

Critical Thinking and Philosophical Writing II

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Outline

- ① Rules 29-33
- ② Rules 34-39
- ③ Writing Sample

What is an Extended Argument

- Short Arguments = Premises + Single Conclusion
- Extended Argument = Premises (Argument ← Premises + Conclusion) + Conclusion
- Go beyond a short argument
- A more detailed line of thought
- Main ideas clearly laid out and their own premises in turn are spelled out and defended.

Rule 29. Explore the Issue

- Begin with an issue, not with a position.
- The goal is to arrive at a well-informed position, defended with valid (example: theoretical physics) and sound arguments.

As you explore an issue...

- Be skeptical
- Ask questions
- Consider diverse explanations
- Weigh arguments and reasons
- Thinking as an open-ended process
- Avoid cliché arguments
- Don't pre-judge conclusions

Practice Your Questions

Think of 3 important questions:

- Should recreational marijuana be legalized?

Rule 30. Spell out Basic Ideas as Arguments

- Constructing Arguments: specific conclusions backed up with reasons (or evidence)
- Take your position → re-frame as an argument

Practice by...

- 1) with pen and paper, draft your premises and conclusions
 - Start by aiming at a relatively short argument to start with (with 3-4 premises)
 - Practice using the deductive argument forms (modus ponens, etc.)
 - Revise from your first attempt with better attempts
 - Take your time

Practice by...

2) Take a position and construct an argument for and an argument against...

- Example: Athletes should not use performance enhancing drugs.

Rule 31. Defend Basic Premises with arguments of their own.

Example: The Harm to Society Argument

- ① An athlete's use of substance X causes harm to society.
- ② Society needs to be protected from this harm.
- ③ Banning substance X will protect society.
- ④ Therefore, substance X ought to be banned.
- ⑤ The use of substance X provided role models who encourage an attitude of disrespect toward rules and authority.

Rule 31. Defend Basic Premises with arguments of their own.

Example: The Harm to Society Argument

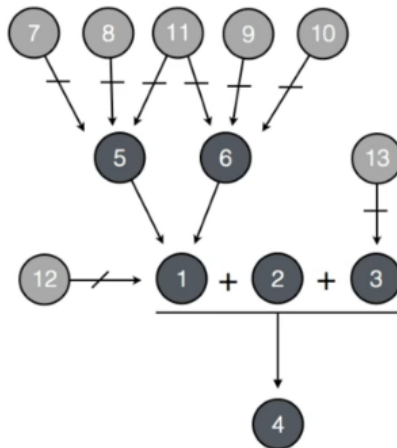
- ⑥ The use of substance X provided role models who encourage other forms of substance abuse.
- ⑦ An attitude of disrespect toward rules and authority is not always a bad thing.
- ⑧ The use of substance X can only encourage an attitude of disrespect toward rules and authority if the use of substance X is banned in the first place.
- ⑨ There are many substances that are off-limits to children, but not to adults. Why couldn't substance X be one of those?

Rule 31. Defend Basic Premises with arguments of their own.

Example: The Harm to Society Argument

- ⑩ The causal link between taking substance X and encouraging other forms of substance-abuse is dubious.
- ⑪ Why should sportspeople be role models when other public figures are not held to this high standard?
- ⑫ We can only say that taking substance X is harmful to society if we have a justifiably negative attitude toward drug-enhanced performances. We have no such justification yet.
- ⑬ It is doubtful whether a ban on doping would actually protect society from harm.

Structure of the Argument



Key Message

- Thesis - Conclusion of Argument
- Evidence of the conclusion = premises
- Each premise needs its own supporting argument, etc...
- Each premise therefore becomes the conclusion of a further argument that you need to work out.
- A good argument depends upon the constituted whole

Concrete Examples Help

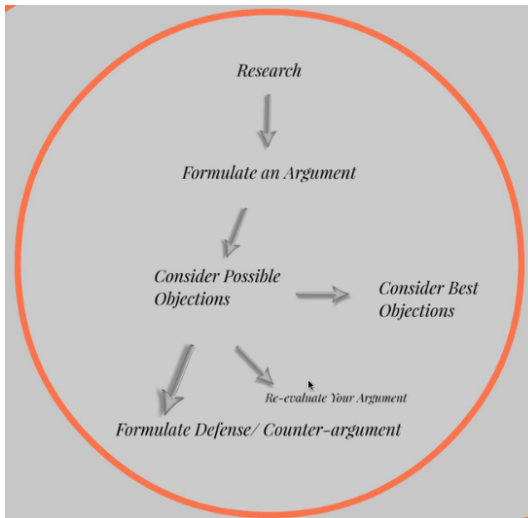
Distinction: Arguments (prove) vs. Explanations (clarity)

- Examples: Most Americans support capital punishment. Politicians are unlikely to ban a practice that most of their constituents support. Therefore, American politicians are unlikely to ban capital punishment.

Rule 32. Consider Objections

- Consider why you might be wrong?
- What arguments are there against my conclusion(s)? What are the best arguments against my argument?

Rule 32. Consider Objections



Types of objections

- Counter-example objections
- Logical objections
- False Dilemma objections
- Explanatory objections
- Categorical Objections
- Researched Objections

Rule 33. Consider Alternatives

- Argument → Address an Idea → Solve a Problem
- If you are defending a proposal, it is not enough to show that your proposal will solve a problem. You must also show that it is better than other plausible ways of solving that same problem.

Rule 33. Consider Alternatives

Example: Durham's swimming pools are overcrowded, especially on weekends. Therefore, Durham needs to build more pools.

- "Overcrowded" is vague
- Other ways to address problem?
- Why is this proposal better than others?
- Look for serious alternatives
- Be creative
- Change your argument: the goal is truth, not persuasion
- There are always alternatives.

Practice

- Identify two alternatives for a proposal
- State with is best and why
- Example: In an effort to equitably compensate student amateur football player, the prohibition against paying student athletes directly should be over-turned and we should begin paying student athletes a share of the money they generate for their Universities.

Outline

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- ② **Rules 34-39**
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Rule 34: Jump Right in

Launch straight into the real work. No windy windups or rhetorical padding.

- NO:
For centuries philosophers have debated the best way to be happy... We knew that already. Get to your point.
- YES:
In this essay I will try to show that the best things in life really are free.

Rule 35: Make a Definite Claim or Proposal

- If you are making a philosophical claim, or defending your interpretation of a text or event, begin by stating your claim or interpretation simply.
- Always make your conclusion clear immediately.
- “Something should be done” is not a real proposal. You need not be elaborate.
- “Very probably there is life on other planets.” That’s forthright and clear.

Rule 36 Your Argument is Your Outline

- ① Take the basic argument you've outlined and put it into a concise paragraph.
- ② An argumentative essay should now advance each of the premises of this basic argument in turn, each with a paragraph that begins with a restatement of the premise and continues by developing and defending it.
- ③ Some premises in your basic argument may need fairly involved defenses. Treat them exactly the same way.
- ④ Pull out the road map, as it were, and remind your readers—and yourself—where you are in your journey toward the main conclusion.
- ⑤ In your outline you will have worked out the argument for this premise too, and you can now bring it smoothly up to bat.

Rule 37: Detail Objections and Meet Them

- NO:
Someone might object that expanded student exchange programs will create too many risks for students. But I think that...

Rule 37: Detail Objections and Meet Them

- YES:

Someone might object that expanded student exchange programs will create too many risks for students. The concern is partly, I think, that students abroad, who are mostly young people after all and not so worldly, may be more easily taken advantage of or hurt, especially in places where life is more desperate and there are fewer safeguards and protections.

Rule 38: Get Feedback and Use It

- Points that seem connected to you may seem completely unrelated to someone reading your essay.
- Every piece of serious writing is hard. Development, criticism, clarification, and change are the keys. Feedback is what makes them go.

Rule 39: Modesty, please!

Don't claim more than you've shown.

- NO:

In sum, every reason favors sending more students abroad, and none of the objections stands up at all. What are we waiting for?

- YES:

In sum, there is an appealing case for sending more students abroad. Although uncertainties may remain, on the whole it seems to be a promising step. It's worth a try.

Writing Sample

- See the Demo

Reference

- David R. Morrow, Anthony Weston (2015). *A Workbook for Arguments: A Complete Course in Critical Thinking*, Second Edition. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.