

English 1101 Handout Models of Argument

Overview

Included here is a summary of three different models of argument. These models provide possible ways to organize an effective argument, which I hope will be helpful to your organization of your own argument. This information is summarized from the following source: Georgia State University, Department of English. (2008). *First Arguments: A Peer Approach to Persuasion*. Plymouth, Michigan: Hayden McNeil.

The Classical Approach

The classical approach to argument is a model of argumentation invented by the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle. It is best used when the purpose of your argument is to persuade your audience to agree with your point of view, take your side on an issue, or make a decision in your favor. The classical approach/Aristotelian model relies heavily on the use of ethos, pathos, and logos appeals.

The following is the typical organization pattern for this approach:

- **Introduction**
- **State your case**--Clarify your issue. Give any necessary background for understanding the issues. Define any important terms of conditions here.
- **Proposition**--State your central proposition or thesis. Present the subtopics or supportive points to forecast your argument for your reader.
- **Refutation**--Analyze the opposition's argument and summarize it; refute or address the points; point out faulty reasoning and inappropriate appeals.
- **Substantiation and Proof**--Develop your own case. Use ethos, pathos, and logos appeals to make your case. Use good evidence such as examples.
- **Conclusion**

The Toulmin Approach

This model of argument was developed by the British philosopher Stephen Toulmin. The Toulmin Model is especially helpful when you try to make a case on controversial issues that do not have an absolute truth as the Toulmin Model seeks to establish probabilities rather than truth.

The following is a typical organization for the Toulmin Model:

- **Claims**--There're several different types of claims: claims of fact, claims of definition, claims of cause, claims of value, and claims of policy. You can use any one or more of these claims to introduce your issue and to establish your case.
- **Data**--Information you use to support your claims.
- **Warrant**--The assumption made by a writer in order for the claim to be true.
- **Backing**--What you use to support the warrant.
- **Rebuttal**--This is where you consider the opposing viewpoint and refute it.
- **Qualifier**--Use language that seeks to qualify the claims you make in order to bring your argument to a close.

The Rogerian Approach

This is a model of argument named after the psychologist Carl Rogers, who believed that people could only resolve an issue or solve a problem once they found the "common ground." A group of rhetoricians, Young, Becker, and Pike, then developed a model of argument named the Rogerian argument, which advocates a way of argument that is less confrontational, less one-sided, and more compromising and deliberately consensus-building. The following are the usual elements of the Rogerian approach:

- **An introduction** that briefly and objectively defines the issue or problem
- **A neutral, non-judgmental statement of the opponent's position**, presented within valid contexts, that demonstrates the writer clearly understands it
- **A neutral statement and explanation** of your position and the contexts in which it is valid
- **An analysis** of what the two positions have in common and what goals and values they share
- **A proposal** for resolving the issue in a way that recognizes the interests of both parties, or a statement of how the opponent's position would benefit if he were to adopt elements of the writer's position

Your Approach

The above approaches provide proven organizational tools you could use for your argument. What approach you use, however, doesn't necessarily have to conform exactly to one of these approaches. In fact, it is quite common for people to combine some of the elements of these approaches based on the needs of their argument.