

Building an Argument



Program of the Day

- What is an argument?
 - How to build an argument
 - How can you question the other party's view?
 - *Assess* and *Improve* arguments from last year's Grade 12 Law
-

What is an argument?

“... expressing a point of view on a subject and supporting it with evidence...”

(source: The Writing Center at UNC-Chapel Hill)



Key Elements of an Argument

1. Premises which *together* constitute your argument;
2. Concrete examples will help illustrate and justify the premises
3. A conclusion which logically follows from your premises

Tip Questions Before Building an Argument

1. What is the main point of my argument?
2. Which concepts and or ideas should I explained in order to illustrate my point?
3. Which evidence am I prepared to offer as illustration of my point? (Law, Facts)
4. What are the implications of what I am saying?
- 5. What would someone disagreeing with me say?**
- 6. How would I respond to them?**

Structuring your Argument

P

Point - this is what you want to argue- formulated as a concise claim:

Consuming meat is unethical because the production of meat harms the environment.

E

Explanation: explain what you meant with your claim - e.g. explain the key concepts you use

The idea is that the production of meat harms the environment and that consuming it reinforces the demand of more meat. If you believe that harming the environment is unethical, consuming meat is also unethical insofar as it implicitly contributes to the process of producing meat.

E

Evidence: these are the facts/information you use to support your point

For example, feeding animals in order to produce meat requires raising crops which often leads not only to deforestation but also to usage of huge quantities of water. Moreover, these animals produce staggering amounts of waste, waste that poisons water sources and soil.

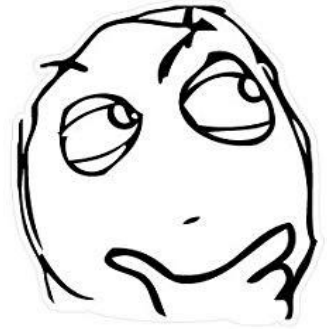
L

Link it back to the point your trying to make

If you accept that harming the environment is unethical, consuming meat is also unethical insofar as it implicitly reinforces the process of producing meat which means incentivizing actions harmful to the environment.

Strategies for Questioning your opponent's view

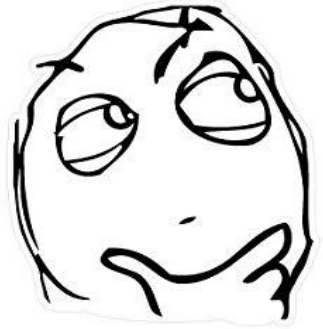
1. Questioning the truth of the premises;
2. Questioning the validity of the argument;
3. Finding a questionable hidden premise;
4. Arguing that an argument is Ad Hominem;
5. Finding an alternative



Strategies for Questioning your opponent's view

1. Questioning the truth of the premises;

- All students are elephants.
- This is a student.
- Therefore, it must be a student.



Strategies for Questioning your opponent's view

2. Questioning the validity of the argument;

- All students are human.
- This is a human
- Therefore, it must be a student.



Strategies for Questioning your opponent's view

3. Finding a questionable hidden premise;

You point out that in order for the argument to work you have to assume that C. Then you try to argue against C.

- GMO crops are not natural.
- Therefore, we should ban GMO crops.



Strategies for Questioning your opponent's view

4. Arguing that an argument is Ad Hominem;

Attacking a defendant's character rather than addressing the actual facts of the alleged criminal activity.

- "You haven't held a steady job since 1992. Worse than that, we couldn't find a single employer who'd provide you with a good reference."



Strategies for Questioning your opponent's view

5. Finding an alternative;

- For the other party's solution;
- For their interpretation of a particular concept



Time to dissect some arguments!

Read the arguments assigned to you (analyse each position one at a time); meaning ...

- Assess whether they follow the PEEL structure;
- Identify questionable elements in these arguments based on the strategies we have discussed;
- Discuss in pairs whether these arguments are(n't) good and why;
- Mark them based on PEEL and on their argumentative strength;
- Try to improve them with your partner.