

Arrangement: Laying out the Parts of Your Argument

While there is no one-size-fits-all organizational strategy for essays and speeches, oftentimes a general template can be used to guide your organization as you plan, compose, and subsequently deliver your argument.

As is the case with so much else in this class, for inspiration we look to the ancients (in this case, the Romans), who first laid out the parts of the following structure.

How might you use this to guide your argument's structure and focus?

- 1. Exordium:** Catches the audience's attention.
- 2. Narration:** Sets forth the facts of the issue: gives the background, gets the reader/listener up to speed on the context, the important discussions that may have gone already, etc.
- 3. Division:** Sets forth points agreed upon by both sides and points to be contested. Oftentimes the arguer's major claim is found here.

Think of this as a sort of "They say . . . , but I say . . . " move, where, after having explained the background and shown what others have argued or would likely argue, you explain how *your* argument will add to the dialogue.

- 4. Proof:** Sets forth the arguments (the minor claims, the evidence, the reasons) that support your case.

This section almost always constitutes the majority or bulk of your work.

- 5. Refutation:** Refutes the arguments your opponents have put forth or would likely put forth.
- 6. Peroration:** Sums up your arguments, your central claims and moves your audience to action.

What should your audience believe and/or do now?