How We Argue
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Glossary
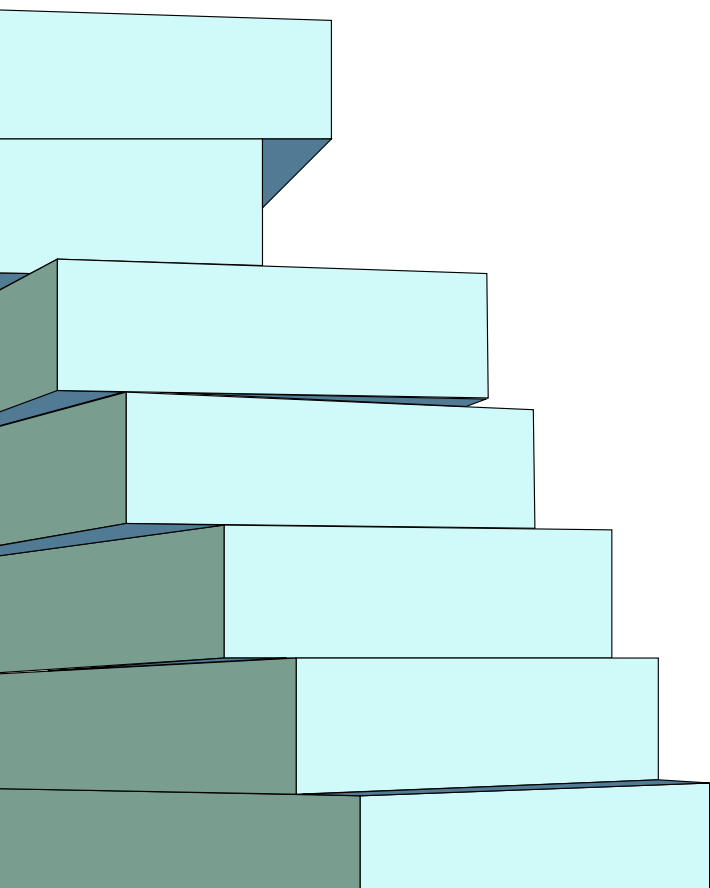

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K E Y T E R M S - LESSSON 1

- **Argument**: Communication in which the speaker is trying to support an idea by giving reasons to believe.
  - vs. **Fight**: In a fight, the speaker is just trying to get their way, regardless of whether or not they change their audience's mind or persuade them to agree.
  - vs. **Description**: In a description, the speaker explains what happened, gives information, or tells a story. Their goal is to inform or entertain the audience, rather than convince the audience of a main point.

What Arguments Do

- Arguments allow us to communicate our ideas— and the reasons we have for our ideas— to other people
- Arguments are the way that we work through big, complex ideas, and try to determine what is true.
- Arguments support an idea though verbal or written communication

K E Y T E R M S - LESSONS 2 & 3

- **Claim** - A statement a speaker wants you to believe
  Claims can be true or false. Claims express a single thought
- **Main Claim** - The main thing that a speaker wants you to believe; the point of an argument
- **Premise** - A claim that gives a reason to believe the main claim. A premise answers the question "Why believe this?"
- **Objection** - A claim that gives a reson not to believe the main claim
- **Inference** - Represents the author's belief that a premise is a relevant reason to believe the claim above it
- **Indicator Words** - Words that should indicate to you that the author or speaker is in the process of making an inference from one claim to another

Examples of Claims

- We should eat pizza
- Climate change is doing irreversible damage to Earth
- Governments should censor social media websites
- Hot dogs are sandwiches

What Isn't a Claim

- Commands
- Questions
- Fragments (ex/ "America's immigration policy")
- Reminder: A claim is one thought, not multiple ideas

Key Example: Compound Claim

A compound claim contains multiple claims. When mapping arguments, make sure to break down compound claims into singular claims

We should eat pizza because pizza is delicious and it is good for your health →

- We should eat pizza
- Pizza is delicious
- Pizza is good for your health

Examples of Indicator Words

Followed by Main Claim	Followed by Premises	Followed by Objections
Thus	Since	However
So	Because	But
Hence	First	On the other hand
Therefore	Seeing as	
Because of this	Given That	

K E Y   T E R M S - LESSONS 4-6

- **Reason Rule - Every claim in your map must give a relevant reason to believe the claim above it**
- **Independent Premises- Give you distinct reasons to believe the claim above**
- **Sub-premise - A premise that give you a reason to believe another premise**
- **Co-premises- Premises that work together or "hold hands" to give one single reason to believe the claim above**

Strength of an Inference

- How **relevant** a premise is to the claim above it indicates the **strength** of the inference
- If there exists a really relevant premise that gives a good reason to believe the claim above it, we say that the **inference** above that premise is strong.

Steps to Evaluate an Argument

Part 1: Test Inferences for Strength

Step 1: Assume the premise is true. Even if you know it's really false. Imagine that the premise is true.

Step 2: Ask yourself: If true, how relevant is the premise to the claim above it?

Part 2: Test Premises for Truth

Ask: Are the premises actually true? Mark them as true or false.

A good argument is one with true premises and strong inferences.