An Overview of Argument

Element	Questions to Ask	Traits of Effective Argument	Example	Language
1. Make a <u>claim</u>. Your proposition or assertion; the central point you will argue; also known as the thesis.	What do you <u>claim</u>? • X is true • X is important • X should be done • X is of a certain quality	• not obvious • defendable • debatable • not a fact/opinion • significant •avoids either/or		• qualifiers: <u>many, often, almost, tends to, might</u> • verbs: <u>suggests, implies, supports, contends, demonstrates</u>
2. State your <u>reasons</u>. Two or three sentences that explain why the audience/ readers should accept your claim.	**What <u>reasons</u> support your claim?**	• logical • persuasive • relevant • substantial • appealing		• X because… • X suggests Y because… • Because X leads to Y, Z must happen. • A leads to B because C…

3. Provide <u>evidence</u> to support your reasons. Consists of facts, figures, statistics used to prove your claim. Should be something that can be seen, touched, heard, or felt—a FACT!	**What <u>evidence</u> supports those reasons?**	• Avoid logical fallacies
		• Valid evidence is:
		  □ authoritative
		  □ relevant
		  □ specific
		  □ effective
		  □ current
		  □ compelling
				• based on…
				• According to A, B stems from…
				• Studies consistently show that A leads to B…
				• X found that Y caused Z when A happened.
				• A concluded B based on C.
				• X demonstrated that Y…

4. <u>Acknowledge</u> and <u>respond</u> to opposing perspectives. A good claim challenges previously held beliefs. You must recognize the other points of view and then explain how your claim disproves or improves upon the other claims.	**Do you <u>acknowledge</u> this alternative/complication, objection—and how do you respond?**	•Use concessionary language to <u>acknowledge</u> and <u>respond</u>. • Cite specific important alternatives or objections, and then address them head on with reliable evidence to support your claim.		Use subordinating conjunctions like <u>although, as if, because, unless, while</u>, etc. to signal concession. While X consistently shows Y not everyone agrees with the results or the method by which these results are obtained.
5. <u>Ethos</u> Invisible 6th element of any argument; relates to image of the author reflected in the claim and supporting details.	**What is the author's or speaker's <u>ethos</u>?** How do we know we can believe what he or she says?	• Be thorough •Establish and maintain credibility throughout • Focus on the quality of the argument's construction • Consider integrity of sources		What the writer/speaker does not want to do is use—or at least overuse—the pronoun <u>I</u>, as if to imply "if I say or think it, it must be true"