

Recognizing Arguments

Argument

Definition

A group of statements, one or more of which are intended to support another statement

Premise

Definition

Statements in an argument offered as evidence or reasons why we should accept another statement

Premise Indicators

Definition

Indicates that premises are being offered

- Since
- For
- Seeing that
- Inasmuch as
- Because
- Given that
- Considering that
- As
- In view of the fact that
- As indicated by
- Judging from
- On account of

Conclusion

Definition

The statement in an argument that the premises are intended to prove or support

Conclusion Indicators

Definition

Indicates that conclusions are being offered

- Therefore
- Hence
- So
- It follows that
- That is why
- Wherefore
- As a result
- This being so
- Thus
- Consequently
- Accordingly
- For this reason

Tips on finding the conclusion

- Find the main issue and position
- Look at the beginning or end of the passage
- As what is trying to be proven
- Try putting the word *therefore* before one of the statements
- Try to find the most appropriate way to fill in the blanks
 - The writer or speaker believe (conclusion) because (premise)
 - The conclusion will naturally come before the word *because*

Statements

Definition

A sentence that can be viewed as either true or false

- A sentence may be used to express more than one statement

- A statement can sometimes be expressed as a phrase or an incomplete phrase, rather than a complete declarative sentence
- Not all sentences are statements
- Statements can be about subjective matter of personal experience as well as objectively verifiable matters of fact

Examples

- Red is a color
- Canada is in South America
- God does not exist
- Abortion is morally wrong

Rhetorical Question

Definition

A sentence that has the grammatical form of a question but is meant to be understood as a statement

Example

- Alyssa, you should quit smoking. Don't you realize how bad that is for your health?

Ought Imperative

Definition

A sentence that has the form of a command but is intended to assert a value or ought judgement about what is right or wrong

Example

- Do not read beauty magazines. They will only make you feel ugly

2.1 Swirlies

Statement or not

1. T
2. F
3. F

4. F
5. F
6. F
7. F
8. F
9. F
10. F

Ought Imperative or Not

1. T
2. F
3. F
4. T
5. T

Non Arguments

- Something is an argument only if
 1. It is a group of two or more statements
 2. One of those statements (the conclusion) is claimed or intended to be supported by others

Reports

Definition

Simply just conveying information about a subject

- A report could be someone reporting another person's argument

Unsupported Assertions

Definition

Statements about what speaker or writer happens to believe

- Such statements can be true/false or rational/irrational
- Could be part of an argument
- See [Assumptions](#)

Conditional Statements

Definition

An if-then statement

- Not an argument because it has no claim

Antecedent

- The *if*

Precedent

- The *then*

Chain Arguments

- The antecedent of the first statement is linked to the consequent of the last statement by a chain of intervening conditional statements

Illustrations

Definition

Intended to provide examples of a claim rather than proving the claim

- Often starts with *for example*

Explanations

Definition

Tries to show why something is the case rather than proving that it is the case

Common Knowledge Test

- Is the statement a matter of common knowledge?
 - If yes, the passage is most likely an explanation

Past Event Test

- Is the statement an event that occurred in the past?

- If yes, the passage is most likely an explanation

Author's Intent Test

- Is it the author's intent to prove/establish that something is the case or to explain why something is the case?
 - If the former, the passage is most likely an argument
 - If the latter, the passage is most likely an explanation

Principle of Charity Test

- Unclear passages should be generously interpreted
- Never interpret a passage as a bad argument when the evidence reasonable permits us to interpret it as not an argument at all