

Rubric Category	Comprehensive Understanding
Grade/Score	Grades 6-12 / Scores 2 and 3
Rubric Category	Development
Grade/Score	Grades 6-12 / Scores 2 and 3
CCSS Writing Standards	W1, W1a, W1b
Argument Type	Primarily literary

Clear Claims: Choosing and Writing Supportable Claims

Students evaluate how provable their claims are by matching up potential claims with pieces of evidence.

Understanding the Expectations

When you make an argument, you make a claim or take a position. For a claim or position to be interesting and meaningful, it has to be revised and improved from your first attempt. A truly strong claim has to be supportable so as you continue to develop it, keep your eye on that priority.

To be supportable, your claim needs to be based on the evidence you see in the text, and you need to be able to explain how that evidence supports your claim. For example, if you claimed that a character's actions were motivated by his desire to eat cheeseburgers, you would need to be able to identify evidence that explains why cheeseburgers are important to him. If you can't find any quotations that indicate the character likes them, or if you can't explain how your cheeseburger quotations support your claim, then your claim isn't supportable.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself as you try to decide if your claim is supportable:

- How many pieces of evidence do I have which support this claim?
- Can I write a warrant for each piece of evidence that explains how it supports the claim?
- Which pieces of evidence help me make my claim more specific?

There are several stages in the writing process in which you might want to judge how supportable your claim is. You might want to rank your claims by how supportable they are early on as you are organizing your thoughts so you can decide which claims are worth spending time on. You might also want to consider how well-supported your claims are later on in the writing process when you are organizing paragraphs and writing warrants for your evidence so you can evaluate your evidence more effectively.

Playing the “Supportable” Game

1. If you already have a well-developed thesis for your essay, jot down your main claim and some of the sub-claims from your body paragraphs. If you are earlier in the writing process and haven't yet decided what claim you will write about, list 2-4 you are considering. To come up with this list, look back in your notes or on any artifacts like paper charts or shared digital documents the class created. It's OK if not all of your claims agree with each other or are consistent. In fact, it's great if they conflict, since you are going to be choosing and ranking your claims by how strong and interesting they are.
2. Once you have your list of claims, gather together a list of the possible evidence that would support any of these claims. This evidence might be specific quotes or particular moments from the text described in your own words. If you already have notes, shared digital documents, or paper charts, you can review them. If you are working on a draft of an essay, you can highlight or otherwise gather the claims and evidence you have already incorporated. Always remember that you can review the text for more ideas by looking for items you may have marked or annotated during the reading.

3. Create a digital document or work in your notebook and make two columns.
4. Write or paste your potential claims in the left column, leaving a few lines between each claim. Give each claim a number (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.)
5. Write or paste your pieces of evidence in the right column, leaving a few lines between each piece. These do not need to be written in any particular order. Give each piece of evidence a letter (A, B, C, D, etc.)

Your notes should look something like this (except you will have detailed claims and pieces of evidence for each item, while the example only has one claim and one piece of evidence):

Claim #1 Jack steals the key to the restaurant because he loves cheeseburgers so much that he is willing to commit a crime in order to have more of them.	Piece of Evidence A
Claim #2	Piece of Evidence B
Claim #3	Piece of Evidence C "Jack lay awake all night, his stomach growling, dreaming of all the cheeseburgers he could eat if he became rich someday" (62).
Claim #4	Piece of Evidence D

6. Underneath each claim, write the letter of each piece of evidence that could support it. In the example above, Evidence C could help prove Claim #1, so we would write "C" under Claim #1 and "1" under Evidence C. Remember: a piece of evidence might fit more than one claim. You can do this by yourself, but if you are with a partner or group, you can also help your partners match up their evidence to their claims.
7. Now, underneath each piece of evidence, write the number of the claim that might go with it. Remember: a piece of evidence might fit more than one claim. You can do this by yourself, but if you are with a partner or group, you can also help your partners match up their claims to their evidence.

Now, your notes should look something like this:

Claim #1 A and C	Piece of Evidence A #1 and #2
Claim #2 A, B, and D	Piece of Evidence B #2 and #3
Claim #3 B and C	Piece of Evidence C #1 and #3
Claim #4 D	Piece of Evidence D #2 and #4

8. Now look at your claims again. Which ones have the most evidence that supports them? Rank your claims by how strong they are, based on how much evidence supports them. The top claims are the ones you might want to consider including and developing.

Remember: this is just one way to check the potential strength of claims and evidence, so if you feel a claim is strong, even though it does not have as many pieces of evidence as another, simply make sure you can explain why.

Writing It Up

Now, review the claims you identified as strongest during this game. If you are early in the writing process, consider writing a paragraph in which you choose a strong claim and two pieces of evidence for it and explain how those pieces of evidence support and deepen the claim. If you are working on revising a completed draft, select out the paragraph you feel has the weakest, least supported claim. Then, revise it by either: rewriting your claim to make sure it's clear that it's well-supported; writing a clearer, more specific warrant for your evidence that makes it clearer how that evidence proves the claim; or, if the paragraph's main claim isn't very supportable or interesting, throw out the paragraph entirely and choose a better claim to write about.