

Elements of an Argument

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

claim: writer's position on an issue or problem

support: material that proves a claim; includes **reasons** and **evidence**

assumptions: opinions or beliefs that are taken for granted

opposing viewpoints: objections to the writer's claims

counterarguments: arguments made to oppose (counter) opposing views

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Identify the claim. Find the sentence(s) that state(s) the writer's opinion. The claim may appear in the introduction as the thesis and/or in the conclusion as the summary. There can be more than one claim if they are linked together logically.

Step 2: Find the support and assumptions. Determine how the writer supports the claim. The writer may rely on assumptions, ideas or opinions that an audience generally accepts as true. In addition, the writer uses reasons and evidence, such as:

- **statistics:** data, percentages, and averages, drawn from reliable sources
- **examples:** specific details that illustrate the claim
- **facts:** statements that can be verified in a reference source or by observation
- **narratives or anecdotes:** brief stories that illustrate the point
- **expert opinions:** quotations from reliable sources—scholars, researchers, etc.
- **observations / personal experiences:** first-hand accounts of an event

Step 3: Look for opposing viewpoints and counterarguments. Determine how the writer anticipates opposing viewpoints and provides support to disprove them.

Our community needs its own library. Firstly, we need a place to get books, videos, magazines, and reference materials. People against building a library claim that no one would use it. But Mayor Treddun of Plainedge, our neighboring town, says 500 of our residents check out materials from their library every day! Those against building a library say we can't afford it. Actually it would cost very little—the additional tax for each resident would be just 25¢ a year! A library would also increase the value of our homes. Some argue that housing prices have peaked, but real estate expert Beth Fink calculates that our homes would be worth 20% more with a community library. We all want our homes to rise in value, so please support the new library. Thank you.

—Ruth Sieden, Marcus Henry, and Li Cho

The writers state their **claim**.

The writers express an **opposing viewpoint**.

Support for the claim includes **statistics**.

Here is a second **opposing viewpoint**.

Beth Fink is cited as an **expert opinion**.

The writers use an **assumption** to strengthen their argument.