

# Tips for Writing a Sound Argument

(for the thesis-driven paper)

## Aim to develop an argument that . . .

- *Is well-organized.*

A strong argument flows logically from point to point. Choose an organization that is appropriate to what you are arguing; good choices include **topical organization** (where your points are grouped according to similar characteristics) and **chronological organization** (where your points are grouped sequentially).
- *Makes effective transitions between points.*

Those different points are all part of a larger argument, so they must be connected to make any sense. Use clear and varying transitional sentences to indicate the relationship between your points, or you will have a random, incoherent paper.
- *Has clearly defined terms.*

Keep tight control of your argument by delineating exactly what you mean by certain words. If your terms are ambiguous, your argument will be as well.
- *Uses evidence to support its assertions.*

Without credible support to back it up, your argument will only seem like one person's opinion. Take the time to research carefully, and use evidence from a trustworthy source in the field to reinforce the argument.

## Try to avoid writing an argument that . . .

- *Does not match your thesis.*

The purpose of your argument is to prove that your thesis is viable. If your argument does not relate closely and consistently back to your thesis, your paper will be weak and unfocused.
- *Indulges in plot summary.*

Only mention as much of the plot as is necessary for your actual argument to make sense. Plot summary is considered to be background information, not argumentative, because it is a statement of uncontested fact.
- *Describes, rather than analyzes.*

Unless you analyze a description for the purpose of your argument, it does not belong. A thesis-driven argument is supported by strong

analysis. Make it plain why your evidence proves your point, instead of wasting space on superfluous description.

- *Includes unrelated material or commentary.*

Regardless of how interesting the comment may be, it should not be included in the body of the argument if it does not ultimately help prove your thesis.