

## WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

<b>Argument</b>	This is an essay that argues a point. You are taking a position that you are required to defend your with persuasive evidence.
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You will need **sufficient evidence** to support your assertions. You will need to make a point worth arguing; a point that elicits a “**so what?**” from your reader **will not** generate a strong essay.

### The “So What?” Test

- Why is it important? What will readers learn from it? How will it illuminate a text or help us to answer a problem?
- The “**so what?**” question can help you to distinguish a summary of observations from a real argument.
- When you notice something interesting in a text, you are on your way to asking a question, and that question can lead you towards formulating an argument.

### Good Questions for a Good Argument

- In your readings, you might notice something surprising, disturbing, or interesting, and you should formulate a question to help you understand why.
- Your questions may come from a dissatisfying interpretation offered in secondary sources. Maybe you would like to offer another interpretation. Your interpretation then becomes your argument.
- Class discussions that go unresolved can also lead to questions. Maybe you think that after so much discussion, additional interpretations can be made. Those interpretations become your argument.

### Four Basic Elements of an Argument:

<b>A claim</b>	The position that you put forth.
<b>Evidence</b>	The details that support your claim.
<b>Definition of terms</b>	So that you and your reader share an understanding of the terms that you use in presenting your claim and your evidence.
<b>Consideration of counter-arguments</b>	To show your reader why these are weak and your claim is strong.

## How to Consider Opposing Arguments:

1. What are the most important opposing arguments?  
What concessions can I make and still support my argument?
2. What evidence do I have to support my own argument?  
How does that evidence compare with that used by my opposition?
3. What are possible misunderstandings of my own argument?

## Strong Argument Checklist

### 1. Write a one sentence summary of the main point of each paragraph.

- Do the points follow logically?  Yes  No
- Would adding one or two points strengthen your argument?  Yes  No
- Should your paragraphs be re-ordered?  Yes  No
- Do you digress (move away from your subject)?  Yes  No

### 2. Look at your use of evidence.

- Is the quotation integrated into the context of your own essay?  Yes  No
- Is the quotation understandable within the text of your essay?  Yes  No
- Do you substitute your own explanations with quotations? **Do not.**  Yes  No
- Are your quotations used as evidence for your assertions?  Yes  No

### 3. Look at your introduction and conclusion.

- Does your introduction and conclusion help the reader understand the significance of your argument?  Yes  No
- Do you answer the “so what” question?  Yes  No