3 Forms of Argument: Aristotelian, Toulminic & Rogerian

Aristotelian

| 1. Exordium – Introduction, Presentation of Topic  |
| 2. Narratio – Exposition, Provision of Background Information  |
| 3. Propositio – Presentation of Position/Stance  |
| Partitio/Divisio – Outline of Main Points/Claims (optional)  |
| 4. Confirmatio – Provision of Evidence/Proof  |
| Conflatio – Logical Appeal  |
| Digressio – Emotional Appeal  |
| 5. Refutatio – Pacification, Nullification of Opposition  |
| 6. Peroratio – Conclusion, Invitation to Envision  |

1. Exordium: The exordium simply presents the topic as one worthy of consideration. The writer explains why the topic at hand is worth the reader’s time, reflection, and concern.

2. Narratio: This doesn’t mean “narrative” in the current sense, but instead presents necessary background information on the topic to the reader. The writer must provide enough information to help the reader think about the topic in an informed manner, so the narratio might be

- Definitional
- Statistical
- Chronological
- Anecdotal
- Historic

It also might explain various sides of a controversy, or provide an important summary.

3. Propositio: The “proposition” is the means by which the writer finally takes a position on the topic. Up until this point, the writer hasn’t divulged an opinion about the subject matter. The proposition is a sentence that is positional—a stand taken.

Partitio/Divisio: The partitio is a subcategory of the proposition. It outlines the major arguments that constitute the writer’s approach to proving the claim(s); it anticipates the writer’s “lines of inquiry.”
4. Confirmatio: The confirmatio does what you’d expect: it **confirms what has been asserted** in the proposition. The writer proves the likelihood of the *propositio* with various rhetorical examples. There are two approaches:

Confutatio: The *confutatio* employs various appeals to *logos* (logic, or patterns of reasoning) to prove the validity or truthfulness of the proposition. This component may offer secondary evidence: **facts** (or verifiable data), **statistics, quotations, interviews**, etc.

Digressio: The *digressio* uses *pathos* (emotional appeal). It’s a deliberate departure from a logical approach. Although some readers might be moved by a purely rational presentation of evidence, Aristotle believed most readers are moved by an appeal to emotion. Thus, the *digressio* entails a **story, an anecdote, or an extended metaphor**—something that takes the more abstract *propositio* and “brings it home” to the reader through **narration, description, and imagery**.

5. Refutatio: As suggested by the word “refutation,” here the writer **pre-empts (anticipates, blocks) potential disagreements** to the *propositio* by presupposing main objections to the essay’s claims. The writer argues against each objection, thereby countering, even dismantling, any opposition before the reader has a chance to adopt it.
Why Deal with Opposition?

First, it demonstrates that the author is aware of opposing views, and is not trying to “sweep them under the table.” It thus is more likely to make the writer’s argument seem “balanced” or “fair” to readers, and as a consequence be persuasive.

Second, it shows that the writer is thinking carefully about the responses of readers, anticipating the objections that many readers may have. Introducing the reader to some of the positions opposed to your own, and showing how you can deal with possible objections can thus work to “inoculate” the reader against counter-arguments.

Third, by contrasting one’s position with the arguments or alternative hypotheses one is against, one clarifies the position that is being argued for.

When dealing with objections or counter-arguments, authors tend to take one of three approaches.

- **Strategic Concession**: acknowledgment of some of the merits of a different view. In some cases, this may mean accepting or incorporating some components of an authors’ argument, while rejecting other parts of it.

- **Refutation**: this involves being able to show important weaknesses and shortcomings in an opponent’s position that demonstrate that his/her argument ought to be rejected.

- **Demonstration of Irrelevance**: showing that the issue in question is to be understood such that opposing views, while perhaps valid in certain respects, do not in fact meet the criteria of relevance that you believe define the issue.

6. Peroratio: A peroration, in English, is a recap(itulation). However, the peroratio is not merely a reiteration of the propositio. Here the writer answers that vital question, “So what?” What does this argument mean for the future? For society or humanity? For me, the reader, personally? Returning to the need to build credibility through ethos, in the peroratio the writer shows a capacity for thinking broadly and in a visionary manner about the ways in which the reader and writer may envision a better future as a direct result of the writer’s argument.
In his *Uses of Argument* (1958), Toulmin proposed a layout containing six interrelated components for analyzing arguments:

- **Claim** – The position or claim being argued for; the conclusion of the argument.
- **Grounds** – Reasons or supporting evidence that bolster the claim.
- **Warrant** – The principle, provision or chain of reasoning that connects the grounds/reason to the claim.
- **Backing** – Support, justification, reasons to back up the warrant.
- **Rebuttal** – Exceptions to the claim; description and rebuttal of counter-examples and counter-arguments.
- **Qualification** – Specification of limits to claim, warrant and backing; the degree of conditionality asserted.

Toulmin stated that three parts—the claim, the evidence, and the warrant—are essential to just about all arguments. *The other three—backing, rebuttal, and qualification—are utilized as necessary.*
Claim + Reason(s) = Argument

Claim

Ground(s)

Warrant

Claim: Cats are less intelligent than dogs.
Ground: Cats cannot learn to do tricks as well as dogs.
Warrant: The ability to learn tricks is a mark of intelligence.

Claim: Needle exchange programs should be abolished.
Ground: Because they only cause more people to use drugs.
Warrant: When you make risky behavior safer you encourage more people to engage in it.
A warrant is an assumption, a belief we take for granted, or a general principle. These warrants reflect our observations, our personal experience, and our participation in a culture.

Setting: Several people are waiting in line for a movie. They have been waiting for two hours.

1. A large man cuts in at the front of the line.

   **Claim:** He should go to the back of the line.
   **Support:** We have been waiting for two hours.
   **Warrant:** First come, first serve.

2. A foreigner comes up looking around in confusion, muttering something unintelligible.

   **Claim:** Let him in.
   **Support:** He doesn’t understand.
   **Warrant:** We should help those who don’t understand.
3. A young woman cuts in the middle of the line where her boyfriend has been saving a place for her.

Claim: We don’t like it, but we won’t interfere.
Support: She is his girlfriend.
Warrant: Couples belong together.

4. A boy in a wheelchair approaches.

Claim: Let him in the front of the line.
Support: He has a disability.
Warrant: We should show compassion to those less fortunate.
5. A husband cuts in with his wife, who is at the front of the line, and starts cussing her out.

Claim: Don’t mess with this one!
Support: This is a personal problem.
Warrant: We shouldn’t interfere in private affairs, even in another galaxy.

Arguments may be classified according to the types of warrants offered as proof.

3 Types of Toulminic Arguments: Authoritative, Substantive, Motivational

**Authoritative** (based on the credibility of the sources):

- Is the authority sufficiently respected to be a credible claim?
- Do other equally reputable authorities agree with the authority cited?
- Are there equally reputable authorities who disagree?

**Substantive** (based on beliefs about the reliability of factual evidence):

- Are sufficient examples given to convince us that a general statement is justified?
- If you have argued that one event or condition can bring about another, does the cause given seem to account entirely for the effect?
- If you have used comparisons, are the similarities between the two situations greater than the differences?
- If you have used analogies, does the analogy explain or merely describe?

**Motivational** (based on values of the arguer and the audience):

- Are the values ones that the audience will regard as important?
- Are the values relevant to the claim?

**Backing:**

- Backing may be thought of as credentials designed to certify the warrant.
- Backing is introduced when the warrant itself is not convincing enough to the readers/listeners.
Rebuttal: Used as a preemptive method against any counter-arguments. These acknowledge the limits of the claim, considering certain conditions where it may not hold true.

Qualifier: Words or phrases expressing the speaker’s degree of force or certainty concerning the claim. Such words or phrases include:

- “probably”
- “possible”
- “impossible”
- “most”
- “usually”
- “always”
- “never”
- “absolutely”
- “sometimes”
- “certainly”
- “presumably”
- “necessarily”

Some Additional Definitions

**Claims** represent answers to the question “**What are you trying to prove?**”

3 Types of Claims: Claims of Fact, Claims of Value, Claims of Policy
**Claims of Fact** – Assert that a condition has existed, exists, or will exist. Support consists of factual information—that is, information such as statistics, examples, and testimony that most responsible observers assume can be verified.

Example: What some people refer to as global warming is actually nothing more than normal, long-term cycles of climate change.

**Claims of Value** – Make a judgment. They express approval or disapproval. They attempt to prove that some action, belief, or condition is right or wrong, good or bad, beautiful or ugly, worthwhile or undesirable.

Example: Democracy is superior to any other form of government.

**Claims of Policy** – Argue that certain conditions should exist. As the name suggests, they advocate adoption of policies or courses of actions because problems have arisen that call for solution. Almost always “should” or “ought to” or “must” is expressed or implied in the claim.

Example: Voluntary prayer should be permitted in public schools.

**Support** for a claim represents the answer to the question “What have you got to go on?”

**2 Types of Support:** Factual Evidence, Appeals to Needs/Values

**Factual Evidence** – Appears most frequently as examples and statistics, which are a numerical form of examples. However, facts alone are not enough to substantiate claims. Opinions or interpretations about the facts are inferences. They are an indispensable source of support for your claims.

**Appeals to Needs/Values** – If you want to persuade an audience to change their minds or adopt a course of action, you will have to show that assent to your claim will bring about what they want and care deeply about.

**Needs** – Physiological, safety/security, love/belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization.

**Values** – Needs give rise to values. If we feel the need to belong to a group, we learn to value commitment, sacrifice, and sharing. And we then respond to arguments that promise to protect our values.
Rogerian

Rogerian argument is a conflict-solving technique based on finding common ground instead of polarizing debate.

It’s named after American psychologist Carl Rogers, who proposed trying to understand an adversary’s position by listening to him/her before adopting a point of view.

Aristotelian is litigious, win/lose, right/wrong, and winner-take-all. This form of reasoning is the opposite of Aristotelian argumentation, an adversarial form of debate, because it attempts to find compromise between two sides.
Essentially, there are four components:

1. A statement of the problem at hand—the introduction.
2. A statement of opposing positions/views (summarizing/outlining things with which you disagree).
3. A statement of understanding (situations in which opposing views may have some merit/validity).
4. A statement of the writer/speaker’s own positions/views, including the contexts in which it is valid.
5. A statement of contexts, circumstances under which writer/speaker’s views would be honored/adopted.
6. A statement of benefits—how the opponent’s position would benefit if he/she were to adopt elements of the other position.
If the writer can show that the positions complement each other, that each supplies what the other lacks, so much the better.

The Rogerian approach promotes mutual learning and communication by:

- Avoiding a confrontational stance
- Presenting oneself as someone who understands and can empathize with the opposition
- Establishing common ground with the opposition
- Demonstrating a willingness to change one’s views
- Directing one’s argument toward a compromise or workable solution
“Let me say that we appreciate the truth in all churches and the good which they do. We say to the people, in effect, you bring with you all the good that you have, and then let us see if we can add to it. That is the spirit of this work. That is the essence of our missionary service” (President Hinckley, Nairobi, Kenya, 17 Feb. 1998).

“God bless us as those who believe in His divine manifestations and help us to extend knowledge of these great and marvelous occurrences to all who will listen. To these we say in a spirit of love, bring with you all that you have of good and truth which you have received from whatever source, and come and let us see if we may add to it” (General Conference, Oct. 2002).