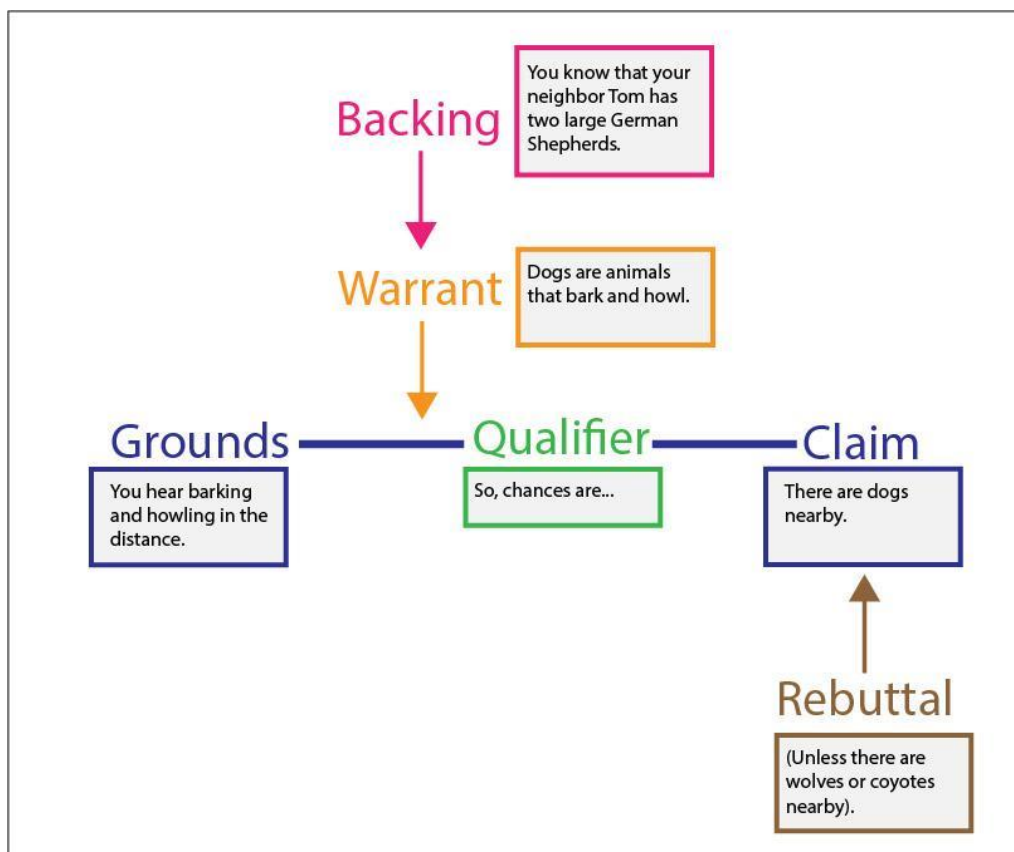


Toulmin's Model of Argumentative Writing

Argumentative writing is a part of every avenue in life, regardless of what degree you pursue, what industry you work in, or what city you live in. Philosopher Stephen E. Toulmin recognized the importance of argumentative writing and developed a model, named after himself, that offers a structured method of analyzing and building arguments. It can be especially helpful if you are suffering from writer's block.

This model is most effective when there are no clear answers to your argument. It consists of six parts: three fundamental elements are the claim, grounds, and warrant; then, the optional elements are the backing, qualifier, and rebuttal.

Toulmin's Model



[Figure 1] Toulmin's Model displayed with a visual for the connections between each element of the model.

Source: Purdue University. *Purdue Owl*.

Claim

The claim is the foundation of your paper and one of three fundamental parts of Toulmin’s model. This statement clearly highlights what the author wants to prove to the readers—it is your main argument.

For example, you may state your claim by writing the following:

“It is clear that although ticket scalping may be efficient in selling every ticket, it is not effective in ensuring customer satisfaction and in increasing profit or revenue for the ticket firm.”

Grounds

The grounds section, the second fundamental part of Toulmin’s model, supports and builds on your claim. This section consists of the evidence using methods such as facts, statistics, examples, reasoning, and more.

Below is an example of the claim (in red) and the grounds (in green) that work to support it.

Example of the Grounds Being Linked to the Claim

Claim: “It is clear that although ticket scalping may be efficient in selling every ticket, it is not effective in ensuring customer satisfaction and in increasing profit or revenue for the ticket firm.”

Grounds: “The results from Depken’s study on the MLB and NFL suggest that ‘the change in prices that correlates with anti-scalping laws...[has] sufficient monetary incentive to explicitly support anti-scalping legislation’ (1).”

“For example, if tickets to a pop concert are selling from \$45 to \$145, and the scalper buys the floor tickets for \$145, the producer firm receives the same \$145 it would have received from a genuine customer. The scalper, on the other hand, paid \$145 but may walk away with more than \$1000 by the time the date of the concert arrives.”

Warrant

The warrant, the third fundamental part of Toulmin’s model, serves to link the claim and the grounds. The exciting element of the warrant is that it can be stated explicitly or it can be implied, which is completely at the writer’s discretion. However, as a writer, depending on the technicality of your argument, you have to consider what prior knowledge the readers may or may not have when making this decision.

In the following example, the definitions of efficiency and effectiveness—stated explicitly—work to prove the claim that ticket scalping is efficient but not effective.

“Efficiency, an economic state in which each resource is perfectly allocated to the person or persons it serves best while minimizing waste, is one of the most important aspects of economics.”

“On the other hand, effectiveness is the comparison of a firm’s costs and profit for a certain product.”

Backing

The backing element of Toulmin’s model can be applied as necessary. It is meant for providing additional support to prove your implied arguments in both the warrant and the claim. Most commonly, the backing is a specific example to give justification to an implied warrant. This example can acknowledge supplemental questions about the argument and further build on the credibility of your argument.

“Even if the reselling didn’t succeed, the scalper could attend the event or give it to a close friend instead. The ticket selling firm on the other hand would be ‘stuck with more tickets to its event than it can possibly use or even give away’ (Swofford 533).”

In the above quote, the writer provides further evidence that the eradication of ticket scalping could lead to a surplus of tickets—thus supporting the claim that ticket scalping is efficient but not effective.

Qualifier

The qualifier points out possible or existing limitations to the argument; it is a technique rather than a physical section of Toulmin’s model. Qualifiers are most often identified by using words such as “presumably,” “some,” or “many.” As this is an optional element of Toulmin’s Model, it can be included in any sentence in which it is applicable. Commonly, qualifiers are most effective in justifications for your analysis.

“It rules **most** of the decisions that the government, producers, and consumers make worldwide.”

“There are several ways to improve efficiency, but **some** proven successful methods are limiting overcrowding by maintaining a manageable patient load, ensuring teamwork, and nurturing good communication between care providers.”

Avoid qualifiers like “always” and “never” because broad claims make it harder to support your argument with tangible evidence and reasoning. These absolute statements are challenging to prove as true.

Rebuttal

The rebuttal is a useful segment because it helps to further strengthen your argument by addressing any counter-arguments. The rebuttal emphasizes the importance of maintaining an unbiased tone. By acknowledging counter arguments and remaining unbiased, you, as a writer, build credibility and, consequently, draw more attention to the value of your argument.

“They [secondary-market ticket sale companies] are a fantastic resource for consumers and fans who were unable to attend the public on-sale for an event or for those who are unable to attend the event due to schedule conflicts to sell their tickets to a fellow fan.”

The above example admits that there is validity to the other side of this debate and consequently strengthens the author’s claim by continuing to state the following: “The reason that these ticket resale companies exist is because of how challenging buying tickets to events has become due to ticket scalpers and their bots.”

Activity: Toulmin’s Model Identification

For each sentence below, identify which element of Toulmin’s model that it represents. Make sure to justify your answers by using the information provided in this handout.

Word Bank: Claim, Grounds, Warrant, Backing, Qualifier, Rebuttal

Sample Sentences for Analysis

Item	Sentence for Analysis	Toulmin’s Model Element
1	“It may seem like a never-ending cycle, but the root cause of this issue is simple: the U.S. Emergency Department is not efficient.”	
2	“Overcrowding, defined as ‘the situation in which ED function is impeded primarily because of the excessive number of patients waiting to be seen, undergoing assessment and treatment, or waiting for departure	

	comparing to the physical or staffing capacity of the ED' (Yarmohammadian, et al.)..."	
3	"Their efforts resulted in 'reducing ED admission time by 83%, the left-without-being-seen rate by 91%, and the ED length of stay by 48%; improved the door-to-doctor time; and eliminated waiting room deaths' (Knazik, De Baker)."	
4	"Although many may say that solving lack of efficiency is an impossible task due to most solutions needing government or federal interference, both pairs of researchers emphasize that more effort in something as small as the relationship between care providers can improve the situation."	
5	"Many argue that the consumers who show the highest willingness to pay should be granted the scarce goods in the economy."	
6	"Healthcare plays a major role in every person's life, and it is assumed that one will visit the Emergency Room at least once in their life, even if it is just for a loved one or friend."	

References

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