Recognizing arguments

In short, an **argument** is

a series of **reasons** that end with a **claim**. or

a **claim** supported by a series of **reasons** for example,

“Covid is raging,” so people should continue to wear masks and practice social distancing”

(reason) (claim)

“People should wear masks and practice social distancing because Covid is raging.”

(claim) (reason)

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Other words for **claim**: “conclusion,” “thesis”

Other words for **reason**: “premise”

Consider:

Statement, statement, statement, statement-🡪 CONCLUSION!!

Reason, reason, reason, reason, reason-🡪CLAIM!!! (**ALL ARE ARGUMENTS**)

Premise, premise, premise, premise, premise🡪THESIS STATEMENT!!!!

**Statement**: A sentence that can be viewed as either true or false. Each can be prefaced with the phrase “It is true that” or “it is false that”. Statements can be used as…

**Premises**: Statements in an argument offered as evidence or reasons why we should accept another statement: the conclusion

**Conclusion**: the most important statement in the argument, supported by other statements.

Statements are **not** (usually):

Questions: “How are you today?”

Greetings: “Hey!”

Requests: “Can you grab that bag for me?”

Proposals: “Let’s have a party.”

Instructions: “Put tab A into slot B.”

Exclamations: “Good lord!”

Commands: “Get out of here!”

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**Premise indicator words**: provide clues that premises are being offered: “since” “for” “seeing that” “because” “given that” “considering that” “due to the fact that” “judging from” “moreover” “on account of”

**Conclusion indicator words**: provide clues that conclusions are being offered: “therefore” “hence” “so” “as a result” “consequently” “this suggests that”

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I don’t like any of these words because we can use ONE WORD to replace them all:

**ASSERTION**

**Smaller, supporting assertions = reasons/premises/statement**

**Larger, supported assertions = thesis/conclusion/claim**

“Covid is raging,” so people should continue to wear masks and practice social distancing”

(support**ing** assertion) (support**ed** assertion)

“People should wear masks and practice social distancing because Covid is raging.”

(support**ed** assertion) (support**ing** assertion)

Distinguishing arguments from non-arguments…often impossible, and not really useful.

~~Reports~~: Purpose is to simply convey information about a subject. **USUALLY, but not always.** **THESE CAN BE ARGUMENTS!** Consider: a report you write for your boss that shows how smart you are (so she’ll promote you)

~~If/then statements:~~ **THESE CAN BE ARGUMENTS!** Consider: “If you don’t study, you’ll fail the class.” Implied conclusion: “You should study.”

~~Unverified claims~~: **THESE CAN BE ARGUMENTS!** Example: “Trump is a jerk, and you shouldn’t vote for him!”

~~Explanations:~~ tries to show why something is the case, not to prove that it is the case. **MANY EXPLANATIONS ARE ACTUALLY ARGUMENTS.** Consider a father lecturing to his son: “Let me explain how evil women are.”

Illustrations (not drawings!): **SAME.** Examples can be distorted to support a claim.

**IN SHORT,**

**EVERYTHING IS AN ARGUMENT!!!**

**SOME ARGUMENTS ARE “OVERT,” OR DIRECT (YOU CAN UNDERLINE THE WORDS) AND SOME ARE “IMPLIED” OR HINTED AT.**

**You do this every day:**

**PICTURES: the photos you post to social media**

**SPEECH: the way you speak to your grandmother versus your friends**

**WRITTEN WORDS: the way you write in school versus in text**

**DECISIONS: you make choices with your best interest usually in mind**

**Everything you do, down to the smallest level, is attempting to persuade others: the way you walk, the way you talk, the way you write, etc.**

**These attempts to persuade are called RHETORIC.**

**Author**

Target Audience

Thesis/Theses