GRADUATE WRITING CENTER
SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY

SUU

THESIS, ARGUMENT,
AND SUPPORTING
EVIDENCE

Argumentation is the expression of a point of view on a subject and the support of that expression with evidence. Argumentation means more than simply presenting information you have gathered or regurgitating what was discussed in class. You need to select your perspective, provide evidence that supports your view, and offer an interpretation based on evidence. Professors often look for the following features as they evaluate your arguments:

      1. Proof you understand the material
      2. Demonstration of your ability to use or apply the material beyond what you read or heard.
      3. Demonstration of your ability to support your ideas with academically credible evidence.
      4. Indication of an in-depth understanding of the issues at stake through a consideration of opposing viewpoints.

As you prepare your argument ask yourself the following questions:

Audience: "Whom am I trying to convince?"

      Knowing your audience is important and central to creating an effective argument. For example, some audiences are more convinced by facts and figures, whereas others are impressed by logic, or on occasion, personal experiences. Your audience might understand a little bit about your topic already, so your opinion must have credible proof. State your point and give evidence without assuming that the reader is already familiar with the material.

Thesis Statement: "What is the point?"

      The first step in developing an effective argument is to create and decide your main point, or your thesis statement. Without a thesis statement, there can be no argument. Your paper, in effect, becomes an "information dump" without a real purpose or direction. When deciding which point to argue, avoid generalized statements, and be specific.

      Examples:

      Too simple: Pesticides should not be used because of pollution.

      Specific: Pesticides should not be used because there exists a potential of pollution of underground water sources.

Reason: *"Why do you think the way that you do?"*

Once you have a point to argue, the next step is explaining your point of view to your readers. These reasons should be backed up by credible evidence and should become the body of your paper. Your point of view, or reasoning, is the first line of defense for your argument.

Example:

Pesticides should not be used for a variety of reasons, including the potential for pollution of underground water sources, which could be hazardous to the community.

Evidence: *"What do the experts say?"*

Once you have stated the reasons for your opinion, make sure that your opinion correlates with the evidence and research that you have gathered. Use these sources to back up your opinion. Provide quotes from experts and authorities on the topic; give statistics, facts, and examples.

Example:

Dr. Schrute, of the Agricultural Monthly, states, "Pesticides can cause pollution of underground water sources, and ought not to be used, as a precaution for community safety" (2020, p. 4).

Counter-arguments: *"What do people with differing viewpoints say?"*

Counter-arguments strengthen your argument and build your credibility. By anticipating what the opposition may say or how people who disagree with you might respond to your views, you show that you have thought about the topic seriously and have done some research. Bringing up reasonable counter-arguments allows you both to test your ideas to make sure they are credible and to explain to your audience the weaknesses you see in those opposing ideas. You may want to respond to opposing viewpoints in one of these two ways:

1. Accept the opposing viewpoint as credible, but explain why yours is better
2. Reject the opposing argument altogether with an explanation as to why.

Examples:

Some experts say that using pesticides is completely safe and poses no threat of pollution of underground water sources because of the new developments in pesticide composition and concentration.

Some experts agree that the potential pollution of underground water sources could occur with pesticide usage, though that potentiality is extremely low.