



TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION (KAS – 301)



UNIT – 4

Technical Communication Skills

TOPIC : Argumentation Skills and Critical Thinking Skills

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What is an argument ?

- Argument \neq “a quarrel or dispute.”
- Argument is a process of careful reasoning in support of a particular claim.
- People who “argue skillfully” are able to connect with others in a rational, sensible way, without causing animosity.

Argumentation

- ▶ Argumentation is the thought process used to develop and present arguments.
- ▶ It is closely related to critical thinking and reasoning.

Argumentative / Persuasive Skill

- ▶ Argument is not about losing or winning.
 - It is about how you persuade the next person to agree with you or how to get the response you want.
 - Persuasion means trying to influence someone's actions, opinions, or decisions.
 - At workplace, persuasion skills are needed to win coworker's support, to attract clients and customers, to request funding, etc.
 - But people who are merely “argumentative,” on the other hand, simply make others defensive.

keys to improve Argumentation skills

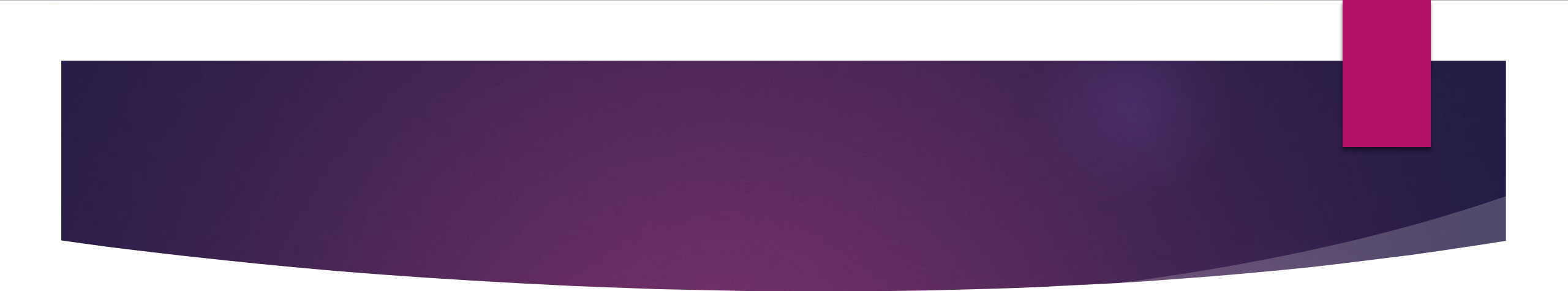
1. **Stay calm:** Even if you get passionate about your point you must stay cool and in command of your emotions. If you lose your temper – you lose.
2. **Use facts as evidence for your position:** Facts are hard to refute so gather some pertinent data before the argument starts. Surveys, statistics, quotes from relevant people and results are useful arguments to deploy in support of your case.
3. **Ask questions:** If you can ask the right questions you can stay in control of the discussion and make your opponent scramble for answers. You can ask questions that challenge his point, ‘What evidence do you have for that claim?’ You can ask hypothetical questions that extrapolate a trend and give your opponent a difficulty, ‘What would happen if every nation did that?’ Another useful type of question is one that calmly provokes your foe, ‘What is about this that makes you so angry?’



4. Use logic: Show how one idea follows another. Build your case and use logic to undermine your opponent.

5. Appeal to higher values: As well as logic you can use a little emotion by appealing to worthy motives that are hard to disagree with, ‘Shouldn’t we all be working to make the world better and safer for our children?’

6. Listen carefully: Many people are so focused on what they are going to say that they ignore their opponent and assume his arguments. It is better to listen carefully. You will observe weaknesses and flaws in his position and sometimes you will hear something new and informative!



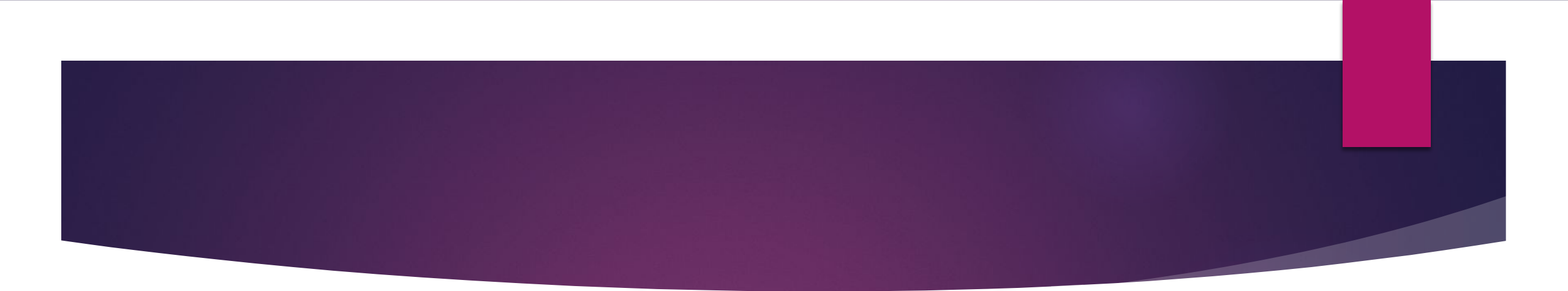
7. Be prepared to concede a good point: Don't argue every point for the sake of it. If your adversary makes a valid point then agree but outweigh it with a different argument. This makes you look reasonable. 'I agree with you that prison does not reform prisoners. That is generally true but prison still acts effectively as a deterrent and a punishment.'

8. Study your opponent: Know their strengths, weaknesses, beliefs and values. You can appeal to their higher values. You can exploit their weaknesses by turning their arguments back on them.

9. Look for a win-win: Be open-minded to a compromise position that accommodates your main points and some of your opponent's. You cannot both win in a boxing match but you can both win in a negotiation.

Critical thinking

- ▶ **Critical thinking** is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.
- ▶ Critical thinking is not just being critical in the typical, negative sense of the word; there are many definitions but according to Beyer (1995), critical thinking means ‘making clear, reasoned judgments’.

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- ▶ A successful critical thinker questions perceived knowledge, rejects anecdotal or non-scientific evidence and examines the source of all information. He or she is open-minded and well-informed, able to judge the quality of an argument and draw cautious yet evidence-based conclusions.
 - ▶ It's important for academic students because it enables them to produce essays and papers that are free from personal or societal bias.

Critical thinking skills

- ▶ The list of core critical thinking skills includes observation, interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and metacognition.
- ▶ According to Reynolds (2011), an individual or group engaged in a strong way of critical thinking gives due consideration to establish for instance:
 - Evidence through reality
 - Context skills to isolate the problem from context
 - Relevant criteria for making the judgment well
 - Applicable methods or techniques for forming the judgment
 - Applicable theoretical constructs for understanding the problem and the question at hand

Critical thinking calls for the ability to:

- Recognize problems, to find workable means for meeting those problems
- Understand the importance of prioritization and order of precedence in problem-solving
- Gather and marshal pertinent (relevant) information
- Recognize unstated assumptions and values
- Comprehend and use language with accuracy, clarity, and discernment
- Interpret data, to appraise evidence and evaluate arguments
- Recognize the existence (or non-existence) of logical relationships between propositions
- Draw warranted conclusions and generalizations
- Put to test the conclusions and generalizations at which one arrives
- Reconstruct one's patterns of beliefs on the basis of wider experience
- Render accurate judgments about specific things and qualities in everyday life