

How To Build an Argument

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Why should I learn about arguments?

When we ask big questions, the answers aren't always black or white. The best way to approach a big question is to understand the problem, and then come up with potential solutions.

Your first task is to learn how to build an argument.

If you decide to make a claim about what is true and what should be done, it should be because you've done your research.

Your Goal:

To make a claim that is based on your research.

How do I build an argument?

Your argument will be an effort to get as close to the truth as possible. How will you do that? It's simple! Support your claim with evidence.

ARGUMENT = CLAIM + EVIDENCE

This equation is the building block to all great arguments. Once you have done your research, you are prepared to build an argument.

What is a Claim?

A claim is either the answer to a question or a solution to a problem. Let's look at a couple of examples:

Question: Why do so many students underperform in school?

Answer: "Students underperform because they don't wear uniforms."

Problem: How can we help students do better in school?

Solution: "Students should be forced to wear school uniforms."



Is my argument “right”?

That’s a hard question. Using evidence to support your claim does not mean that the argument can’t be refuted. It’s just the starting point. Your argument might be different from your friends’, and it’s also possible that you’ll change your mind along the way. Both of these are perfectly fine. The more arguments we read, the more we understand the problem.

Avoiding preferences and desires

When we are making an argument it's important to consider whether or not our own personal preferences or desires are a part of that argument. Let's look at two examples:

“I hate my school sweater, so students should not have school uniforms.”

“I think we should have school uniforms because I don't want to have to worry about what I wear every day.”

Do you see how **personal preference** is used as evidence in the first example and **personal desires** are used in the second?

I can't express preference or desire?

Of course it's okay to have personal preferences and desires! When you're talking with your friends, it's okay to talk about what you like and what you don't like. Sometimes you might even be asked to talk about them in class discussions. However, if you do choose to include personal preferences and desires in your argument, make sure they are included on top of your evidence and not as a replacement for it.





Congrats

Now you know how to build a strong argument. Don't forget to try this simple technique in your next Parlay RoundTable!