

Rubric Category	Comprehensive Understanding
Grade/Score	Grades 6-12 / Score 1
Rubric Category	Organization
Grade/Score	Grades 6-12 / Score 1
Rubric Category	Development
Grade/Score	Grades 6-12 / Score 1
CCSS Writing Standards	W1, W1a, W1b, W1c
Argument Type	Primarily literary

Components of an Argument

Students review the components of an argument—including claim, evidence, and warrant—in order to ensure that they can apply these concepts successfully in their own writing.

Understanding the Expectations

Sometimes you discover, either through your own review, work with a partner, or feedback from your teacher, that you haven't really made an *argument* in an essay that is supposed to be written in that genre. You may have, for example, written something that ended up more like a summary of events or an exploration of different possibilities about a text. In these situations, it's important to be sure that you really understand terms like *argument*, *claim*, *evidence*, and *warrant*, as well as how to apply them in your own writing.

What's an Argument?

As you learn to write arguments about literature and life, you will hear terms like "claim," "evidence," and "warrant" used over and over. As you learn more, you'll develop a better and better sense of what those terms mean and how you can organize and create those things yourself, but if you don't feel a strong under-

standing of those key terms, it can be very challenging to understand what an essay topic is asking of you. When it comes to writing, we use the word *argument* to mean a series of *claims*, *evidence*, and *warrants* intended to prove a point.

What's a Claim?

In order to be a *claim*, a statement has to argue something that a reasonable person could disagree with. For example, if a character named Jack punches a character named Steve, it wouldn't be a claim to say, "Jack hit Steve," because that is a fact from the story that nobody can disagree with. It also wouldn't really be a claim to say, "Jack hit Steve because he is mad," because even though that is a little more of an interpretation, and therefore more interesting, it still isn't something we could disagree with.

What's Evidence?

Evidence, in literary essays, typically means a quotation from the text that supports a claim. Sometimes, a specific example from the text takes the place of a quotation, but almost always, literary evidence is a well-chosen quotation that doesn't just *relate* to the claim but actually proves it. In the example above, a good piece of evidence might be a quotation that helps us understand something interesting about Jack's reasons for hitting Steve.

What's a Warrant?

A warrant is an explanation of the way a piece of evidence proves a claim. The tricky part of writing a good warrant is making sure it says something that isn't obvious, something that most people wouldn't already know just from having read the book.

Using a Formula

While there are many, many ways to write a strong argument, it can help to double check that each paragraph has the key components in an order that makes sense, so there's nothing wrong with falling back on a formula to ensure you are being clear. When in doubt, make sure each paragraph of your essay has the following:

- a topic sentence that is a real claim
- an introduction to a piece of evidence
- a piece of evidence

- a warrant explaining how the evidence proves the claim
- a transition to another piece of evidence or a new paragraph

As you become more and more confident as a writer, you can play with different ways to accomplish all of these goals without following the formula so specifically.

Playing the “Build an Argument” Game

1. If you are working on a full draft, choose one of your body paragraphs for this game. You will be highlighting each part of the argument to check if it is effective—or if it is there at all! If you are early in the writing process and don’t have a draft, review your notes or your essay and list up to three potential claims you want to use. Then, review your notes or essay to find at least one piece of evidence that could support each of those claims.
2. Now, you are going to highlight (or write) each key piece of the argument. If you can’t find something to highlight for a step, make a note for yourself that the step is missing so you can fill it in later in the game. If you are writing a paragraph from scratch because you don’t have enough material written yet, you can skip the highlighting and go straight to the next step.
 - a. First, highlight the claim of the paragraph. This is typically in the first sentence or two of the paragraph, and it needs to be something that a reasonable person could disagree with.
 - b. Next, highlight the introduction to the evidence. It’s the phrase or sentence that helps explain what the evidence is about and why it is there.
 - c. Next, highlight the evidence. It should be a quotation that helps you prove your point, not just any quotation that relates.
 - d. Next, highlight the warrant. It’s the sentence or sentences that explain how the quotation proves the claim.
 - e. If you noticed any pieces were missing, or if you noticed that the piece was there but wasn’t very effective, you can use the next step to fill in those gaps.
3. Now, fill in any missing pieces, or if you skipped down to this step, use these starters to help you write a good paragraph.
 - a. To write the topic sentence, try this starter phrase: “The purpose of this paragraph is to prove...” This sentence will become the topic sentence of your paragraph, the sentence that sets out the subclaim that the paragraph will prove and deepen.

- b. To write an introduction to your evidence, you can complete this phrase: “The piece of evidence that best proves this point is...” If you know any good techniques for introducing or blending a piece of evidence, you can use those instead.
 - c. Put in the piece of evidence you introduce. Make sure it actually proves the point.
 - d. To write a warrant, which is the sentence or sentences that explain how the quotation proves the claim, try completing this starter phrase: “This evidence proves my point because...”
4. If you have lots to say about your quotation, what you have written so far might make for a strong paragraph. Another option is to introduce another piece of evidence that relates to the same point and follow up it up with another warrant. Look at your claim and the evidence you have gathered and make a smart decision that helps you accomplish your own goals for writing.
 5. Remember, this formula (topic sentence, introduction to evidence, evidence, warrant) is not the only way to write a great paragraph. As you become more confident, you can play around with different ways to accomplish these goals rather than writing according to this structure. But, if you are ever worried about the organization of a paragraph, you can always fall back to this solid formula to ensure you are making sense.

Writing It Up

If you are early in the writing process, you can write a body paragraph by taking your work, deleting the starter phrases, and making sure that each sentence flows smoothly to the next. If you are working with a full draft, you can repeat the highlighting game on each paragraph to ensure it’s not missing any key pieces, and then you can fill those pieces in.