

The Rhetorician's Toolbox or Periodic Table of Elements

"For all a rhetorician's rules

Teach nothing but to name his tools." Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, part I, canto I, line 89

- ✓ 1. sylogism—a rigorous dialectical deductive argument occasionally found in rhetoric—the conclusion is derived from explicitly stated major and minor premises
2. enthymeme—an inverted syllogism with the major premise omitted—a less rigorous form of deduction than the syllogism. The enthymeme is central to reasoning in rhetorical discourse.
3. sorites—the fusion of two or more enthymemes to create a complex chain of reasoned argument—in most cases the minor premise of the lead enthymeme becomes the conclusion of a subsidiary enthymeme
- ✓ 4. example—supporting an assertion by marshaling specific instances in which it is true—a less rigorous form of dialectical induction
5. contract—a rhetorical term for the rhetor's introduction, the section of the argument in which the rhetor establishes the subject of discourse—the contract may also cover the author's thesis, establish ethos and tone, signpost (preview), and develop urgency or need (exigence)
5. distributio or distribution—dividing a subject into (usually specifically enumerated) categories that enhance the argument—a rhetorical version of dialectical division
6. expeditio or argument by elimination or argument by residues—a special kind of distribution in which only one or no categories are acceptable or logical or possible
7. antithesis—another special kind of distribution that emphasizes binary opposites—an either/or strategy that denies middle ground and polarizes the argument, not a compromise figure, it's a two-sided expeditio
8. catalog—a list of things that belong to a larger, often unstated category, often simply an innocuous and unconscious structural device
- ✓ 9. prolepsis—anticipatory refutation of opposition or addressing the skeptical audience's doubts
- ✓ 10. charity principle—super prolepsis, deliberately presenting and then refuting your opposition's best argument, this way your argument doesn't simply outweigh the opposition, it transcends it, this idea of charity shows fairness and thoroughness, so it enhances ethos as well as logos
- ✓ 11. turnaround—converting an opponent's argument to your own—pulling the rug out from under your opposition's feet—a very special kind of prolepsis. This is usually accomplished by hooking the opponent's minor premise to an opposing thesis and alternative major premise:
12. argument of direction (slippery slope)—(from *The New Rhetoric*, by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 281-87) demonstrating how an action or policy or position leads inevitably to an end point (usually one that is highly undesirable)
13. reductio ad absurdum—a subcategory of the argument from direction in which the rhetor demonstrates that the opponent's reasoning is contradictory or leads inevitably to an absurd position
14. analogy—comparison of two parallel terms or situations in which the traits of one situation are argued to be similar to another—often one relatively familiar and concrete, the other less familiar and concrete, using the more concrete terms or situation to make a less obvious point about the less concrete term—analogy suggests, but does not usually demand, a comparison
15. argument a fortiori or of comparative degree—a special kind of analogy with a greater or lesser comparison built into it

- ✓ 16. rule of justice—(from *The New Rhetoric*, by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca) a special kind of argument by analogy that “requires giving identical treatment to beings or situations of the same kind” (218). This strategy compels comparison.
17. precedent—arguing from a previous case or circumstance, somewhat related to the rule of justice but uses previous situation or history, rather than a notion of fairness, as its mechanism
18. claiming presumption/shifting the burden of proof—In most arguments, the benefit of the doubt tends to fall to one side or another. For example, in our legal system, we assume innocence; the burden of proof falls on the prosecution. In other contexts, presumption tends to favor the status quo. Arguments that specifically call attention to presumption or the burden of proof are evoking this strategy.
19. parable—an analogy expressed in a simple symbolic story, a common preaching vehicle
20. allegory—a complex analogy expressed in an involved symbolic story
21. motive—why we should or shouldn't trust someone to do the right thing—always highly speculative because we can't get into people's heads—related to ethos
22. argument from conversion—using the conversion process (yours or someone else's) as a measure of the power of a thesis—related to ethos
23. definition—important definitions are usually ad hoc, formulated for the specific purpose the rhetor has in mind; definitions that make entire arguments can be problematic because the opponent can always offer a counter definition
24. "in service" argument—a way of subordinating evidence or sections of your argument to other goals, thus integrating complex steps, elements, or subjects within one argumentative framework
25. arguments based on philosophical pairs—(adapted from Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca) establishing an argumentatively advantageous difference between two ways of looking at an issue that allows rhetors to gain sophistication and balance complex situations, good for ethos and allows you to grant your opposition a point and still transcend their position. These arguments are usually cued by words such as “but,” “yet,” and “nonetheless”:
- a. short-term/long-term
 - b. means/ends
 - c. cause/effect
 - d. appearance/reality
 - e. spirit/letter
 - f. part/whole
 - g. individual/society
 - h. theory/practice
 - i. incidental/essential
 - j. half full/half empty
 - k. story/why the story is told (motive)
 - l. word/deed (verbal/real)
 - m. ideal/expedient
 - n. individual/universal
 - o. exception/rule
 - p. opinion/truth
 - q. subjective/objective
 - r. artificial/natural
 - s. static/dynamic
 - t. form/substance

- u. particular/general
- v. mind/body
- w. current state/future, completed, or ideal state
- x. past/present or present/future

26. rhetorical question—a seemingly open question that has only one correct answer—related to but not the same as a transitional question, which is designed to move an argument forward but does not necessarily have an immediate answer
27. paradox—a contradiction that's true—often a good way to introduce a problem in a contract to be solved later, in some ways the opposite of analogy
28. oxymoron—mini paradox, usually as a noun-adjective phrase
29. correctio or intentional correction—correcting oneself and leaving the mistake apparent
- ✓ 30. occultatio—saying what you're not going to say
31. apostrophe—addressing the absent
32. ellipsis—intentional omissions and cuts
33. etymology—arguing from the roots of words
34. ambiguity—deliberately suggesting more than one possible meaning, sometimes deployed to avoid blame or to keep options open, often takes passive voice
- ③5. irony—a discrepancy or incongruity, primarily related to ethos, often carries ambiguity with it
 - a. verbal irony—discrepancy between what is said and what is meant, includes stable irony, unstable irony, and sarcasm
 - b. dramatic irony—a discrepancy between what the audience knows and what a given character knows
 - c. Socratic irony—feigned ignorance to facilitate discussion or draw audience on
 - d. generic irony—a discrepancy, incongruity, odd result, or paradoxical circumstance in real life; God's paradox
36. hyperbole—exaggeration, to make a mountain out of a molehill
37. understatement—opposite of hyperbole, to make a molehill out of mountain
 - a. meiosis—understatement for the purpose of diminishing
 - b. litotes—understatement for the purpose of increasing
38. authoritative quotation—direct quote, related to ethos, the Bartlett's technique
39. sententia—maxim, common wisdom, a concise, weighty saying, it professes to be the wisdom not only of a given speaker, but of the whole culture
40. demonstratio or demonstration (enargia)—a vivid, powerful description that recreates something or someone "before your very eyes"
41. chiasmus—inverting the order of repeated words, phrases, or larger units
42. antimetabole—a chiasmus that creates a contrast or antithesis
43. climax or gradatio—mounting by degrees through linked words or phrases, usually of increasing weight and in parallel construction, in music a crescendo

Selected Bibliography

- Lanham, Richard. *Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: U of California P, 1991.
- Perelman, Chaim, and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. Trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1969.
- Sloane, Thomas O., ed. *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*. New York: Oxford, 2001.

PACES: Project, Argument, Claims, Evidence, Strategies

In your rhetorical analyses, you will use specific terms and concepts. To help you remember these terms, remember the acronym PACES.

This stands for **Project** • **Argument** • **Claims** • **Evidence** • **Strategies**

Project:



This is the kind of work an author sets out to do. This definition often confuses students. It might be helpful to think of **Project** in other terms:

- It is the purpose and method used to carry out that work.
- It is the overall activity the writer engages in—researching, investigating, experimenting, interviewing, documenting, etc.
- Try to imagine the author's goals or hypotheses in writing the text.

Argument:



In the broadest sense, an argument is any piece of written, spoken, or visual language designed to persuade an audience or bring about a change in ideas/attitudes.

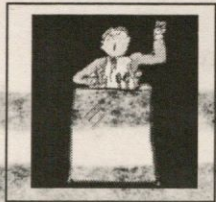
- In academic writing, the argument often refers to the main point, assertion, or conclusion advanced by an author, along with the evidence and reasoning by which this is established.
- Arguments are concerned with contested issues where some degree of uncertainty exists. It would be useless to argue about something on which everyone agrees.

Describing the main argument is **NOT the same** as describing what a text is “about.” Arguments (and claims) usually advance debatable propositions. For example, an author may write about climate change. However, this is not the argument. In that piece of writing, the author may **argue** that the United States should pass the Kyoto Agreement, or pass cap and trade legislation. The author might also argue that climate change is a conspiracy theory without scientific merit. Each of these is an assertion that stakes out a position. Each can be debated.

To articulate the argument, you will choose a verb that describes the strength of that argument.

Arguments exist outside of academic writing as well. Think about advertising, political speech, and the perspectives of documentary and even fictitious films. All of these can contain arguments. Even a photograph can communicate an argument.

Claims: A claim is something the writer wants the audience to believe. Usually consists of an assertion, the staking out of a position, the solution to a problem, or the resolution of some shortcoming, weakness or gap in existing research.



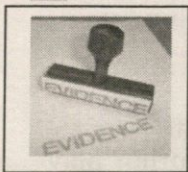
- Claims often come with **self-identification**. For example, the author might state, "My point here is that..."
- An author might also provide **emphasis**, stating, "It must be stressed that..."
- With another type of claim, the author might demonstrate approval. For example, "Olson makes some important and long overdue amendments to the basic position outlined by..."
- The author might also provide a **problem/solution framework**.

Arguments may consist of numerous claims and sometimes sub-claims. Whenever you identify a claim, look for evidence to support that claim. Without evidence, the claim is weak and can easily be refuted with contradictory evidence.

An author without authoritative evidence may provide statements that justify the claim, or explain why a claim should be believed. A reason is evidence, information, justification or data given to support a claim. To find reasons, ask why the claim can be made. What have you got to go on? What is there to support the claim?

Once again, to articulate a claim, you will choose a verb that describes what that claim is **doing**.

Evidence: The component of the argument used as support for the claims made.



- Evidence is the support, reasons, data/information used to help persuade/prove an argument. To find evidence in a text, ask what the author has to go on.
 - What is there to support this claim?
 - Is the evidence credible?

Not all evidence is equally credible. Some **types of evidence** include:

- facts
- historical examples or comparisons
- examples
- analogies
- illustrations
- interviews
- statistics (source & date are important)
- expert testimony
- authoritative quotes
- anecdotes or narrative illustrations
- witnesses
- personal experiences
- reasoning

Strategies:

Rhetorical strategies are the ways authors craft language—both consciously and subconsciously—in order to have an effect on readers.

Strategies are means of persuasion, ways of gaining a readers' attention, interest, or agreement.

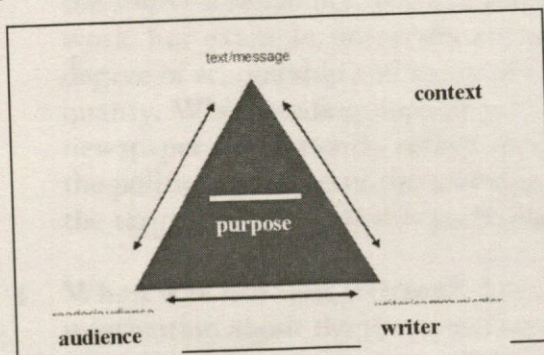
Some common strategies include:

- The way an author organizes her text
- The way an author selects evidence
- When an author addresses the reader
- The way an author frames an issue
- The choice of a definition for key words
- The ways an author uses to establish credibility and trust (ethos)
- Appeals to authority (logos)
- Identifying and refuting opposing views
- Use of style and tone
- Metaphors and images
- Use of "meta-discourse"
- Repetition

Hmm..



The Rhetorical Situation – When writing a rhetorical analysis, you will also consider the circumstances in which an author or speaker communicates (see below).



Entry points for analysis:

- **writer**- age, experience, gender, locations, political beliefs, education, etc.
- **purpose**- to persuade, entertain, inform, educate, call to action, shock, etc.
- **audience**- age, experience, gender, locations, political beliefs, education, expectations, etc.
- **text/subject**- broad, narrow, depends on situation
- **context**- the "situation" generating need; time, location, current events, cultural significance

(adapted from Tony Burman)