

Theses, Claims, and Forms of Argument

Writing an Effective Thesis

College writing typically involves argumentative writing, and argumentative writing requires a thesis. A thesis can come in different forms (direct or indirect) and appear in different places in a paragraph or paper. However, almost all essays have a thesis in the first paragraph that is as direct as the scope of the paper allows. Although you may not be able to capture the who, the what, the when, the where, and the how all in one sentence, the arguable parts of who, what, when, where, why, and how are important to present in your thesis. The rest will be provided by the other sentences of your opening paragraph.

Also, a thesis must just be a fact or facts. Argument is opinion, so you must get beyond a fact or description of your subject and into your opinions.

Topic/Fact: Albert Einstein discovered the Theory of Relativity in the early Twentieth Century.

Broad Thesis: Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity is the greatest scientific advance in the history of humankind.

Narrower Thesis: Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity, introduced in 1905, was initially rejected by the community, but not as much as some history books have claimed.

Your thesis must always be appropriate to your assignment length. Discussion of all scientific discovery before and including Einstein's would be difficult to accomplish in a college paper, whether three, five, or ten pages. Most likely a *book* containing a history of science would be required. The Narrower Thesis is researchable and narrow enough to present background information and competing claims in a longer paper of eight to ten pages.

Fact: *Star Wars* success at the box office is predictable and interesting.

Broad Thesis: *Star Wars*, like other science fiction, can always compete at the box office with other types of storytelling and fiction.

Narrower Thesis: *Star Wars* was destined for box office success because of the nation's ongoing interest in space exploration, as well as its epic plot, which was absent from much previous science fiction.

Avoid general terms like "interesting." The narrower *Star Wars* thesis offers reasons with sharper focus for the movie's box office success. It mentions the "type" of storytelling that the Broad Thesis does not, and it separates the movie from other science fiction instead of combining it with other science fiction, as the Broad Thesis does.

Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How (WWWWWH)

A quick check to guarantee you have all the components of a strong thesis is asking yourself Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. Not all of these components may fit into a single sentence definable as your thesis, but these important areas of information will almost always appear in your introductory paragraph or paragraphs. To be sure that you've included all the relevant information to your readers, you may wish to outline your subject as follows:

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Why:

How:

If you are not solving a problem or using a methodology for your writing purpose, or writing on a topic that includes these, the “how” does not always exist. Still, you can doublecheck your basic information and its depth, guaranteeing a stronger focus for yourself and for your readers.

Let’s revisit our *Star Wars* example:

Star Wars was destined for box office success because of the nation’s ongoing interest in space exploration, as well as its epic plot, which was absent from much previous science fiction.

Who: *Star Wars*

What: destined for box office success

When: late 1970s

Where: United States? the world?

Why: ongoing interest in space exploration, epic plot

How: ?

The *Star Wars* example demonstrates several interesting points. First, the “Who” may not be a person. The Who is the subject of your essay. It may be people, an object, an idea, or other things. However, it is the focus. Second, certain bits of information are often implied. Although the paragraph doesn’t say the late 1970s, everyone knows that this is the date of *Star Wars* release and subsequent box office records. The author is trusting the audience to know the period of the movie’s release. Not all subjects will be as universally known as *Star Wars*. Dates may need to be included.

Also, the “Where” is missing as well. While either The “United States” or “The World” would work, the author may want to add this information to the introduction, signaling the limits “where” that will be discussed in the essay. Also, the *how* is absent. I would suggest that here, because no problem is being solved, the *how* is absent. Or the *why* and the *how* are very similar in this case: because of an interest in space exploration and because of an epic plot. Lastly, as we shall see in the Einstein example, WWWWH can often be refocused, reshaping your thesis and filling in missing categories.

Now let’s look at our Einstein example:

Albert Einstein’s Theory of Relativity was initially rejected by the community, but not as much as some history books have claimed.

List the information from above below, also noting what is absent:

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Why:

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How:

You'll notice a fair amount of key information is absent. As a writer, you would have to decide, based upon your audience and subject, whether or not these absences will be filled in by the reader's general knowledge. I would suggest the following for our thesis on Einstein:

Who: Albert's Einstein's Theory of Relativity

What: initially rejected

When: [early twentieth century]

Where: scientific community

Why: ?

How: ?

In the above example, *Where* is not a place, but a body of people with shared knowledge. Much like *Who*, the answers to these questions might not conform to your ideas of *Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where*, *Why*, and *How*. This is because much argument is theoretical, so it takes place nowhere, so to speak. If applied and practiced, then it may take on physical features. If only hypothetical, some parts of the WWWWH grid may not conform to your expectations.

Also, we have extra information that doesn't fit well: *but not as much as some history books have claimed*. This is because of the writing style. The "What" most likely is:

the initial rejection of the Theory of Relativity is overstated in history books

You may have noticed the *Why* behind the rejection of Einstein's Theory of Relativity is absent from this sentence. The absent information could be included somewhere else in the introductory paragraph. After all, not everything can fit into one sentence. Or it may be because our subject needed to be refocused because of our new *What*.

Who: Historians

What: overstated the initial rejection of the Theory of Relativity in history books.

When: during the Twentieth Century

Where: the world? Europe?

Why: ?

How: ?

You can see how the WWWWH grid has allowed us to refocus our first paragraph, providing the absent information. You can read the *Who*, *What*, and *When* and get a thesis equally strong or stronger than the initial version. The "Where" doesn't seem to have changed, and everyone knows historians are found in countries everywhere. However, as a writer, you should try to define your limits in each category. *Historians in Europe*, or *historians before the 1960s*, or whatever specific group or individual one is writing about. Also, the *why* and *how* behind the rejection of the theory seem easier to imagine now: common belief and trends in historical writing.

These are ideas that challenge the WWWWH grid, but by using the method, you can see upcoming challenges in presenting complex information, you can detail general information, (such as missing actors, as with *historians*) and you can guarantee you have provided a beginning framework for your explanation or argument.

Identifying Argumentative Claims

Previously, we learned that arguments forward specific claims about the truth, legitimacy, or effectiveness of ideas. Any argument offering a workable solution or answer to a problem, whether scientific or philosophical, starts with a claim. Poor arguments also start with a claim, but poor

arguments may be underspecified, may not solve the problem, and may lack enough support and evidence to be legitimate answers to questions.

Claims, good or poor, are statements that can be denied or affirmed. If your statement or thesis cannot be denied or confirmed, then you may only be explaining, not arguing. Statements such as “All individuals are born free,” “Stem cell research is immoral,” “Nurturance predicts behavior better than biology,” and “Stan is a good guy” are all claims. In short, a person can argue *for* them or *against* them. Imagine evidence arguing both for and against each of the four claims just stated. If you can imagine arguments existing both for and against, you have an argument.

Claims will typically be written in the form of declarative sentences. This is undoubtedly the strongest form to state an argumentative claim. Some writers may try to state their claim through a question, but it is doubtful whether or not this is always an effective form to convince your audience. The use of the four sentence types will be discussed at length in the Chapter Four.

For Discussion: Are the following argumentative claims? Or are they only facts? For each of the above statements that is an argumentative claim, imagine evidence to both support and refute the validity of these claims. Discuss the answers as a class or in small groups.

Dogs are man’s best friend.

Diamonds are a girl’s best friend.

The average human head weighs eight pounds.

Natural diamonds are compressed coal.

The post-World War II Leavitt Town was the model for later American suburbs.

Leave me alone.

Germans are an efficient people.

It is easier to do good than evil.

We have not yet discovered all the elements that comprise our universe.

Peanuts is written by Charles Schultz.

Peanuts is a comic strip representing the common personality types of twentieth-century American life.

The sun is a star.

Not everything is a claim.

Trying times make heroes of all women and men.

Some people don’t look good in warm colors.

There are sixteen ounces in a pound.

Recognizing Claims in The Classroom

Sometimes instructors may give you a claim to defend, as in the following:

Argue that Ophelia’s relationship to her father parallels Hamlet’s relationship to his mother.

Defend the claim that science and creationism can co-exist without detriment to either science or faith.

Most often you’ll receive an argumentative prompt offering you a choice:

Discuss whether current environmental laws focusing on greenhouse emissions are firm enough to reverse global warming trends.

Agree or Disagree: Freud’s psychological theory is rooted not in the mysteries of the human mind, but in the anxieties of his own mind.

What role does race play in class divisions in twenty-first-century America?

The term *claim* can be viewed as simply another term for “thesis” or “proposition.” Arguments

have one major thesis; however, they have many claims in their network of evidence and support. And remember, argumentative claims are not a summary of an idea. Argumentative claims suggest that you “take a side” or “make a point.” Arguments don’t just explain an idea, event, or item: They explain how the idea, event, or item is a valid conclusion about an open-ended topic with a variety of viewpoints.

Five Forms of Argument

After you have read widely, outlined your goals for writing, and narrowed your topic, you will begin to write. Your first draft should keep audience and purpose in mind. The first draft will have a lot of excess material that will be edited. This is OK. Keep the excess material. You cannot predict which ideas you will keep, which ideas you will erase, and which ideas will be the seed for more ideas in future drafts. Upon completing the imagination and prewriting required at the beginning of the writing process, you will need to re-examine and organize your thoughts. Eventually, you will have to revise the language of these thoughts. In the early stages of writing, language can be revised, but language is not the only feature that needs to be revised. Thinking must also be revised.

Why does thinking need to be revised and re organized? Because no thought spills from our mind perfect, united, and organized. The following types of argument have been used for centuries upon centuries. Most arguments utilize more than one form at various points in a communication. Long arguments may utilize all. Because these categories are the basic modes of making sense of the world around us, it is often helpful to look at your thesis and basic support and ask which mode you are using. For further practice, you may wish to look at Chapter Nine’s rough drafts and Chapter Ten’s polished, final drafts, identifying the forms of argument each thesis and claim uses. Although there are many forms of argument and exposition, here are some forms common to academic argument:

- Argument by Definition
- Argument by Comparison and Contrast
- Argument by Illustration and Example
- Argument by Classification and Division
- Argument by Cause and Effect

Each form has certain predictable qualities that you use everyday without realizing it. Your prewriting thesis, no matter how unformed, will contain elements of one of these forms of thought. To help you tidy up your thoughts, you may wish to ask yourself which argument your prewriting thesis most closely resembles. You are asking yourself basic questions: How am I thinking? How am I suggesting that the world works? How am I talking about a particular event or idea? What events and ideas am I surrounding the event with to give it importance?

Argument by Definition

In argument by definition, your thesis is not based upon situational solutions. Instead, you are concentrating on the qualities internal to an idea itself. You will suggest that a your subject has the qualities of a certain class of things, therefore it should be treated the same as other members of this class of things. Your argument will show why it belongs in the class it does and how other opinions have wrongly classified it, providing an incorrect solution to the problem.

You won’t spend a lot of time comparing how your idea is better or worse than a similar idea. Instead, you will be arguing that the qualities of the “thing” you are promoting are highly valuable. Those who argue from definition on social issues may believe their values and solutions permanent and timeless and applicable to a variety of problems, so argument by definition typically doesn’t aim for a “multiple answer” mentality to solving problems. Instead, it outlines

its ideals and values, defends them, and suggests that readers would be wise to adopt these ideals and values as well.

Argument by definition entails defining the limits of your subject. You must set boundaries. Your support and claims will reinforce these boundaries of the good and the less good, the fair and the not-so-fair, the useful and the less useful, and the efficient and the inefficient. You and your thesis are walling off certain parts of the world, finding that some ideas should not be as highly valued as others. If you are arguing that democracy is the most benevolent form of government, then you are walling off other forms of government such as theocracy, communism, and monarchy. You would begin by defining the qualities of a good government. They may be

- Equality of all citizens
- Right to own property
- Right of people to create own laws and legislative bodies
- Right of people to amass wealth through hard work
- Religious freedom
- Social mobility

You can see that these are a few of the qualities of democracy not offered by other governmental schemas. If you argue that these are the most important values to humankind when building a government, you are arguing from definition. Abraham Lincoln often argued from definition. His most famous argument from definition was an argument over what the definition of a human being is. Why would this be important to Lincoln? Obviously, Lincoln was arguing for the Emancipation Proclamation, and he needed Americans to see not black and white, but only the human being. Arguing from definition allowed Lincoln to set up his qualities and values in such a way that neither race nor the need for cheap labor could be a valid proposition for continuing slavery. Many argument theorists suggest that definition is the strongest form of argument. Lincoln certainly thought so. He did not risk history to another form of argument. Many other “core values” arguments, typically derived from either religious principles or the United States constitution, are arguments by definition.

Argument by definition typically follows this formula: *X is a Y because it has features A,B,C, etc.* Or the following is possible: *X is not a Y because it does not have features A,B,C, etc.* It is easy to see that a hot-button issue can be argued from both conservative and liberal viewpoints through definition.

Conservative argument by definition:

Stem cell research is immoral and murderous because scientific theory denies the sanctity and preservation of all life, and the stem cell research process destroys stem cell clusters.

Liberal argument by definition:

Stem cell research is moral because science can better help those living with disabilities and illness, and the stem cell research process destroys embryos or cell clusters that will never grow into a human being.

Each of these definitions of what is moral depends upon limiting the qualities of what defines “morality.” The values of each speaker are different. Thus, their definition will be different. Here are some other examples: *Video game violence is/is not equal to real violence because... Stepparents are/are not as compatible with children as biological parents because ... Stealing a library book that no one has read in fifty years is/is not a crime because ... Common-law marriage is/is not a marriage because ...*

Syllogisms

The syllogism is an ancient device that proves methodically that one thing is the same as another. You can see why this would be useful when arguing by definition. Here is the rationale for syllogisms:

Claim: X is a Y

Reason: Because it has qualities A, B, and C

Grounds: X has certain qualities

Warrant: If something has A, B, and C, then it can be called an X

Backing: Evidence that Y has A, B, and C

Not everyone may agree that Y has qualities A, B, and C. Think of the stem cell example. The qualities of A, B, and C are different for each. Those who disagree with a viewpoint can argue either the grounds or the warrant.

Exercise:

If someone has the conservative view of stem cell research, what would they say when attacking the liberal grounds?

First, figure out what the liberal grounds are. List them.

- 1.
- 2.

Now, discuss how these grounds are different than the conservative grounds. You may wish to list the conservative grounds.

If this same person of conservative viewpoint chose to attack the liberal warrant, what specific qualities of the liberal argument would they be attacking?

For practice, you may wish to repeat this exercise from the liberal standpoint as well

Here are some examples of syllogisms. I will condense the entire syllogism into three parts and show only how X is a Y. This means that I am leaving out the qualities or reasons (A, B, C, etc.) that allow one to argue from definition. As you read these, imagine what the qualities or reasons are, and also imagine if there is any way to refute the qualities or reasons.

Major premise: All men are mortal.

Minor premise: Socrates is a man.

Conclusion: Socrates is mortal.

Major premise: Stainless steel will not rust.

Minor premise: This can is made from stainless steel.

Conclusion: This can will not rust.

Major premise: Only politicians that are sensible are electable

Minor premise: That politician is electable.

Conclusion: That politician is sensible.

Major premise: All students who graduate will get a good job.

Minor premise: That student will graduate.

Conclusion: That student will get a good job.

The first syllogism is the classic example of syllogisms. Are the other examples perfectly constructed and inevitable as the first? Is it possible that the syllogism can provide faulty logic as well sound logic? What is different about the fields of study covered by the last three syllogisms that does or does not guarantee their logic is flawless. Anyone who argues knows that not all claims and grounds are universal. Different people have different values. Even people with similar values will change their opinion as an idea moves from one situation to another. Stem cell research, for instance, may be murder to someone until a loved one is struck with an illness treatable through

stem cell research. The situation has changed and the idea of stem cell research has a different frame—one where the good of science counts for more than it did previously. Or, even if they believe in the values behind their argument by definition, the *situation* has changed and the old values don't seem to count. Likewise, an argument to go to war may be founded upon being attacked, but what constitutes an attack may differ from situation to situation. And even then, people will either see or not see that the qualities and evidence necessitate going to war or not.

Knowing the general idea behind argument by definition can help you see if you are thinking of your topic as an idea that does not require comparison, contrast, causes, or effects to make it a viable solution or answer to a problem. The definitional idea itself applies to any related issues or conundrums. There is no cause or effect that can alter the definition's ability to provide an answer. An answer can always be made based upon the values of the definition itself.

Argument by Comparison and Contrast

Unlike argument by definition, contrasting and comparing examines both the good and bad of two distinct ideas, texts, problems, or solutions. Your own argument and solution may draw upon the good and bad of both idea A and B, or may demonstrate how idea B encapsulates idea A and goes beyond idea A, or may discredit one in favor of the other. You can always expect that you will have both an A and a B to compare and contrast, whether they are theories, texts, solutions, organizations, or people.

Comparison points out similarities. *Contrast* points out differences. You'll need similarities to prove to your audience that A and B should be discussed together. Your thesis or introductory paragraph should suggest these similarities. Yet your reasons for comparing A and B, as well as the major differences, should also appear in your thesis.

Like other types of argument, you must think critically about your subject. Discussing similarities and differences is a good start. However, you must be sure to do more than summarize when arguing. Your paper's points of comparison and contrast should be based on the particular problem you are tackling, and these points should become your support for your solution as well.

Building Criteria

You may wish to develop a framework or graph to help you organize your criteria. It may look like the following example. The criteria are what each generally shares, yet the qualities of these criteria will vary, helping you make your decision:

Criteria:	Reading Books:	Watching TV:
Amount of time:	takes more time	takes less time
amount of information:	more information	less information
depth of information:	detailed research expected	less detail expected
ability to validate sources:	can see sources listed	some sources cited
specificity on a subject:	topics can be very specific	broad or specific
availability:	must be found ahead of time	always broadcasting

While it may look like books are the winner here, your argument for what is “best” depends upon your thesis. Here are several arguments that could use the above list:

Compare and contrast the quality and detail of information that we receive from both books and television.

Compare and contrast two types of communication, organizing your criteria to choose a medium

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that gives a lot of general information quickly.

Compare and contrast the ability to verify sources between two modes of communication.

These are not the only possibilities. You'll notice that some of these questions ask you to choose a "victor" after you've compared and contrasted. Others do not explicitly ask this. You should decide whether or not your purposes require a "victor." If you are arguing, naturally you must choose a position and defend it through criteria like those listed above. Often times, your criteria alone won't result in a victor; your criteria will present you with a well planned answer to a question or solution to a problem. Yet you must find support and evidence to persuade your audience the criteria are relevant and effective.

You may also notice that a list like that one above is not highly specific. Each claim, such as books making it easier to verify sources, may or may not be true. It would depend upon what type of books you are examining. Popular culture books and non-fiction can be argumentative yet written without a single source to support them. The support may simply come from the writer's own thought. This is both freeing and dangerous, argumentatively speaking. You may wish to discuss as a class both the freeing and dangerous aspects of people who argue without including the opinion of others qualified to speak on a subject. Also, you can see that the things you examine (ideas, problems, texts, people, etc.) need to be well-selected for similarities, and the criteria must be detailed enough to provide an in-depth analysis. Otherwise, the differences won't be highly relevant and won't support your position.

Your criteria can be based upon the type of things you are examining. Based on the categories I've provided, you may wish to ask the following questions to get your comparison and contrast started:

Theories (Ideas, Problems):

What are these theories about? What problem to they attempt to define or solve? Are the theories applicable in the same fields? Does each theory originate in the same historical period? Does the period of origin matter when evaluating the theory? Is your problem the same as the original problem the theory was meant to solve? How have the theories been used in the past? What types of people used them for what situations? Were they successful?

Texts and Art (print, visual, and otherwise):

What themes do these texts describe and discuss? Are these themes timeless, or are they historically-bound? Does that change the way the themes are viewed by the writer compared to modern readers? By what qualities does the text wish and deserve to be judged (style, theme, characterization, plot, writer's intention, historical importance, historical representation, etc.)?

People:

What is the origin of this person? Are there formative years (education, environment, opportunities, etc.) normal or unique? Does the journey define their later accomplishments? What are this person's values? Are they groundbreaking for the "type" of person they are (gender, race, class, religion, etc.) or for their accomplishment only?

Groups:

What is this group's origins? What was its original purpose? Has that purpose changed? What effect has the group had on the area of society they wish to affect? What is their strategy? Have the purposes or strategies had any unwanted side effects? Does the group have a recognizable political persuasion?

Recognizing Argument by Comparison and Contrast

Recognizing assignments of this type is fairly easy. The key words are typically *compare*, *contrast*, *similarities*, and *differences*. Here are some examples. Notice that both similarity and difference may not be asked for in the question, but it will be expected that you provide it to some degree.

Compare the political events surrounding President Lincoln's assassination with the political events surrounding President Kennedy's assassination.

Contrast the ways in which liberal theory and neo-conservative theory use tax revenues to support education. Argue that one provides a comprehensive educational plan.

What are the differences between the comedy of Mark Twain and the comedy of modern day sitcoms? Which one qualifies as satire?

You'll notice that the first question doesn't ask for an argument, although the second and third questions do. You may wish to ask your instructor if argument is a requirement if the assignment prompt doesn't specify this important point. The second prompt asks for an argument. The third prompt is the trickiest. It indirectly asks that you organize your differences around the criteria for "satire," yet it doesn't state so directly. If you organized your criteria for any other purpose than discovering which one is satirical, you will not have answered the second question.

Your thesis will generally contain your major findings on the differences of A and B. Often, your thesis will contain the brief similarity as well.

Example Thesis

While both liberal and neo-conservative educational plans provide a comprehensive educational plan for all American schoolchildren, the neo-conservative plan to offer school vouchers and privatize education offers choice and quality in education that the liberal plan cannot provide.

Example Thesis

While neo-conservative educational plans provide more choice to some American families, the voluntary segregation and unequal funding of public schools that would result from privatization are not part of the democratic ideals or equal opportunity upon which America is based; only liberal theory guarantees higher learning rooted in American democracy's ideals.

You can easily spot both A and B, liberal and conservative viewpoints, in these sample theses, despite slightly different approaches to presenting the information in each.

Organizing Your Essay

Most comparison and contrast essays work from similar structures. You can either present idea A first in its entirety, evaluating it point-by-point. Afterward, you present idea B point-by-point in its entirety.

The second method of organization is to evaluate idea A by one point, then evaluate idea B by the same point. This method offers an instant comparison for the reader, but it offers only parts without giving the audience a whole A or B. You will have to decide which method is best for your assignment. Here are some questions to help you decide:

1. Will people forget a point-by-point analysis too easily because of a large amount of information?
2. Depending on how familiar with the topic and ideas my audience is, how much do I need to explain A and B as separate whole entities before dissecting them into parts?

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3. Which type of comparison/contrast essay allows me to illustrate and support my thesis and argument quickly?
4. Which type of organization allows me to most easily demonstrate how my immediate claim and contrast relate to my thesis?

As you can see from the questions, your audience's familiarity with your subject is important to your organization, as is the ability to quickly show important differences' relevance to your thesis. Remember that these "differences" will often rely on previous comparison and contrast—this is where organization becomes important in comparison/contrast essays. No essay is mathematically organized from beginning to end. Although discussing only idea A then idea B, or discussing each criterion point-by-point would be organizationally perfect, you may have to break out of either pattern at times to relate details to your argument.

Comparing and contrasting is a basic mode of thought. We all make choices everyday based on a better/worse scale. Comparing and contrasting can help you build criteria to support for your prewriting ideas, and it can help you continue to think of related material. Even if you don't choose to argue by comparison and contrast, you'll add to your prewriting ideas by thinking with this method.

Argument by Illustration or Example

Argument by illustration is a unique form of argument that provides a "story" of sorts to argue why something works well. If you are arguing about how a professional sports team should be managed, you may use the story of a championship team to illustrate the finer points of managerial strategy. Your "story," however, is not just a story of victories, great plays, and game-by-game analysis. Your illustration would cover all the criteria of other forms of argument that are less "story" driven. For example, the managerial strategies for a sports team would probably include argument about how to choose a coach, the coach's relationship with management, how to draft players, how to construct a team identity, etc.

The "story" of how you were elected class president would contain a blueprint on how to self-nominate, campaign, communicate your views, and debate an opponent.

While each of these would be told as part of the "story" of the championship season, each part of the story would serve as an example of how a team should be run. This means you would analyze and abstract certain principles from the story that could be used as advice for any coach of a sports team. These abstractions are the argumentative structure. The story of the team is one form of support. Although it may not matter how you arrive at these abstract lessons on how to manage a sports team, it is these abstractions that make your story more than just an inspiring story.

You will also need sources for your argument. These will typically work in support of the abstractions from your argument.

Exercise: The following could be passages from the story of a championship season in the making. Write an abstract principle below each.

1. Coach Bruce Smith was a man destined for Super Bowl greatness. As a player, he won two MVP awards and back-to-back Super Bowls. As a college coach, his team ranked in the Top Ten eleven out of his fifteen years.
2. While an assistant coach in the NFL, Coach Smith worked closely with general manager

Avery Shield, trading advice and recruiting strategies.

3. Coach Smith personally talked to and recruited Tom Johnson and D.D. Tavrick, his star wide receiver and quarterback.
4. During the years leading up to the championship season, Coach Smith dismissed an All-Pro tight end, Chuck Bearweather, for consistently being late for practice. He also dismissed a kick returner Jim Shackford for publicly criticizing the return coverage during the preseason.
5. Although his top three recruits did not display much promise two years ago, Coach Smith gave these players assignments on special teams. All three of these draftees started during the championship season, and one was nominated All-Pro. All three have signed contracts for another three years, despite offers from other clubs.

Potential Answers:

1. Players who are successful as professional players and college coaches will be good professional coaches.
2. A football team with a coach and management that cooperate and share ideas may increase their chances of a successful season.
3. Coaches who have personal contact with potential players will have a better chance of signing those players.
4. Dismissing players who are undisciplined or critical may help team cohesion.
5. Developing rather than dismissing developing players can lead to their better play and a dedication to the team rather than money and free agency.

Each of these are argumentative claims that could work in other forms of argument as well. Abstracting these from the “story” allows you to support them with similar opinions

from secondary sources—in this case, secondary sources on management and leadership in professional sports and perhaps management in general. Many of the student essays in the final chapter of this book are argument by illustration. Look to these for examples of how a story provides an argumentative structure.

Because illustration represents the natural “stories” of life, it can be very helpful for extending your prewriting thoughts. Imagining how your topic fits into the story of your life or others’ lives can help you use your life experience to discover ideas that may never enter your mind while making abstract lists.

Argument by Classification and Division

The purpose of argument by classification and division is to create categories that explain your problem and/or your solution. Classifying your problem or solution can help to explain differences to both yourself and your audience. These differences can go beyond explanation into argument in a variety of ways. After classifying the problem different ways, you can offer a solution that solves each class of problem. You would most likely engage each problem with your solution in separate paragraphs, but not necessarily so.

Classification and division allows you to solidly and predictably *order* your topic, problems, and solutions. While some essays are a mosaic or weave of claims, support, and counterargument with a unique and unpredictable order, classification often visually presents its contents with subject headings for each problem or solution.

Your problems, once classified, should not overlap. Creating clear cut categories is a hallmark of this type of argument. When categories creating a problem are fuzzy, as they often are in life, argument by classification and division may not be the right choice to communicate or persuade. However, this type of argument can potentially help you distinguish and limit fuzzy categories, making them clearer.

As always, your essay will need a thesis. This thesis may list all the categories and their solution, or it may discuss just the problem and solution generally.

While the infrastructural problems of America divide neatly into bridges, interstates, water pipes, and sewer pipes, the allotting of government funds for repair cannot be divided so neatly due to the level of disrepair for each category.

An essay of this type often has headings after the introduction:

BRIDGES

A government report suggests that all the bridges of America are in need of repair. The report found that bridges built before 1960 are architecturally less sound, yet corrosion levels and structural stress are higher than recommended on a majority of bridges built before 1980.....

INTERSTATES

A majority of state and federal analyses of interstates found that although the roads are in disrepair, they do not pose excessive danger to drivers. Furthermore, funding for these highly visible problems is consistent with federal estimates.....

It is easy to imagine the rest of the essay. It is also easy to imagine several ways to communicate the solutions. First, you could reach conclusions on the urgency of particular classes’ disrepair. Then, using the same headings as the first half of your essay, you could provide solutions. This format may work well with some essays. However, you would be separating your solution from the in-depth explanation of the problem. Thus, providing a solution immediately following

each problem's description may be more appropriate and easier on your reader's memory and understanding.

Two Outline Strategies for Classification and Division

Outline One:

- I. Introduction/Thesis
- II. Problems
 - A. Bridges
 - B. Interstates
 - C. Water Pipes
 - D. Sewer Pipes
- III. Solutions
 - A. Bridges
 - B. Interstates
 - C. Water Pipes
 - D. Sewer Pipes
- IV. Conclusion

Outline Two:

- I. Introduction/Thesis
- II. Classifications
 - A. Bridges
 - a) problems
 - b) solutions
 - B. Interstates
 - a) problems
 - b) solutions
 - C. Water Pipes
 - a) problems
 - b) solutions
 - D. Sewer Pipes
 - a) problems
 - b) solutions
- III. Conclusion

Arguments by classification and division can be useful when you have a wealth of information but are not sure how to organize it. Separating your material into classes can help you see which strands of information, ideas, problems, and solutions belong together. Even if you choose not to argue through definition and classification, the process of classifying your prewriting thoughts and any research will help you organize information for any type of essay.

Argument by Cause and Effect

Cause and effect arguments explain the reasons or results of an event, idea, or situation. This mode of communication will also work well for explanation. Whether or not you have an argument will depend on whether or not your causes or effects are opinions rather than facts. If your thesis is an opinion, not fact, then even if you use facts as causes or effects, they are working in service of

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your opinion. Contentious scientific issues such as global warming, deforestation, and stem-cell research are examples of scientific fact used in the service of a values-laden argument. Cause and effect can also be used for cultural “values” argument as well, where causes and effects are hypothetical.

There are three basic types of cause and effect arguments: multiple causes/one effect, one cause/multiple effects, and chain or domino effect.

The multiple causes/one effect can be organized as follows:

Thesis: *American children are not being protected from dangerous Chinese toys for three reasons: lack of Chinese governmental oversight, lack of U.S. testing on Chinese imports, and lack of U.S. trade penalties against China for lax toy safety laws.*

Three Outline Strategies for Cause and Effect

This essay could easily be organized in the following manner:

- I. Introduction/Thesis
- II. Lack of Chinese Governmental Oversight
 - a) reason/cause
 - b) reason/cause
- III. Lack of U.S. Testing
 - a) reason/cause
 - b) reason/cause
- IV. Lack of U.S. trade penalties against China
 - a) reason/cause
 - b) reason/cause
- V. Conclusion

The one cause/multiple effects will be similar to the following. Fill in any gaps left in the outline:

Obesity is one of the major problems facing Americans today. It can result in physical and mental health problems, as well as removal from an active lifestyle.

- I. Introduction/Thesis
- II. Physical Health Problems
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
- III. Mental Health Problems
 - a)
 - b)
- IV. Removal From an Active Lifestyle
 - a)
 - b)
- V. Conclusion

The third type of cause and effect argument is a chain effect, also known as a domino effect. The above argument against obesity could be easily organized as a domino effect.

Write a thesis for the simple outline below:

- I.

- II. Obesity has been linked to physical health problems such as
 - a) high blood pressure
 - b) diabetes
 - c) shortness of breath
- III. Physical symptoms can inhibit an active lifestyle
 - a) less endorphins in bloodstream
 - b) accelerates the body's aging process
- IV. The inactive lifestyle can result in
 - a) low self-esteem
 - b) mild depression
 - c) lack of sexual drive
- V. Conclusion

The above example of the cause/domino effect demonstrates the *potential* effects of a cause. They are not guaranteed. You may wish to think about what fields deal in absolute domino effects and which fields have only the potential for various domino effects.

Exercise: Identifying Argument: Which type of argument is the following thesis and outline?

Twenty-four hour TV news channels distort or omit important information required for a full discussion of current events and politics.

- I. Reporting Distorts Information
 - a) Hosts have political bias
 - b) Station owners have political bias
- II. Medium Distorts Information
 - a) argument, not cooperation, encouraged
 - b) extremist views encouraged
 - c) entertainment valued over neutral information
- III. Medium Omits Information
 - a) Two minute stories lack detail
 - b) Point-counterpoint format not used

Each of the above is a cause. The effect is the misrepresentation of current events by cable news shows. This claim is argumentative. Some of the support for these claims may be data or surveys. Others may merely be opinion. Also, you may see that certain sections have more causes than others. Also, some causes may be placed under a variety of areas. This is OK. Not all causes and effects can be easily categorized.

As with other forms of argument, cause and effect may be a good organizing strategy for your prewriting. Gathering together a cause for each effect may help you see what information belongs together. If you find a cause with no effect or vice-versa, you can fill in what is most likely a gap in your original prewriting.

Out of the Dark

Many times we have an abundance of information but are unsure how the information relates or how to order it in an essay. The focus of this chapter was to demonstrate not only forms of argument that many essays follow, but to demonstrate how forms of argument can shape your

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incomplete prewriting thoughts. Putting your early thoughts into these “containers” will help you extend your thought and fill in gaps. It may also help you choose a form that best communicates your information to your audience clearly.