



Argument

What this handout is about

This handout will define what an argument is and explain why it is important to understand what an argument is. It will also provide examples of arguments and explain how to identify them. The handout will also provide tips on how to write an argument and how to evaluate one.

Arguments are everywhere

You may be surprised to hear that the word "argument" does not have to be written anywhere in your assignment for it to be an important part of your task. In fact, making an argument—expressing a point of view on a subject and supporting it with evidence—is often the aim of academic writing. Your instructors may assume that you know this and thus may not explain the importance of

One way to strengthen your argument and show that you have a deep understanding of the issue you are discussing is to anticipate

and address counterarguments or objections. By considering what someone who disagrees with your position might have to say about your argument, you show that you have thought things through, and you dispense of some of the reasons your audience might

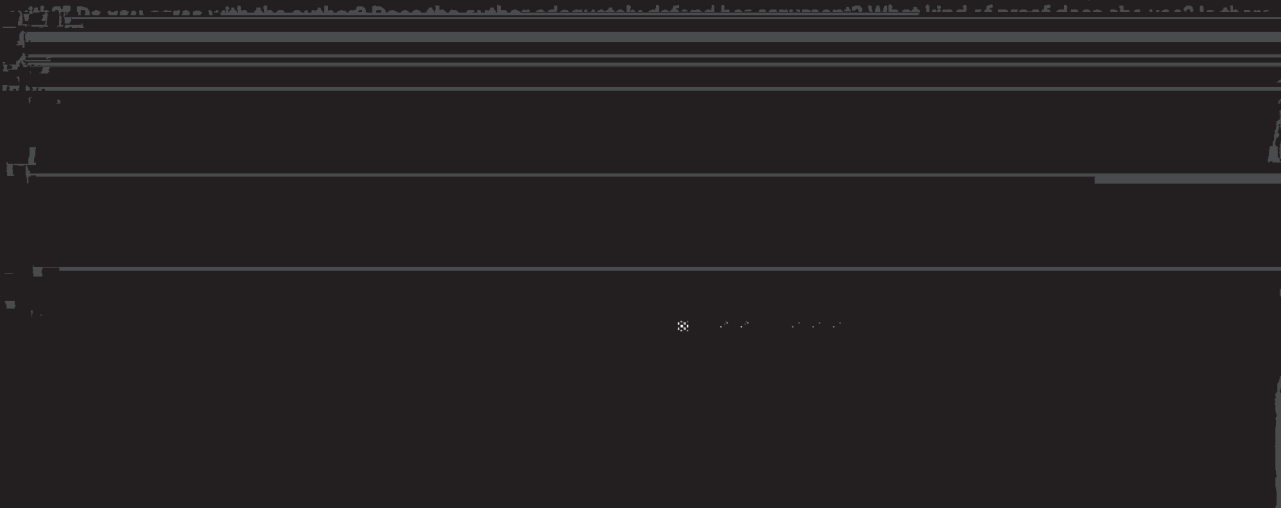
have for not accepting your argument. Recall our discussion of student seating in the Dean Dome. To make the most effective argument possible, you should consider not only what students would say about seating but also what alumni who have paid a lot to get good seats might say.

You can generate counterarguments by asking yourself how someone who disagrees with you might respond to each of the points you've made or your position as a whole. If you can't immediately imagine another position, here are some strategies to try:

- Do some research. It may seem to you that no one could possibly disagree with the position you are arguing, but someone probably has. For example, some people argue that the American Civil War never ended. If you are making an argument

these ideas as facts and start thinking of them as arguments.

When you read, ask yourself questions like "What is the author trying to prove?" and "What is the author assuming I will agree



Ede, Lisa. *Work in Progress*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.

Gage, John T. *The Shape of Reason: Argumentative Writing in College*. 4th ed. New York: Longman, 2005.

Lunsford, Andrea, and John Ruskiewicz. *Everything's an Argument*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012.

