity

,die'tician: a person trained in the science of diet

'strenuous: requiring great effort

re'cuperative: helping one to get well again after illness

,cardio'vascular: relating to the heart and the blood vessels

Self-check Exercise 5

1 What is the main point that the author wants to make here?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2 What kinds of evidence has the writer used to support his argument?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3 Does the writer reply to possible counter-arguments? If so, in which paragraph?

.....

4 Give two examples of the writer quoting competent authority to support his argument.

.....

.....

.....

.....

8.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have told you more about argumentative compositions, and discussed the inductive and deductive methods of writing arguments, the fallacies in reasoning, and non-rational ways of writing. We have also set a model passage to illustrate the techniques of argumentative writing.

8.7 KEY WORDS

au'thority: a person whose opinion is accepted

de'ductive: reasoning by deduction, that is, inference from general to particular

dog'matic: asserting one's opinions

e'motional: expressing emotion, that is, feeling as opposed to reason

'evidence: facts in support of a conclusion

'fallacy: a misleading argument

in'ductive : based on induction, that is, inferring a general law from particular instances

'irony : expression of one's meaning by language of opposite tendency

'observation: accurate watching and noting (of things occurring before us)

'prejudiced: having already formed an opinion (about a person or thing)

'questionable: doubtful

'rational: based on reason

'satire: a composition in which the author tries to make fun of vice or folly

8.8 ANSWERS TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

Exercise 1

1 Passage 1: Deductive

Topic sentence: The facilities at this club are not satisfactory.

Passage 2 : Inductive

Topic sentence : We find a truckload of excuses to absolve the individual from responsibility of his action.

2 The writer uses illustrations to prove his point.

3 Assertive

- 4 i) deductive
ii) inductive
iii) deductive
iv) inductive

Exercise 2

1 All politicians are crooked.

2 India needs a Presidential form of government to face the present crisis.

Exercise 3

1 In India women lead a life of self-abnegation, that is, they do not try to get the things they want.

2 India is a country of saints.

Exercise 4

1 pity

2 weep, wounds, scars

3 weep: I weep to see my countrymen struggling to get two square meals.

wounds: Physical wounds may heal one day, but the wounds caused by humiliation never do.

scar: Even after a war has ended, the countries involved in it will show the scars for a long time.

Exercise 5

- 1 Walking is the key to fitness for people of all ages.**
- 2 The writer has quoted competent authority, provided data, and illustrations, and replied to counter-arguments to argue his case.**
- 3 Yes, in paragraphs 2 and 4.**
- 4 He quotes statements made by a resident doctor and a dietician.**