

ARG CONDITIONS:

Acceptable. Are the reasons you're giving acceptable? If you're making an empirical claim, then there must be evidence that supports your claim. If you are making a theoretical claim, then the theory itself (the definitions, starting assumptions, etc) must bear out your claim. That is, your theoretical claim must be consistent with the theory itself. Notice that the criterion of acceptability is a lot less onerous than demanding truth. Some claims are acceptable even though we don't know whether they are true or not. (e.g. it is acceptable to believe that the bazilyionth digit of pi is a number and not a pineapple....despite not knowing whether that claim is true or not.)

Relevant. The reasons you give must be relevant to the claim (thesis) you are trying to defend. Perhaps the best way to understand relevance is to see what it is for a reason to be irrelevant. For example, if you're arguing against the claim that freedom is objectively valuable, then it is irrelevant to start talking about what kind of peanuts are used to make peanut butter. It would also be irrelevant to talk about the fact that the Leafs didn't make the playoffs. This is true, but completely irrelevant. A reason is relevant just when it counts in favour of the claim that you are trying to defend.

Grounds. The reasons you give must provide grounds for the claim (thesis) you are trying to defend. Reasons provide grounds for a claim just when they give sufficient support for the claim. That is, the reasons compel us to believe the claim. So let's say there is some debate after class whether an animal outside is a duck or a squirrel. I say it's a squirrel and you say it is a duck. So I ask you to give reasons that will compel me to accept your claim. So you say: "Well, it looks like a duck (and you show me a picture of a duck on wikipedia). And it sounds like a duck (it's quacking). And it walks like a duck (it only has 2 legs). So it must be a duck." Your evidence, considered together, gives me compelling grounds to accept your claim.