Argument and Persuasion

Stating Opinions and Proposals
The Method

It all starts with an opinion - something that people can agree or disagree with.
The Method

- Move to action
- Speak your mind
- Convince someone to believe what you believe.
Professions that require persuasion

- Lawyers
- Businesspeople
- Researchers
- Scientists
- Advertisers
Persuasion vs. Argument

Persuasion - Influence readers’ actions by engaging their beliefs and feelings

Argument - Win readers’ agreement with an assertion or claim by engaging their powers of reasoning

Oftentimes these techniques are combined.
Reading Arguments Critically

- Analysis
- Inference
- Synthesis
- Evaluation
Approaching Your Reader

- Share your view with readers willing to consider it.
- Express your view clearly and vigorously.
- Show that you understand your readers’ views as well.
Your Opinion

- State the truth as you see it.
- Writer and reader become two sensible people trying to find a common ground.
Thesis Statement

- Your opinion is your thesis.

- Your thesis statement (opinion stated in a sentence [or two]) will typically appear in your first paragraph.

- Advanced writers may consider placing the thesis in the middle or end if it is done for a purpose.
Evidence

- Facts
- Statistics
- Expert opinions
- Examples
- Reported experience
Evidence

- Accurate
- Fairly represent the available facts and opinions
- Relate directly to your claims
- Ample to convince readers
Appeals

- Rational - Reasoning
  (It makes sense.)

- Emotional - Feelings
  (You know readers’ sympathies and beliefs and you can show how your argument relates to them.)
Emotional Appeal

- An emotional appeal gets the readers’ blood pumping; it tugs on their heart strings.
- Show that your feelings are close to those of the readers.
Ethical Appeal

- Showing that you are a well-informed person of good will, good sense, and good moral character.
- Therefore, you are to be believed.
Ethical Appeal

- Collect ample evidence.
- Reason carefully.
- Use appropriate emotional appeal.
- Mind your tone.
Appeals

- **Ethos** - Ethics (right and wrong)
- **Pathos** - Feelings
- **Logos** - Logic
  (what makes sense when you think about it)
Reasoning

- The Toulmin Method
- Inductive Reasoning
- Deductive Reasoning
The Toulmin Method

- **Data** - Evidence to prove something
- **Claim** - What you are proving with the data
- **Warrant** - The assumption or principle that connects the data to the claim
Toulmin Example

Data - Harry was born in Bermuda

Claim - So Harry is a British subject

Warrant - Since a man born in Bermuda will be a British subject
The Warrant

- Assumption or generalization that explains why the claim follows the data
- In other words, it gives the reasons you hold your opinion.
Is the Warrant Clear?

- **Data** - Drug abuse is a serious problem in the US.
- **Claim** - The US must help to destroy drug production in Latin America.
The Warrant

Warrant - As long as drugs are manufactured in Latin America, they will be smuggled into the US, and drug abuse will continue.
Unstated Warrant

If it is obvious, it need not be stated; however, if it is unclear and unstated, the reader may think the opinion is absurd.
She shouldn’t be elected mayor because her husband has bad ideas on how to run the city.
Another Example

See page 521-22.
Deductive Reasoning

- Begin with a general knowledge and predict a specific observation.

- Syllogism - Three-step form of reasoning practiced by Aristotle.
  - Premise - All men are mortal.
  - Minor Premise - Socrates is a man.
  - Conclusion - Therefore, Socrates is mortal.
Another Example

Major Premise - Conservative Republicans favor less government regulation of business

Minor Premise - William F. Buckley, Jr., is a conservative Republican.

Conclusion - Therefore, William F. Buckley, Jr., favors less government regulation of business.
Inductive Reasoning

- Method of the sciences
- Collect bits of evidence on which to base generalizations
- You observe something over and over and then make a generalization about it.
- Inductive leap - moving from the evidence to the conclusion
Inductive Reasoning

- Evidence - I saw twenty boys tuck in their shirts in the A building.
- Generalization - Boys tuck in their shirts in the A building.
Logical Fallacies
Non Sequitur
It does not follow.

- Stating a conclusion that does not follow from the premise(s).
Oversimplification

Supplying neat and easy explanations for large and complicated phenomena.
Hasty Generalization

Leaping to a generalization from inadequate or faulty evidence.
Either/Or Reasoning

* Assuming that a reality may be divided into only two parts or extremes; assuming that a given problem has only one of two possible solutions.
Argument from Doubtful or Unidentified Authority

Is the source identified? Is it reliable?
Begging the Question

- Taking for granted from the start what you set out to demonstrate.
- When you repeat that what is true is true.
- Where is your data!?
Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc
After this, therefore because of this

Assuming that because B follows A, B was caused by A.
False Analogy

- The claim of persuasive likeness when no significant likeness exists.
The Process

- Opinion
- Proposal
- Both
Introduce your least important point first. Then build up to the strongest point you have.
Evidence

- For each point, give facts, examples, expert opinions, etc.
- Use up-to-date statistics.
Throughout, at the beginning, or near the end.

Reason with opponents; do not just dismiss them.
Conclusion

- Briefly restate your claim, if possible in a fresh, pointed way.

- If you are using emotion, you may want to end with an emotional appeal.
Humor

You might try to get your reader to laugh on your side.
Focusing Your Topic

- Time constraints
- Word / Page constraints