

Argument in the ancient world was conducted mainly through oratory, the art of speechmaking. Training for a profession in which argument was part of the job included being trained in the rhetorical strategies needed for giving speeches in that profession. Hence, aspiring politicians were trained in deliberative oratory, aspiring lawyers in forensic oratory. Everyone involved in public life was probably trained in celebratory oratory, which was used for honoring individuals and events.

Checklist

1. Does my paper include the elements of Classical argument structure in proper sequence?
2. Does my introduction clearly present my thesis and necessary background information?
3. Have I acknowledged and accurately presented challenging views? Have I refuted them thoroughly?
4. Does my conclusion summarize the key points of my argument, present insightful interpretations, or make appropriate predictions or recommendations?
5. If I have used visual aids, have I used them judiciously rather than gratuitously to reinforce my Aristotelian appeals to reason, emotion, or ethics?

Writing Projects

1. Using the Classical model of argument structure, write a three-page position paper on one of the following topics:
 - a. Students should (should not) be required to take fewer core courses and allowed to take more electives.
 - b. First-year composition courses should (should not) be an elective instead of a requirement.
 - c. The college bookstore's buyback policy should (should not) be reformed.
 - d. Publicity for extracurricular events needs to be improved.
2. Using the Classical model of argument, write an essay defending or challenging the value or usefulness of an existing law, policy, or program, such as the electoral college, the National Endowment for the Arts, the banning of prayer from public schools, or the minimum drinking age. Consider using visual aids to clarify your views or add persuasive appeal.

5

Using the Toulmin Model in Your Arguments

Rationality has to be understood in terms of formal argumentation.

—Stephen Toulmin

Stephen Toulmin (1922–2009), an English philosopher of science and the history of ideas, developed a system of argument that has proven useful and influential in the modern world of complex rhetorical situations where problems are not easily divided into “right” and “wrong.” Toulmin’s model of argument is systematic in its reasoning; at the same time, it demands that this reasoning be scrutinized for its ethical underpinnings. It is not enough to present a claim and try to “prove” it with evidence. The arguer must also examine the evidence itself to scrutinize the assumptions we make about the evidence and even to ensure that *those* assumptions are similarly scrutinized for their ethical underpinnings. Toulmin argument, then, insists that logic alone cannot resolve complex human issues. Ethics and values play as important a role in argumentation as logical reasoning.

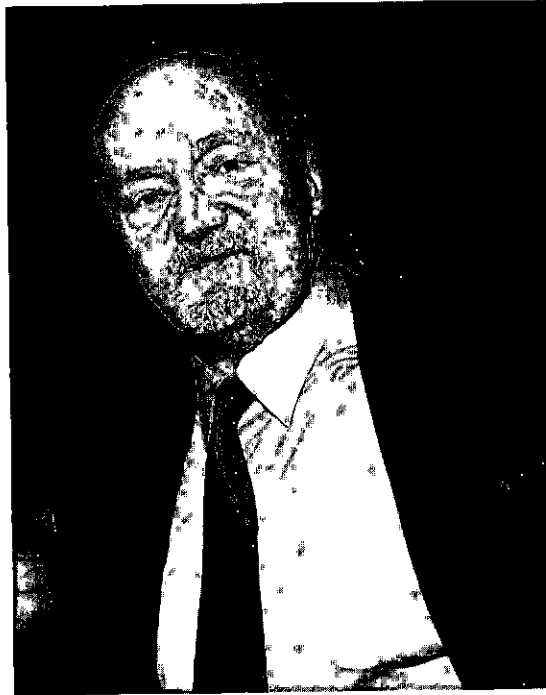
Let’s take a closer look at the elements that comprise Toulmin argument.

The Toulmin Model of Argument

The terms we encounter in the Toulmin model immediately call attention to the complexity of the social interaction required for responsible argumentation:

- An argument begins with a *claim* to be made, which must be articulated as clearly and as accurately as possible, keeping in mind that problems are often more complicated than they seem to be on the surface. The claim is the thesis or premise of your argument that you want your audience to accept.
- To accomplish this goal, you must produce compelling *data*, the grounds or evidence. It is important to keep in mind that “evidence” means different things in different disciplines. In the sciences, for example, the data probably consist of results obtained from experiments, close observations, or mathematical

Stephen Toulmin (1922–2009) is a philosopher of science with a special interest in the role that rhetoric plays in conveying ideas about ethics and morality. His context-based theory of argument provides an influential alternative to rigid, logic-driven theories.



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analyses. In other contexts, the data probably consist of rules, laws, policies, highly valued social customs, or quotations from works of literature.

- Next, you need to ask of any argument whether the data used to support the claim truly are valid and are based on a sound sense of values. In other words, you must determine one or more underlying warrants, assurances that the data are based on some sensible and ethical foundation. Anyone can conjure up all sorts of data and manipulate it to give the appearance of validating a claim. As Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice* reminds us through the mouth of the merchant Antonio, “The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.” For example, sometimes it is not enough to cite a law; it may be necessary to decide if the law is just or unjust.
- Just as the validity of the data is reinforced and sanctioned by one or more underlying warrants, so too must the validity of the warrants be reinforced. As Stephen Toulmin himself explains in *An Introduction to Reasoning* (1979), “Warrants are not-self-validating . . . [and] normally draw their strength and solidity from further substantial supporting considerations” (58). These further supporting considerations Toulmin calls the *backing*. To return to the example of unjust laws, the arguer would need to ask: What *assurance* can I give that the law is unjust?
- Finally, you must be prepared to bring in one or more *qualifiers* to your claim—that is, be prepared to call attention to any exceptions to the claim under certain circumstances. Consider: “The right of free speech must be

protected in all situations except when it can endanger life or safety, such as yelling ‘Fire!’ in a crowded theater.” The qualifier—the exception to the rule—prevents the claim from losing touch with complex social situations. The ability to anticipate qualifiers to one’s claim is the mark of a responsible arguer. Toulmin refers to this phase of argument as the *rebuttal*. Of course, no arguer can anticipate every possible exception, and that is why audience feedback is so important in argumentation.

The Toulmin model provides a slightly different approach to writing arguments—an alternative to the Classical model—that you can use as you consider the best approach given your audience and purpose as the writer (recall the PAWS rhetorical rhombus from Chapter 1, Figure 1.2.) Let us examine each of these Toulmin model elements in more detail.

The Claim

You know this feature as the thesis, premise, or central assumption. Toulmin chooses to call it the *claim* because that term suggests a thesis or assertion that is particularly *open to challenge*. The term comes from the Latin word *clamare*, meaning “to cry out,” reminding us of the spontaneity with which claims are often made and hence how easily they can reach human ears and eyes without sufficient evidence to support them. The Latin root also reminds us to pay attention to how open to public scrutiny the claim is likely to be once it is presented as a speech or as a printed document in a periodical or book, on the Internet, in a court of law, or in a college paper.

For an argument to succeed, the writer first must ensure that the claim offered is worthy of deliberation. Some claims are not arguable. For example, it would be foolish to argue seriously that, in general, red is a superior color to blue. The claim is too dependent on subjective taste to be arguable. As the Latin maxim goes, *De gustibus non est disputandum*—of taste there is no disputing. But let’s say you are an interior decorator and you have studied the effects of color on mood. You might argue that particular colors work best in particular types of rooms within a house. Here the claim is based not on personal taste but on statistical fact: Researchers have shown that pale blue helps relax people; therefore, pale blue would be an appropriate color for bedroom walls.

There are two basic types of claims, objective and subjective. *Objective claims* assert that something *actually* exists and present evidence that is demonstrably factual—not only in the sense of scientifically factual but legally factual, as in the case of laws, regulations, and policies. Here are some examples of objective claims:

- Video games heighten a child’s hand-eye coordination and visual perception, but they impede the development of language processing skills.
- It is a myth that science is based only on logical reasoning and that art is based only on imagination. Logical reasoning and imagination are equally important to science and to art.

- Those who wish to speak out against the U.S. Constitution have just as much constitutional right to communicate their views in public as those who support the Constitution.
- YouTube provides new artists opportunities to be seen by and signed to major recording companies.

The above claims present themselves as objective truths. But they are not *self-evident* truths; they must be supported with the appropriate evidence before readers can accept them as factual. Thus, before the first claim can be accepted as factual, the arguer must show, for example, that psychologists have compared the learning behaviors of children who play video games with those children who do not and have found enough evidence to establish a causal link between video-game playing and abstract reasoning.

Before the second claim can be accepted as factual, the arguer must provide convincing examples of the way imagination works in science and the way logical reasoning works in art. For example, the arguer might refer to autobiographical statements of scientists such as Albert Einstein or mathematicians such as Jules Henri Poincaré, who at various times obtained scientific understanding through dreams or imaginary “thought experiments.”

Before the third claim can be accepted as factual, the arguer must demonstrate how the Constitution, paradoxical as it may seem, actually protects the rights of those who wish to speak out against it. This proof would entail careful analysis and interpretation of selected passages from the Constitution.

Before the fourth claim can be accepted as factual, the arguer must provide examples of such artists, such as Justin Bieber, who were discovered through self-posting on YouTube. The arguer must also provide other examples and evidence that agents of major recording companies do look at YouTube videos for the express purpose of finding fresh, new talent.

Subjective claims, on the other hand, assert that something *should* exist and present evidence derived from ethical, moral, or aesthetic convictions. Someone who argues, for example, that all college students should be required to take at least one course in literature to graduate or that animals should be treated with dignity is making a subjective claim. Although each claim is based on personal values, one cannot dismiss them as a kind of anything-goes relativism. The arguer, for example, might demonstrate that the benefits derived from studying literature improve one’s ability to understand human nature, a valuable asset when one interacts with people.

The Data or Grounds

The Toulmin model demands that writers take pains to ensure that the supporting evidence fully validates the claim. The word *data* suggests “hard facts”—results from experiments or statistics from surveys, as well as historical, legal, and biographical facts. For more indirect kinds of evidence, such as testimonials or interpretations, the term *grounds* is more appropriate.

Thus, we can identify five different kinds of data to authenticate a claim: (1) *legal data* (such as laws, policies, regulations, and codes); (2) *scientific data*, such as findings obtained from mathematical calculations and laboratory experiments (keep in mind that experiments such as DNA testing and ballistics analyses, used to help solve crimes, are an inherent part of legal data and are often referred to as *forensic data*); (3) *testimonial or experiential data*, which are based on firsthand experience (for example, eyewitness testimony and oral histories as gathered by anthropologists); (4) *scholarly or documentary data* (that is, data obtained from secondary sources published in book or electronic form); and (5) *statistical data*, which may be obtained firsthand (in which case they would be akin to but not identical to scientific data unless the statistics were derived from laboratory experiments instead of, say, opinion polls).

Like claims, data or grounds must be presented as accurately and as unambiguously as possible. Someone who argues, for example, that essay exams test student comprehension of literature better than multiple-choice exams do, and who in so arguing relies on the testimonials of students, would want to make sure that those testimonials contain clear *demonstrations* of better comprehension for students taking essay exams. Of course, the criteria for “better comprehension” would need to be clarified before they could be used as valid grounds for a claim. The criteria might include richly detailed (as opposed to generalized) recollection of the content of literary works; they might also include insightful critical assessment or comparison of the thematic material of the works (as opposed to, say, superficial explanation of its strengths and weaknesses).

The Warrant and Its Backing

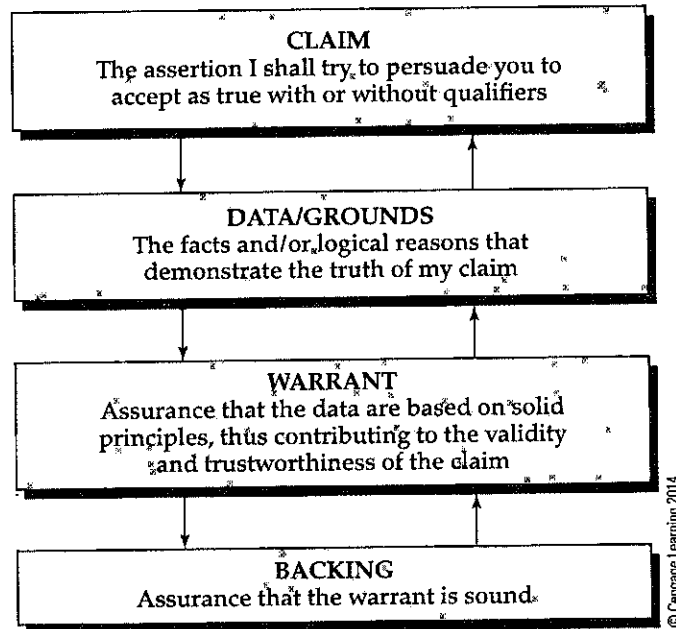
A warrant is the assurance that the evidence brought in to support the claim is completely reliable and that it rests on sound principles or values. Thus, just as the data legitimate the claim, a warrant, often implicit in the argument, legitimates the data. As Stephen Toulmin writes in *The Uses of Argument*, warrants “indicate the bearing of [the] conclusion of the data already produced” (98). By “bearing,” Toulmin is referring to the need for readers to recognize and accept an appropriate direction in which the argument takes shape from claim to data to warrant. Warrants remind us of the humanizing dimension of argument: An argument, no matter how “heated,” must always be principled rather than stem from vague or questionable motives.

Let us see how warrants operate in a given argument. Consider an essay in which a student, Melissa, argues for the abolition of letter grades in formal education. Melissa’s claim is as follows:

Letter grades should be abolished because they result in unhealthy competition, distract students from truly learning the subject matter, and constitute an inadequate gauge of student performance.

Melissa chooses to support her claim with data that compare the performance of students in a letter-graded class with the performance of students in a Pass/No Pass class. Melissa’s warrant might go something like this: “Learning

FIGURE 5.1
Relationships
Among the Claim,
Data, Warrant, and
Backing



for its own sake is more satisfying to students than learning to achieve predetermined standards of proficiency." As backing for this warrant, Melissa might conclude something like the following: "The more satisfying the learning experience, the more students are likely to learn." Melissa may not need to state these sentences explicitly, but the evidence she uses to support her claim should make the warrant and backing apparent.

We might diagram the relationships among Melissa's claim, data, warrant, and backing as in Figure 5.1.

Compelling warrants are just as vital to the force of an argument as are compelling data because they reinforce the trustworthiness of the data. Unsuccessful warrants often seem disconnected from, or even contradictory to, the evidence. Consider the following claim:

Students should not be required to attend class.

If the evidence presented is the college's pledge to inculcate self-reliance in students, then the warrant—the conviction that self-reliance is compromised when professors require students to attend class—would seem contradictory to many readers because it is often assumed that such requirements are designed to *promote* self-reliance. Similarly, backing can be faulty. For example, in an argument claiming that every sixteen-year-old who drops out of school should be denied a driver's license, a warrant might involve the conviction that there is never any legitimate justification for dropping out of school; however, it would be difficult to find backing for this warrant that would apply in every circumstance.

There are three kinds of warrants, which roughly correspond to the three kinds of appeals in Classical argument: logical or scientific warrants, ethical or forensic-based warrants, and emotional or artistic-based warrants.

1. *Logical or scientific warrants.* These warrants reinforce the trustworthiness of logical progression of scientific reasoning. If a meteorologist predicts a smog alert on the basis of 90-degree temperatures, little or no winds, and heavy traffic, her warrant would be that such a formula for smog predication is reliable.
2. *Ethical or forensic-based warrants.* A warrant is ethical when it relates to values or codes of conduct such as honor, integrity, altruism, honesty, and compassion. If one argues that underrepresented minorities should be allowed the opportunity to attend college even if their admissions test scores are not quite as high as those of the majority of admissions candidates and uses as evidence the success rate of those given such opportunity, the warrant is that society is ethically obligated to compensate minorities for past injustices by giving them such opportunities. Where affirmative action measures have become law, we could say that the warrant justifies enactment of that law.
3. *Emotional or artistic-based warrants.* If someone argues that profanity in films weakens instead of strengthens his enjoyment of those films and uses personal testimony as evidence, the arguer's warrant is that such negative reactions to profanity in movies is a reliable criterion for evaluating the strength or weakness of a film.

Backing may also be logical, ethical, and emotional.

Keep in mind when analyzing the arguments of others (and even your own arguments) that, as stated earlier, warrants—and, consequently, backing—often remain unstated. They may be certain fundamental principles or beliefs that the writer simply assumes his or her reader shares. In fact, such principles or beliefs may well be open to challenge, thus undermining the claim of the argument. But to make such a challenge, you first have to identify the unstated warrant. In making arguments of your own, consider the possibility that a good number of your readers may not share your warrant. If that is the case, it is best to state the warrant and backing directly and perhaps even offer some defense for one or both.

The Qualifier

Claims are rarely absolute; that is, a claim may be valid in many circumstances, but not necessarily in all. If that is the case, an arguer would want to *qualify* the claim so that her readers would understand how she is limiting its range. For example, someone who claims that dress codes should be eliminated in the workplace might qualify that claim by excluding workplaces where uniforms are required for reasons of security (as is the case with police or military uniforms) or where certain articles of clothing are prohibited for reasons of

personal safety (for example, someone cannot wear a necktie when operating heavy machinery). Someone writing about the negative influence of television on learning might qualify the claim by noting that watching television for the specific purpose of studying its negative effects could have a positive benefit on learning.

A radical form of qualification is known as the *rebuttal*. This is similar to refutation in Classical argument (see pages 136–137), except that in the Toulmin scheme rebuttal aims not to invalidate the claim but to show that the claim may not be valid in certain situations. Let's use the example of dress codes mentioned earlier. Instead of merely qualifying the claim that dress codes should be eliminated *except for* police uniforms, the arguer might rebut the claim entirely by agreeing that dress codes should be maintained without exception whenever there is consensus among employers and employees alike that it is necessary or desirable.

A Sample Analysis Using the Toulmin Model

Read the following argument by Virginia Woolf, noting the claim, data, warrant, and backing, as indicated by the marginal annotations.

Professions for Women | Virginia Woolf

Woolf begins by providing necessary background information for her argument.



When your secretary invited me to come here, she told me that your Society is concerned with the employment of women and she suggested that I might tell you something about my own professional experiences. It is true I am a woman; it is true I am employed; but what professional experiences have I had? It is difficult to say. My profession is literature; and in that profession there are fewer experiences for women than in any other, with the exception of the stage—fewer, I mean, that are peculiar to women. For the road was cut many years ago—by Fanny Burney, by Aphra Behn, by Harriet Martineau, by Jane Austen, by George Eliot—many famous women, and many more unknown and forgotten, have been before me, making the path smooth, and regulating my steps. Thus, when I came to write, there were very few material obstacles in my way. Writing was a reputable and harmless occupation. The family peace was not broken by the scratching of a pen.

Source: "Professions for Women" in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* by Virginia Woolf, © 1942 by Harcourt, Inc. and renewed 1970 by Marjorie T. Parsons, Executrix. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

No demand was made upon the family purse. For ten and sixpence one can buy paper enough to write all the plays of Shakespeare—if one has a mind that way. Pianos and models, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, masters and mistresses, are not needed by a writer. The cheapness of writing paper is, of course, the reason why women have succeeded as writers before they have succeeded in the other professions.

But to tell you my story—it is a simple one. You have only got to figure to yourselves a girl in a bedroom with a pen in her hand. She had only to move that pen from left to right—from ten o'clock to one. Then it occurred to her to do what is simple and cheap enough after all—to slip a few of those pages into an envelope, fix a penny stamp in the corner, and drop the envelope into the red box at the corner. It was thus that I became a journalist; and my effort was rewarded on the first day of the following month—a very glorious day it was for me—by a letter from an editor containing a cheque for one pound ten shillings and sixpence. But to show you how little I deserve to be called a professional woman, how little I know of the struggles and difficulties of such lives, I have to admit that instead of spending that sum upon bread and butter, rent, shoes and stockings, or butcher's bills, I went out and bought a cat—a beautiful cat, a Persian cat, which very soon involved me in bitter disputes with my neighbors.

What could be easier than to write articles and to buy Persian cats with the profits? But wait a moment. Articles have to be about something. Mine, I seem to remember, was about a novel by a famous man. And while I was writing this review, I discovered that if I were going to review books I should need to do battle with a certain phantom. And the phantom was a woman, and when I came to know her better I called her after the heroine of a famous poem. The Angel in the House. It was she who used to come

between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her. You who come of a younger and happier generation may not have heard of her—you may not know what I mean by The Angel in the House. I will describe her as shortly as I can. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily.

Woolf's claim emerges here through implication: Women who aspire to write must do all they can to "kill" the Angel in the House.



If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all—I need not say it—she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty—her blushes, her great grace. In those days—the last of Queen Victoria—every house had its Angel. And when I came to write I encountered her with the very first words. The shadow of her wings fell on my page; I heard the rustling of her skirts in the room. Directly, that is to say, I took my pen in my hand to review that novel by a famous man, she slipped behind me and whispered: “My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure.” And she made as if to guide my pen. I now record the one act for which I take some credit to myself, though the credit rightly belongs to some excellent ancestors of mine who left me a certain sum of money—shall we say five hundred pounds a year?—so that it was not necessary for me to depend solely on charm for my living. I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse if I were to be had up at a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defense. Had I not killed

her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing. For as I found directly, as I put pen to paper, you cannot review even a novel, without having a mind of your own, without expressing what you think to be the truth about human relations, morality, sex. And all these questions, according to the Angel of the House cannot be dealt with freely and openly by women; they must charm, they must conciliate, they must—to put it bluntly—tell lies if they are to succeed. Thus, whenever I felt the shadow of her wing, or the radiance of her halo upon my page, I took up the inkpot and flung it at her. She died hard. Her fictitious nature was of great assistance to her. It is far harder to kill a phantom than a reality. She was always creeping back when I thought I had dispatched her. Though I flatter myself that I killed her in the end, the struggle was severe; it took much time that had better have been spent upon learning Greek grammar; or

Woolf is more explicit about her claim here: The “Angel” if not killed, will pluck the heart out of a woman’s writing.

The data (grounds) Woolf uses to support her claim: Women writers are forced to conciliate, tell lies.

in roaming the world in search of adventures. But it was a real experience; it was an experience that was bound to befall all women writers at that time. Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer.

But to continue my story. The Angel was dead; what then remained? You may say that what remained was a simple and common object—a young woman in a bedroom with an inkpot. In other words, now that she had rid herself of falsehood, that young woman had only to be herself. Ah, but what is “herself”? I mean, what is a woman? I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know. I do not believe that anybody can know until she has expressed herself in all the arts and professions open to human skill. That indeed is one of the reasons why I have come here—out of respect for you, who are in process of showing us by your experiments what a woman is, who are in process of providing us, by your failures and successes, with that extremely important piece of information.

But to continue the story of my professional experiences. I made one pound ten and six by my first review; and I bought a Persian cat with the proceeds. Then I grew ambitious. A Persian cat is all very well, I said; but a Persian cat is not enough. I must have a motor-car. And it was thus that I became a novelist—for it is a very strange thing that people will give you a motor-car if you will tell them a story. It is a still stranger thing that there is nothing so delightful in the world as telling stories. It is far pleasanter than writing reviews of famous novels. And yet, if I am to obey your secretary and tell you my professional experiences as a novelist, I must tell you about a very strange experience that befell me as a novelist. And to understand it you must try first to imagine a novelist’s state of mind. I hope I am not giving away professional secrets if I say that a novelist’s chief desire is to be as unconscious as possible. He has to induce in himself a state of perpetual lethargy. He wants life to proceed with the utmost quiet and regularity. He wants to see the same faces, to read the same books, to do the same things day after day, month after month, while he is writing, so that nothing may break the illusion in which he is living—so that nothing may disturb or disquiet the mysterious nosings about, feelings round, darts, dashes, and sudden discoveries of that very shy and illusive spirit, the imagination. I suspect that this state is the

Woolf’s warrant, implied here, is that women writers must be free to be themselves, whatever that might be.

To provide backing to her warrant, Woolf describes her own experience as a writer to demonstrate how uncompromising one must be in communicating his or her true convictions.

same both for men and women. Be that as it may, I want you to imagine me writing a novel in a state of trance. I want you to figure to yourselves a girl sitting with a pen in her hand, which for minutes, and indeed for hours, she never dips into the inkpot. The image that comes to my mind when I think of this girl is the image of a fisherman lying sunk in dreams on the verge of a deep lake with a rod held out over the water. She was letting her imagination sweep unchecked round every rock and cranny of the world that lies submerged in the depths of our unconscious being. Now came the experience that I believe to be far commoner with women writers than with men. The line raced through the girl's fingers. Her imagination had rushed away. It had sought the pools, the depths, the dark places where the largest fish slumber. And then there was a smash. There was an explosion. There was foam and confusion. The imagination had dashed itself against something hard. The girl was roused from her dream. She was indeed in a state of the most acute and difficult distress. To speak without figure, she had thought of something, something about the body, about the passion, which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say. Men, her reason told her, would be shocked. The consciousness of what men will say of a woman who speaks the truth about her passions had roused her from her artist's state of unconsciousness. She could write no more. The trance was over. Her imagination could work no longer. This I believe to be a very common experience with women writers—they are impeded by the extreme conventionality of the other sex. For though men sensibly allow themselves great freedom in these respects, I doubt that they realize or can control the extreme severity with which they condemn such freedom in women.

These then were two very genuine experiences of my own. These were two of the adventures of my professional life. The first—killing the Angel in the House—I think I solved. She died. But the second, telling the truth about

Woolf qualifies her claim by emphasizing the fact that the obstacles facing women have not yet been overcome.

my own experiences as a body, I do not think I solved. I doubt that any woman has solved it yet. The obstacles against her are still immensely powerful—and yet they are very difficult to define. Outwardly, what is simpler than to write books? Outwardly, what obstacles are there for a woman rather than for a man? Inwardly, I think, the case is very different; she has still many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome. Indeed it will be a long time

still, I think, before a woman can sit down to write a book without finding a phantom to be slain, a rock to be dashed against. And if this is so in literature, the freest of all professions for women, how is it in the new professions which you are now for the first time entering?

Those are the questions that I should like, had I time, to ask you. And indeed, if I have laid stress upon these professional experiences of mine, it is because I believe that they are, though in different forms, yours also. Even when the path is nominally open—when there is nothing to prevent a woman from being a doctor, a lawyer, a civil servant—there are many phantoms and obstacles, as I believe, looming in her way. To discuss and define them is I think of great value and importance; for thus only can the labour be shared, the difficulties be solved. But besides this, it is necessary also to discuss the ends and the aims for which we are fighting, for which we are doing battle with these formidable obstacles. Those aims cannot be taken for granted; they must be perpetually questioned and examined. The whole position, as I see it—here in this hall surrounded by women practising for the first time in history I know not how many different professions—is one of extraordinary interest and importance. You have won rooms of your own in the house hitherto exclusively owned by men. You are able, though not without great labour and effort, to pay the rent. You are earning your five hundred pounds a year. But this freedom is only a beginning; the room is your own, but it is still bare. It has to be furnished; it has to be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms? These, I think are questions of the utmost importance and interest. For the first time in history you are able to ask them; for the first time you are able to decide for yourselves what the answers should be. Willingly would I stay and discuss those questions and answers—but not tonight. My time is up; and I must cease. ☉☉

The Toulmin Model in Action

You may be wondering when it would be more appropriate to use the Toulmin method of argument over the Aristotelian (Classical) method. In general, the Toulmin method foregrounds the ethical or values-based underpinnings of an argument, as we can see in Woolf's "Professions for Women." Not only does

Woolf explicitly describe the pressure that female writers of her day experience in order to adhere to male standards of composition and points of view, she also implies that it is unjust for such double standards to continue. As backing for this warrant Woolf draws from her own example of breaking free of the male writer's paradigm. Because of what was then a highly debatable point of view, Woolf felt it necessary to foreground the ethical basis of her reasoning—hence her decision to employ what we now refer to as the Toulmin method of argument.

Let's consider another example. Imagine that you are a member of a board of ethics whose task it is to decide who is most responsible for smoking-related illnesses: the tobacco industry or individual smokers. Your first step will be to locate the data (evidence) to support your claim. Next, you will look for ethical validation (warrant) of your data, making sure that you have sufficient backing to reinforce your warrant. In the following exercise, then-student Daniel Neal has decided to argue that the burden of responsibility lies with the individual smoker.

EXERCISE 5.1

Read Daniel's argument and then respond to the questions at the end.

Daniel Neal

Tobacco: Ignorance Is No Longer an Excuse

Any individual who chooses to use tobacco today is making an informed decision. The negative effects of tobacco are known, admitted, and even advertised by tobacco companies. Simply put, ignorance is no longer an excuse for smoking. And since the government has settled with the tobacco companies, ignorance is no longer an excuse for legal action. Because of the tobacco settlement, individuals must now be responsible for the consequences of choosing to use tobacco.

Part of this settlement requires the tobacco companies to begin "spending hundreds of millions of dollars on efforts to discourage and deglamorize tobacco use" (Klein 463). Because it will highlight the dangers of tobacco, some argue that this will in fact encourage youth tobacco use. Richard Klein holds that "emphasizing that tobacco is dangerous and disapproved will enhance the glamour, prestige, and attractiveness of cigarettes, particularly among the young" (463). Klein's

point is valid: Teenagers are attracted to what is dangerous and disapproved. No one debates that youth tobacco use is undesirable and should be prevented. It is wrong, however, to blame tobacco companies for youth tobacco use for the simple reason that they are not the ones directly selling it to minors. The tobacco companies cannot be held accountable for the actions of independent retailers who choose to sell tobacco to children. Instead of arguing that the settlement will increase youth tobacco use, those who are concerned should attack the way teens get tobacco: dishonest retailers willing to sell tobacco products illegally to minors. The tobacco settlement has not changed the illegality of underage tobacco use—that minors may choose to smoke illegally is irrelevant. It is unquestionably positive, however, that the tobacco settlement will fund education efforts so that these minors, when adults, can make informed and responsible decisions about tobacco use.

Other critics of the settlement feel that the tobacco industry will receive unfair protection from further lawsuits. In her essay "...Or a Payoff to Purveyors of Poison?" Elizabeth M. Whelan writes:

Whatever the parties' motivation, the deal that resulted gave the tobacco industry a major boost by providing limited immunity against future litigation. While technically allowing smokers (or their survivors) to continue to sue cigarette companies for damages caused by smoking, the settlement would put a yearly cap of \$5 billion on damages, an amount that is a trivial cost of doing business for the industry. This cap will serve as a disincentive to future plaintiff's attorneys, who will incur enormous costs in any challenges they choose to mount against the wealthy tobacco companies (467).

If the dangers of tobacco were still concealed by the tobacco companies, Whelan's argument would be quite valid. However, that tobacco use is harmful to one's health is plain

knowledge today. Since anyone considering tobacco use today has been fully informed of the dangers by many sources (including the tobacco industry), how can anyone but that individual be responsible for damages resulting from smoking? While Whelan holds that limited immunity for tobacco companies is a negative thing, it is in fact quite positive: By setting limits on the liability of tobacco companies, the government is forcing individuals to take responsibility for their actions. Later in her essay, Whelan continues: "This is analogous to a scenario in which a corporation admits to polluting the water supply, pays some damages, then returns immediately to dumping toxins down the well—and gets away with it" (467). In this analogy Whelan neglects to include a key participant: the individual choosing to use tobacco. Borrowing her terms, while the well may be toxic, not only is it clearly labeled so, but no one is forced to drink from it. The tobacco settlement is quite fair because it places the responsibility for tobacco use into the hands of the informed consumers who use it.

Instead of continuing to demonize the tobacco industry, we should demand that the individuals who choose to use tobacco take personal responsibility for the damages caused by it. Consider alcohol, a substance harmful both when used as intended (killing brain cells) and when abused (driving while intoxicated, alcohol poisoning, alcoholism, etc.). We have, as a society, accepted the idea of individual responsibility for the consequences of alcohol use. It is time we do the same for tobacco. An individual choosing to smoke today must realize that he or she has been amply warned. By providing the tobacco industry protection against future litigation, the tobacco settlement has justly moved the onus of responsibility from the corporation to the informed consumer.

Works Cited

- Klein, Richard. "The Tobacco Deal: Prohibition II . . ." *Wall Street Journal* 26 June 1997: A-18. Print.
- Whelan, Elizabeth M. " . . . Or a Payoff to Purveyors of Poison?" *Wall Street Journal* 26 June 1997: A-18. Print.

1. Identify Daniel's claim, data, warrant, and backing (keeping in mind that the final two may be implied).
2. How effectively does Daniel use the Toulmin method? What might he do differently?
3. Critique Daniel's method of organizing the argument. Which parts of the essay, if any, could he organize more effectively? Why?

Organizing Your Argument Using the Toulmin Model

Preparing to write an argument using the Toulmin model puts you into an intense questioning mode about the nature of your claim, the reliability of your data, and the ethical strength of your warrant and backing.

To begin, write down your claim, data, warrant, and backing. Then jot down questions about each of them. One student, organizing an argument on the hazards of secondhand cigarette smoke, prepares the following list:

My Claim

Secondhand cigarette smoke is hazardous enough to justify prohibiting smoking in all public places.

Questions About My Claim

1. Is it valid? What makes it valid?
2. Is it practical? Can it actually be acted on?
3. Are there qualifications I must make to my claim?
4. What will be some of the possible challenges to my claim?
5. Who could benefit most from accepting my claim? Benefit least or be harmed?

My Data

1. Statistical information from the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, and the American Medical Association
2. The most recent surgeon general's report on secondhand smoke
3. Personal testimonials of those who became seriously ill as a result of long-term exposure to secondhand smoke

Questions About My Data

1. Do I have sufficient data to support my claim?
2. Are there other important sources of information that I have overlooked?

3. Are my data reliable (not biased or manipulated)? Timely? Accurate?
4. How can I test the data for reliability, timeliness, and accuracy?
5. Which data are the most compelling? Least compelling?

My Warrant

It is more important for people to have the freedom to breathe clean air than for smokers to have the freedom to befool the air.

Questions About My Warrant

1. Do I really believe that "freedom" in the context of smoking has to be qualified to include freedom from encroaching on one's right to breathe smoke-free air?
2. What other warrants might underlie the one I have identified? Am I too intolerant of smokers? Am I exaggerating the seriousness of the problem?
3. Am I prepared to stand behind my warrant, regardless of how others might challenge it?

My Backing

Freedom from things that cause distress in others is more important than freedom to do things that cause distress in others.

Questions About My Backing

1. Does my backing apply in all cases? For example, does ambient smoke always cause distress in others?
2. What makes me so sure that "freedom from" things that might cause distress is more important than "freedom to do" things that might cause distress?

The student then prepares the following tentative outline based on this list:

Thesis

Because secondhand smoke is so hazardous, smoking should be banned from all public facilities.

- I. Introduction: The problem of secondhand smoke
 - A. First example: Woman breathes in secondhand smoke in a restaurant and has an asthma attack
 - B. Second example: Child in a shopping mall, allergic to secondhand smoke, becomes seriously ill when a group of smoking teens pass by him

- C. Claim, with allusions to underlying warrants, that secondhand smoke is hazardous enough to justify banning smoking from all public places
- II. Data in support of the claim
 - A. Scientific data from ACS, ALA, and AMA + discussion of data
 - B. Testimonial data from physicians + discussion
- III. Deeper considerations (warrants and backing) behind the claim

[Note: This discussion would approximate refutation in the classical model but would give more emphasis to a shared value system with the audience.]

- IV. Concluding remarks

EXERCISE 5.2

1. For each of the following claims, suggest at least one qualifier, two kinds of evidence, and one warrant for which you may also discover backing. Also suggest a counterclaim with counterdata and a counterwarrant for each.
 - a. Our mayor should be removed from office because we just learned that he was once arrested for possession of marijuana.
 - b. Any novel that includes the use of racial slurs should be banned from public school classrooms.
 - c. Beef in restaurants should be prepared well done regardless of customer preference because of the danger of *E. coli* infection.
 - d. Job seekers should use social media networking sites such as LinkedIn for the fastest and best results.
2. Work up two versions of an outline for an essay on improving conditions where you live. Use the Classical model to structure the first outline and the Toulmin model to structure the second. Which of the two outlines would you use as the basis for the paper, and why?
3. Rewrite each of the following claims by using more specific terms or references. *Example*: UFO sightings are a bunch of nonsense. *Rewrite*:

UFO sightings are difficult to document because trick photography is easy to accomplish.

- a. Books are an environmental problem.
 - b. Cats make better pets than dogs.
 - c. Students should be admitted to college on the basis of merit only.
4. Suggest one or two possible warrants for each of the following claims:
 - a. All college students should be required to take at least one course in economics.
 - b. More college courses should be conducted as online courses.
 - c. High school sex-education courses are inadequate.
 5. Suggest at least one backing for the warrants you proposed in question 4.

EXERCISE 5.3

Read Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and identify its claim, data, warrant, and backing.

Declaration of Independence | Thomas Jefferson

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.—We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all

experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.—Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.—He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.—He has forbidden his Governors to pass.

Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.—He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.—He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.—He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions of the rights of the people.—He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.—He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws of Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.—He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.—He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.—He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.—He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.—He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.—He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:—For quartering

large bodies of armed troops among us:—For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:—For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:—For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:—For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:—For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:—For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:—For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:—For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.—He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.—He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the Lives of our people.—He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.—He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.—He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions. In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.—

We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for

the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, *Free and Independent States*; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do.—And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor. ☉☉

Reinforcing the Toulmin Model with Visuals

Visuals can reinforce a Toulmin-type argument in at least three ways: It can help readers visualize a claim, help readers better comprehend the data, and/or heighten awareness of the warrant. Let's consider adding illustrations to the Declaration of Independence (pages 168–171) to reinforce the warrant that the policies of the king of Great Britain against the American colonists are morally wrong. What kinds of visuals would you paste into it, and where, that would reinforce the Declaration's argument? Here are two possibilities; perhaps you can think of others:

1. To illustrate "He [the King of Great Britain] has made Judges dependent on his Will alone," create a caricature of the king's soldiers muzzling the colonial judges.
2. To illustrate the king's imposition "of taxes on us without our Consent," draw King George III as a burglar sneaking out the window of a colonist's home, a bag of money in tow.

Because the Toulmin model brings values and backing more to the forefront than does the Classical model, the kinds of visuals someone arguing in this approach might use could be those representing certain values or pie charts or graphs illustrating the statistics that support the claims.

☉☉ EXERCISE 5.4

Suggest what kinds of visuals might be incorporated (and where) into each of the following articles:

1. "Professions for Women," pages 156–161
2. "Tobacco: Ignorance Is No Longer an Excuse," pages 162–164
3. "Academic Motivation and the Student Athlete," pages 432–447

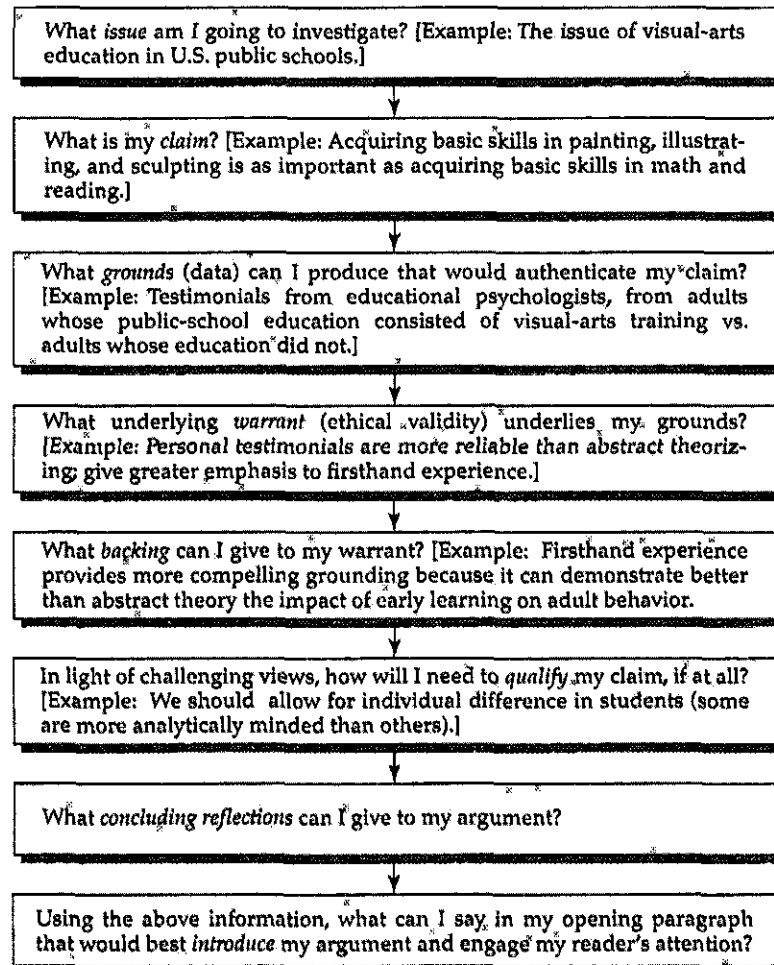
Chapter Summary

The Toulmin model of argument goes beyond Classical argument in its efforts to bring values to bear on reasoning. The Toulmin model of argument provides an alternative to the Classical model in that it brings values to bear on reasoning for audiences who are truly vested in the issues. Toulmin argument recognizes that logical reasoning, while necessary, is not enough to resolve the complex social issues encountered today. For that reason, it is especially suitable in courts of law and for resolving situations in which conflicting value systems are involved—situations typical of a global culture involving multiple ethnicities and religious beliefs.

The Toulmin argumentation method consists of presenting a carefully articulated claim (thesis to be argued). It recognizes that a claim, whether objective (based on scientific or logical issues) or subjective (based on aesthetic, ethical, or moral issues), must be grounded by data—hard facts, statistics, experimental

FIGURE 5.2

Toulmin
Model
Flowchart



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results, valid testimony, and/or logical analysis, depending on the nature of the claim. The claim must also be tested for possible qualifiers, exceptions to the rule; this is the rebuttal phase of an argument. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Toulmin method of argument is that it does not assume the data to be automatically self-justifying. Instead, the data must rest on one or more warrants, trustworthy foundations that give validity to the data. There must also be assurance—through backing—that the warrants themselves are sound.

When composing an argument using the Toulmin method, use the flowchart presented in Figure 5.2 to remind you of the key elements involved.

Checklist

1. Have I stated my claim clearly and accurately enough for public scrutiny, making sure that it is arguable?
2. Have I added one or more qualifiers to my claim, that is, anticipated possible exceptions to it?
3. Have I included the right kinds of data (evidence) appropriate to my claim in order to support it convincingly?
4. Have I ensured that my data are reliable, timely, accurate, and sufficient for demonstrating the validity and truthfulness of my claim?
5. Have I included one or more warrants to validate the trustworthiness of my data?
6. Have I ensured that my warrants, in turn, are valid? In other words, do my warrants have sufficient backing?
7. Have I considered using visual aids to clarify or reinforce my claim, grounds, or backing?

Writing Projects

1. Prepare an argumentative essay on a topic of your own or your instructor's choosing that follows the Toulmin model. Include a preliminary synopsis of your argument, divided into five sections: (1) your claim; (2) a qualifier to your claim; (3) your data, subdivided into hard facts and reason-based evidence, both objective and subjective; (4) your warrant, which renders your data trustworthy; (5) your backing, which reinforces and legitimizes the warrant. Also consider using a visual aid, such as a chart, graph, or photograph, to help illustrate your findings.
2. Write a Toulmin-based argument in which you defend or challenge the view that anyone elected to public office (mayor, governor, secretary of state, president of the United States, and so on) is obliged to live a morally exemplary life. Be sure to define "morally exemplary."