Argument Structure

Student Handout

Lessons 1–5

☺ ☹

**Thesis**

**Claim**

**Claim**

**Claim**

☺ ☹

☺ ☹

☺ ☹

**Argument Analysis:** Is the argument convincing? Why or why not?

☺ ☹

☺ ☹

☺ ☹

☺ ☹

**Evidence**

**Evidence**

**Evidence**

☺ ☹

☺ ☹

**Reason**

**Reason**

**Reason**

Parts of an Argument

supplement

Lesson 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Part** | **Definition** | **Example** |
| **Thesis (position)** | the debatable point that the author is trying to convince or persuade the reader to accept | Children should not be allowed to play violent video games. |
| **Claim** | a statement or position that the author presents as true to support the thesis  An argument can have one or more claims. | Violent video games increase violence in children. |
| **Reason** | a statement or explanation that supports the claim | Children often confuse the sophisticated graphic images in games with reality, causing them to act more violently. |
| **Evidence** | data gathered to support the claim | Studies have shown that many children do not understand that violence in video games in not real. |

Clear Claims

supplement

Lesson 2

# Clear claims . . .

* state an opinion that can be supported with facts
* give a position on a topic with two or more sides

**Example:** Boys and girls should not be allowed to play sports together because boys are better at sports than girls are.

✓ states a clear opinion

✓ supporting data can be gathered  
(for example, boys can lift more weight than girls can)

✓ the issue is debatable

# Unclear claims . . .

* state an opinion that cannot be supported with facts
* give an obvious truth
* fail to take a specific side
* give a mixed opinion

**Example:** There are pros and cons of children having their own pets.

🗶 does not take a clear side

**Example:** Children should not have to learn a foreign language because I hate learning Spanish.

🗶 based solely on the author’s personal opinion

**Example:** People should not eat junk food because nutritious food is healthier.

🗶 obviously true

Sound Reasons

supplement

Lesson 3

# Sound Reasons . . .

* show good judgment or sense
* are closely connected to the author’s claim
* make the claim strong

## Example

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Thesis:** Pluto should not be a planet. | **Claim:** Pluto does not meet the requirement to be a planet. |

**Reason:** Pluto is too small to be a planet.

✓ gives a specific detail

✓ relates directly to the claim

**Reason:** Pluto is made of ice, but planets are made of rock and ice.

✓ gives a specific fact

✓ relates directly to the claim

# Unsound Reasons . . .

* are based on personal opinions or experiences
* are not related to the claim
* are illogical

## Example

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Thesis:** Pluto should be a planet. | **Claim:** People like Pluto. |

**Reason:** Lots of kids want Pluto to be a planet.

🗶 based on personal opinions

🗶 general statement

**Reason:** Pluto is one-third water.

🗶 not related to the claim

Relevant and Sufficient Evidence

supplement

Lesson 4

# Relevant and sufficient Evidence . . .

* is closely connected to the claim and reason
* supports the claim and reason
* is based on facts
* is believable
* gives enough information to be convincing

## Example

**Thesis:** Schools should serve healthier food in the cafeteria.

**Claim:** There are too many overweight students.

**Reason:** Healthier food in the cafeteria would make students healthier.

**Evidence:** In 2012, 21% of teens were overweight.

✓ connects to claim and reason

✓ gives a fact that supports the claim

# Irrelevant and insufficient Evidence . . .

* is not related to the claim and reason
* does not make the reason more believable
* does not give a specific fact
* does not give enough information to be convincing

## Example

**Thesis:** Marine mammals should not be held in captivity.

**Claim:** Keeping marine mammals captive is not safe.

**Reason:** Marine mammals can act unpredictably and hurt themselves in captivity.

**Evidence:** Marine animals hurt themselves a lot in captivity.

🗶 does not give a specific fact

🗶 repeats the reason