

Craft of Research by Colomb, Williams, &
Booth[1]
Argument Creation

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I write to Remember, Understand, & Test my Thinking



Claim **because of** reason **based on** evidence

1 Claim

The solution to your research question. They are backed up with reason and evidence.

The principle questions for any claim are

What kind of claim should I make?	
Is the claim specific?	
Will my readers think it is significant enough to need an argument supporting it?	

1.1 Conceptual claim

Does a thing exist?	
How should we characterise it?	
How did it get this way?	
Moral judgement?	
What can/should be done about it?	

1.2 Practical claims

Why your solution is feasible?	
Why it costs less?	
Why it will not create a bigger problem?	
Why it is faster/cheaper?	

1.3 Evaluation

Is my claim...	
Specific?	
Is the logic explicit?	
Acknowledge the views of critics?	
Significant? (test by reversing the claim)	
Acknowledge limiting conditions	
Use hedges to limit certainty	

2 Reason

An assertion that supports the claim. Storyboard reasons and evidence for your claim

3 Evidence

Data deployed to support a reason. Assessing evidence

Is the evidence...	
Reported accurately?	
Precise?	
sufficient and representative?	
Weighed appropriately to their authority?	

4 Acknowledge and Response

What critiques will my claim have ahead of time? Challenges are either intrinsic (clarity of claim, relevance of reason, or quality of evidence), or extrinsic (alternative framings, or overlooked evidence). Testing questions for argument

Why do I think there is a problem at all?	
Have I properly defined the problem	
Is the solution practical or conceptual?	
Is the claim too strong?	
Why is my solution better than others?	

Testing questions for evidence

Different sort of evidence?	
Inaccurate evidence?	
Imprecise?	
Isn't current?	
Isn't representative	
Isn't authoritative?	
Insufficient?	

Include your considerations of alternatives in your argument.

Charges of weakness	
Alternative lines of argument	
Alternative conclusions	
Alternative evidence	
Important counterexamples	
Additional causes	
Alternative categories	

Acknowledge flaws in argument. Unanswerable questions. Challenge and respond to them all.

5 Warrant

Reference general principles that link a particular claim and reason together. A general circumstance predictably leads to a general circumstance. The general circumstance implies a specific circumstance. The specific circumstance lets us infer the specific consequence. Warrants are used to justify the linking of claim and reason, or explain a fields way of reasoning. Testing warrants

Is the warrant...	
Reasonable?	
Sufficiently limited?	
superior to competing warrants	
appropriate to the field	
covers the claim and reason	

Use warrants	
Readers are outside the field	
Your reasons are new and controversial	
Readers will resist claim	

References

- [1] W.C. Booth, G.G. Colomb, and J.M. Williams. *The Craft of Research, Third Edition*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. University of Chicago Press, 2009.