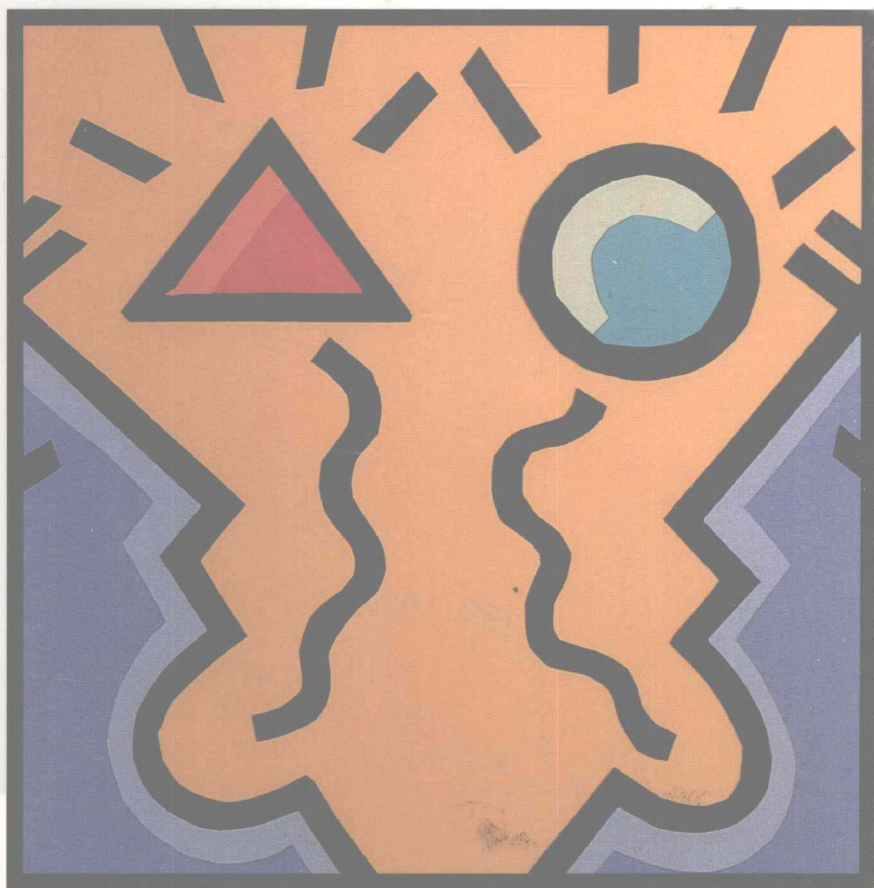


For  
**ARGUMENT'S SAKE**

A Guide to Writing  
Effective Arguments

THIRD EDITION



Katherine J. Mayberry

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KATHERINE J. MAYBERRY

Rochester Institute of Technology



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# Preface

The focus of *For Argument's Sake* is the process of writing effective arguments. By dividing written argument into its four most common modes—factual arguments, causal arguments, evaluations, and recommendations—and outlining the steps of argument composition, from the earliest stage of invention through audience analysis to final revision, this text provides a comprehensive guide to the creation of responsible and effective written arguments.

*For Argument's Sake* came out of my own experience teaching a college course in “written argument” at the Rochester Institute of Technology. At the time, my textbook choices were limited to theoretical treatises on logic and reading-focused argument anthologies. But what my students needed was practical advice about how to write arguments. In the absence of such a text, a colleague (Robert Golden) and I decided to write our own. In the first edition of *For Argument's Sake*, we created a practical guide to writing effective argument that is helpful to students from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, new in its approach to some fundamental issues, and detailed without being unnecessarily complex.

## ORGANIZATION

The text is organized around the three major phases of argument writing: focusing, supporting, and reviewing. Chapters 1 through 5 discuss how to bring a developing argument into focus, including finding and focusing a claim, identifying and accommodating the audience, and understanding the relationship between claim and support. Chapters 6 through 9 show students how to support the four different classes of argument (arguments of fact, cause, evaluation, and recommendation). And Chapters 10 through 12 present the reviewing activities necessary to refine and polish an argument: considering image and style, composing openings and closings, and revising and editing the argument draft.

These three writing phases are presented in the order students typically follow when composing arguments, but there are of course perfectly acceptable and effective exceptions to the typical. The order presented is meant to guide, not prescribe. Further, the sequential presentation of phases is not meant to contradict

the received wisdom about the recursive nature of good writing; in the real practice of writing, changes made in one phase lead to changes in the others.

## SPECIAL FEATURES

The discussion of dissonance in Chapter 2 is unique to argument texts. The question of what moves people to write arguments is a critical one for students that can lead them to make a greater personal investment in their own writing.

The treatment of formal and informal logic is also unique to argument texts; in this book, they are introduced at the point in the argument process where they are most useful: the development and evaluation of support. Too often, argument texts include the theory of logic and examples of informal fallacies without addressing how they are useful in the actual writing process. Chapter 5 presents both formal and informal logic as practical tools for creating reasonable arguments.

The inclusion of an entire chapter on style and image (Chapter 10) enriches the traditional view of argument, which sometimes seems to suggest that effective arguments have more to do with formulas and principles than with using language fairly and effectively. Here, a writer's style—the image he or she projects through the writing—is a fundamental component of argument, not just a lucky accident of talent.

*For Argument's Sake* contains many examples that today's college students (both traditional and nontraditional) can relate to, as well as examples from a range of academic and career areas. The range of applications helps students see the importance of writing effective arguments not only in college courses, but also in their postcollege careers.

Because improvement in writing comes only with practice, the emphasis in all the activities in the text is on *writing*. Each chapter gives students many opportunities to practice what they are learning by writing (and rewriting) full and partial arguments.

## NEW TO THIS EDITION

The third edition of *For Argument's Sake* retains the overall structure of the first two editions, as well as the emphasis on invention, composing, and overall practicality. My experience of teaching from the first two editions, as well as invaluable advice from many colleagues, has, inevitably, led to some changes in this third edition that make the text even stronger.

The most substantive changes appear in Chapters 4 and 5. In Chapter 4, the discussion of definition now includes a more extensive treatment of the stipulative definition. The discussion illustrates how stipulative definitions can constitute arguments in their own right, rather than support for another argument.

In Chapter 5, the presentation of Toulmin logic has been expanded and made even more accessible. Furthermore, in Chapters 6 through 9, the logical frameworks introduced in Chapter 5 are applied to the relevant classes of argument. For

example, the discussion of evaluative arguments in Chapter 8 includes illustrations of the role that the formal syllogism can play in supporting and evaluating student arguments. The demonstration of the ties between theory and practice is a truly distinctive feature of the text.

Chapter 6, “Arguing Facts,” now includes an entirely new section on “Evaluating Electronic Sources.” This section includes both a brief “how-to” discussion on accessing electronic information and a list of evaluative criteria particular to electronic sources.

The overall tone of the third edition is relaxed and student-friendly, illustrating the importance of matching tone and style to audience. Many of the references and examples have been updated to reflect changes in the external environment. Further, more attention has been paid to selecting and creating examples that are accessible and familiar to students; this edition includes a good mix of familiar and unfamiliar ground for students, providing them opportunities to work from what they know *and* to stretch into new territory.

Finally, the activities throughout the text now give students greater opportunity to work in groups—both in evaluating and in composing arguments. These modifications, as well as a discussion of peer reviewing in Chapter 1, are intended to persuade students of the value of collaboration in their thinking and their writing.

I am pleased to offer this third edition of *For Argument's Sake* as an even more useful, accessible, and manageable guide for college students at all levels who must write arguments.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While new professional obligations have prevented my colleague Robert E. Golden from participating further in the revisions of *For Argument's Sake*, this third edition would not be possible without the energy and intelligence that Bob devoted to the project at its outset. The third edition has specifically benefited from the expertise of John M. Ackerman, Northern Arizona University; Alice Adams, Glendale Community College; Virginia Anderson, Indiana University Southeast; Donna R. Cheney, Weber State University; Anthony C. Gargano, Long Beach City College; Margaret Baker Graham, Iowa State University; Patricia H. Graves, Georgia State University; Ruth M. Harrison, Arkansas Tech University; Lorraine Higgins, University of Pittsburgh; John Jablonski, Ferris State University; Ben E. Larson, York College; Kenneth Mendoza, California State University—San Marcos; Peter Mortensen, University of Kentucky; William Peirce, Prince George's Community College; Lynn Rudloff, University of Texas at Austin; and Ellen Strenski, University of California—Irvine. I am grateful to the Division of Academic Affairs of the Rochester Institute of Technology for absorbing the copying costs of preparing this edition, and to Karen Helfrich, Associate Development Editor, and Anne Smith, Publishing Partner, of Addison Wesley Longman for their tactful encouragement.

KATHERINE J. MAYBERRY

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# An Introduction to Argument

## AN EXTENDED DEFINITION

If you grew up with siblings, or if you and your parents had a particularly stormy relationship during your adolescence, you may think you know all there is to know about argument. And you may be right, if you understand the word *argument* to mean a verbal battle where reason is absent and agreement rarely reached. A teenager engaged in this kind of argument with her mother might proceed as follows:

Mom, I don't believe you! You are so unfair! Why can't I stay out 'til three? You never let me do anything fun. None of my friends have curfews. How do you think it feels to have to be the only one who has to leave a party early? Everybody thinks it's ridiculous, and I bet they're all really glad they don't have you for a mother.

The unpleasant and usually unproductive practice illustrated in this example is not the subject of this book. In fact, the kind of argument focused on in these pages is almost the exact opposite of the above illustration. Of concern here is the formal, traditional meaning of *argument*: the process of establishing, through the presentation of appropriate evidence, the certainty or likelihood of a particular point or position (what we call the *claim*).

Another daughter, using the principles of traditional argument, might make the following case about her curfew:

Mom, I would really like to stay at this party tonight until it's over. I know you have a problem with my being out late, and I understand you're concerned about my welfare. But I'm eighteen now, I'll be leaving for college next month, and maybe it's time you let me start testing my own judgment. You and I both know I'm not going to do anything stupid, and I would really like to get some practice making my own decisions about my comings and goings.

While there is no guarantee that Daughter 2 would succeed with such an argument, it *is* a reasonable argument. Daughter 2 is acknowledging her mother's chief concerns and citing a sensible reason for lifting the curfew: she needs some practice at being grown up while still in the safety of her home environment. Daughter 1, on the other hand, has a lot to learn about making her point successfully; indeed, she commits about every foul imaginable in reasonable argument, including insulting her mother, irrelevantly and probably inaccurately appealing to crowd behavior ("None of my friends have curfews"), and failing to offer any sensible reason why her mother should change her mind.

Daughter 2's request is an oral argument, and the subject of this book is written argument; yet the principles and practices are essentially the same. The objective of each is to gain agreement about a point through the use of reasonable evidence. When you think about it, much of the writing you will do in college and in your careers following college falls under this definition. Research papers, lab reports, literary interpretations, case studies—all these forms of writing seek to convince an audience (your professor) of the reasonableness of certain conclusions. All these forms of writing, as well as application letters, instructional manuals, and corporate annual reports, are built around the simple objective of making a point.

An argument, whether written or oral, is different from an opinion. An *opinion* is based not so much on evidence as on belief, intuition, or emotion. Argument, on the other hand, is a position supported by clear thinking and reasonable evidence, with a secure connection to solid facts. While arguments rarely prove a conclusion to be absolutely true, they do demonstrate the probability of that conclusion. Opinions tend to be expressions of personal taste that have not been tested by the application of reasonable principles. Your opinion may be that history is a more interesting subject than literature, or that yellow is prettier than red, but these remain only opinions until they are thoughtfully and fully justified.

Effective arguments are ethical as well as reasonable. They make their points openly and honestly, avoiding underhanded methods and false promises, and seeking to remove ambiguity rather than exploit it. We make arguments in order to advance a reasonable position, not to trick a reader into serving our self-interest. As writers of ethical arguments, we recognize the influence that skilled writing can exert over credulous or ignorant readers, and we are committed to exercising that influence reasonably and responsibly.

Of course, what constitutes a reasonable and responsible argument is sometimes up for grabs. When they argue, people disagree about basic assumptions, beliefs, and values, and those disagreements affect their understanding of what is reasonable. Daughter 2 in the example above is working from the assumption that children should be encouraged to behave maturely. This seemingly inarguable assumption leads her to the conclusion that she should be allowed to exercise her own judgment about curfew. But perhaps her mother believes it is a parent's responsibility to protect her child from harm—another seemingly inarguable assumption. This reasonable assumption leads her to conclude that she cannot put her child at risk by lifting her curfew. Both daughter and mother are being reasonable, but their differing beliefs take them in two very different directions.



So this book will not be able to define what constitutes a reasonable argument for every writer, every audience, and every occasion. But it can introduce you to some concepts, processes, and tools that will help you make informed and effective decisions about how to construct your own arguments. And the many writing samples included at the end of most chapters will demonstrate how the principles and practices of formal argument carry over into a wide variety of writing contexts.

## THE CLASSES OF ARGUMENT

Once you begin paying attention to the writing you do for school and work, you will notice how frequently your assignments fit within the definition of argument. You may also notice that the claims, or propositions, of these arguments tend to fall into certain patterns. Papers in economics or history courses may tend to concentrate on identifying the causes of certain events, while lab reports in biology or physics focus on describing a particular process and interpreting its results. In fact, argument can be divided into four classes: (1) factual arguments, (2) causal arguments, (3) evaluations, and (4) recommendations. These classes are distinguished both by the type of claim being argued and the degree of agreement expected from the reader.

**Factual arguments** try to convince an audience that a certain condition or event actually exists or has existed. Factual arguments, though they sound quite simple, are the most ambitious type of argument, for they try to convince readers of the truth or factuality of a claim. Those laboratory reports from biology or physics are examples of factual arguments, and their purpose is to convince their reader (usually a professor) that certain steps were taken and certain things actually happened.

**Causal arguments**—often found within those economics or history papers—try to convince readers that one event or condition caused another or is likely to cause another in the future. A paper identifying the complex economic reasons for the 1987 stock market crash would be a causal argument. Causal arguments can only rarely claim truth or certainty; most are judged successful if they establish a certain cause or future effect as *probable*.

**Evaluations, or evaluative arguments**, make value judgments. The film critics Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert are in the business of oral evaluations, as they share their judgments about the quality of recent films with their television audience. Because evaluations are often tied up in personal tastes and opinions, they are the hardest of all arguments to make successfully; nevertheless, they *can* be reasonable and effective.

Finally, **recommendations**, as their name suggests, try to get readers to *do* something, to follow a suggested course of action. While the other three classes of arguments aim for armchair agreement, most recommendations want the reader's agreement to be translated into action.

This book will take up the principles and practices of each argument class in isolation from the others, but you should realize from the outset that many of the