

Champion's Guide to Debate

Introduction to Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas, and Congressional Debate

Sample Chapter



Champion Press

This packet includes a complete chapter as a sample of the Champion's Guide to Debate Flexbook! The combination textbook and workbook includes all the basics for new debaters.

As you'll see in this sample, every chapter includes explanations of concepts paired with 200+ application activities, exercises and drills, review questions, discussion prompts, and more. Many chapters include videos and other content that helps students understand the material.

The Champion's Guide to Debate Flexbook offers specific guidance for Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas, and Congressional debate in addition to lessons on:

- Public Speaking Skills
- Argumentation Structure
- Research Methods
- Refutation and Defense
- Case Writing
- Rules and Norms
- Judge Adaptation
- Strategies for Success

The Flexbook model allows students to complete activities within the book as they learn new speech and debate skills. This edition is the result of contributions from 13 nationally acclaimed debate educators with 100+ years of combined classroom experience.

If you have any questions, please contact us at Team@TheChampionPress.com

Chapter 5: Everything Is An Argument



Core Question: How can I effectively construct and present persuasive arguments for competitive debate and beyond?

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the Toulmin Model to construct well-structured arguments
- ✓ Demonstrate the ability to integrate arguments into a debate case
- ✓ Adapt argumentation techniques to different debate formats and styles

We've all had informal arguments with our friends and family, but learning how to structure an argument in a debate setting is a different process.

In this chapter, we'll explore the art of crafting and framing compelling arguments. As debaters, we understand that the strength of ideas lies not just in their content but also in how we present them. How we shape and mold our arguments can determine whether we sway minds or fail to persuade our audience.

5.1 Role of an Argument

Arguments are reasons to agree or disagree with a statement. Constructing compelling arguments will help you harness the true power of words to shape perceptions, win debates, and leave a lasting impact on your judge and audience.

As you learned in Chapter 1, scholars and thinkers have grappled with the complexities of the debate process for centuries.

Today, we have three ways of viewing arguments: logical, dialectical, and rhetorical.

Logical perspective: "Is the argument sound?"

Dialectical perspective: "Has the discussion encompassed differing perspectives of the topic?"

Rhetorical perspective: "Has the speaker constructed an argument so that it can successfully persuade the audience?"

As we dive deeper into the components of argumentation, keep these perspectives in mind. By considering the three categories of perspectives, you'll be better equipped to develop a strong point of view and use sound logic in your debate rounds.

The Role of Arguments in Debate

In the realm of debate, arguments serve as the building blocks upon which you'll construct your cases, challenge opposing viewpoints, and strive to convince judges of the superiority of your position.

Arguments in debate serve multiple purposes.

- Arguments provide structure and organization, allowing for a systematic presentation of ideas and evidence
- Arguments act as building blocks for an overall position supporting or opposing the resolution
- Arguments serve as a primary form of persuasion, aiming to focus the audience's understanding of an advocacy in a concise way
- Arguments rely on persuasive techniques, logical reasoning, and compelling evidence to sway opinions and gain support.

Evaluating Arguments

In debate, very few arguments are absolutely true and infallible. If it were possible to create unbeatable true arguments, this activity wouldn't be very interesting.

The ideas discussed in debate are generally subjective and use different sets of facts and opinions to prove one side is right in the context of that conversation. It's important to make the key distinction of facts vs. opinions when constructing your arguments.

Facts are provable through research and tangible observations about the world. Opinions are interpretations about the world based on those facts.

When discussing debate, we don't call an argument true. Instead, we classify arguments as either valid or sound.

An argument is considered **valid** if its conclusion logically follows from the facts and opinions that comprise the argument, regardless of the truth of the statement. Validity is about the form and structure of the argument rather than the actual truthfulness of its parts.

An argument is **sound** if it is valid and all of the underlying supports and assumptions are true. Soundness combines the logical structure of the argument with factual accuracy. A sound argument guarantees the truth of the conclusion.





Champ's Work: Basic Arguments

I'm trying to figure out some basic arguments before we learn how to structure them. Can you help me come up with some arguments that support this topic and some arguments that oppose this topic?

Resolved: Compulsory voting should be implemented in the United States.

Support 1: _____

Support 2: _____

Support 3: _____

Oppose 1: _____

Oppose 2: _____

Oppose 3: _____

Concept Checkpoint

1. Why are arguments considered the building blocks of a debate?
2. What is the difference between an argument being valid and sound?
3. In what ways do arguments provide structure and organization to a debate?



5.2 Argument Construction

The art of effective argumentation is a multifaceted process that involves more than just expressing opinions.

Structure of an Argument

Argumentation requires a systematic approach that uses reason and evidence to persuade others. Most interpretations of argument in debate are inspired by the **Toulmin Model**, developed by British philosopher Stephen Toulmin. This model provides a structured framework for constructing and analyzing arguments.

The original Toulmin Model includes six interrelated components to form a comprehensive argument: Claim, Grounds, Warrant, Backing, Qualifier, and Rebuttal.

An adaptation of this model is widely used across competitive debate and can help you form strong arguments. This "simplified" version includes Claim, Data, Warrant, and Impact. Once you understand it, you'll recognize argument structures everywhere.

Claim: The **claim** is the central statement or proposition a debater seeks to prove or support. It is the main argument or position that the debater puts forward. A claim should be clear and concise, specific, and focused, capturing the essence of the argument. Think of this like a topic sentence in an essay.

Data: The **data**, also known as grounds or evidence, are the facts, data, examples, or expert opinions that support the claim. They provide the logical and factual basis for accepting the claim as valid.

The grounds should be credible, relevant, and compelling, reinforcing the strength and persuasiveness of the claim.

Warrant: The **warrant** is the reasoning or logical connection between the claim and the data. It explains why the evidence supports the claim and bridges the gap between them. The warrant may involve logical inference, causal relationships, general principles, or other forms of reasoning that establish the validity of the claim based on the provided evidence.

You may have multiple warrants in an argument to explain different pieces of data you use. In some contexts, the term "internal link" may be used to describe the warrant's function of connecting your claim to the data and impact.

Impact: An **impact** is the reason the argument is important. Usually referencing who or what the claim changes, the impact takes the warrant one step further and establishes a compelling reason why the argument matters in the debate and beyond.



Applying Argument Structure

Understanding and applying these components (Claim, Data, Warrant, and Impact) will allow you to construct well-structured and persuasive arguments.

Let's look at an example of the CDWI model using our sample resolution, *Resolved: Compulsory voting should be implemented in the United States.*

Claim: Compulsory voting strengthens democracy. *This provides a clear and concise statement summarizing the argument.*

Data: The foundation of a functioning democracy is the participation of citizens in the electoral process. According to the United States Census Bureau, voter turnout was only about 66.8% in the 2020 presidential election. Even though this marked the highest turnout in over a century, that means that 33.2% of eligible voters did not participate. *This provides clear evidence to show why a world without compulsory voting is flawed and what might be improved by implementing compulsory voting.*

Warrant: By implementing compulsory voting, we can increase voter turnout to nearly 100% by providing a real incentive to one-third of Americans who tend not to vote. We can strengthen democracy by maximizing the participation of all citizens. *This provides a logical explanation of how the claim is proven by the data.*

Impact: If more people vote, our government will better reflect the will of all American voters, not just the ones who showed up to vote. By creating a more representative government, we make it more likely that policies reflect the will and needs of more Americans. *This provides the way that the claim being true would affect people's lives.*

Watch some examples

Choose an episode of Open To Debate and listen to the opening speeches.

How do the speakers structure their arguments?

Are the arguments valid or sound?

Can you think of ways an argument would be improved through better usage of Ethos, Pathos, or Logos?

Can you think of ways an argument would be improved through better structuring in the CDWI model?

Open To Debate Videos

www.debatetextbook.com/open-debate





Champ's Work: Identifying Components of an Argument

I'm working on arguments for the compulsory voting topic, but I'm having trouble identifying the parts of the argument. Can you help me by circling the claim, underlining the data, boxing the warrant, and double-underlining the impact?

Compulsory voting improves political equality. Compulsory voting encourages and requires every citizen, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, education level, or political engagement, to participate in the electoral process. This is different from voluntary voting systems, where studies have shown that the wealthy, educated, and politically engaged are more likely to vote. By making voting mandatory, we are ensuring that every citizen's voice is heard, promoting greater political equality. All citizens from various backgrounds and walks of life have their perspectives considered equally in the electoral process. This can lead to more equitable policy decisions that reflect the needs and interests of all citizens, not just those who are privileged or engaged under voluntary voting.

Here's another one I need your help with! This one is on the opposite side of the topic.

Compulsory voting infringes on personal freedom. Freedom includes the right to make personal choices without coercion. In a democratic society, this extends to the right to participate or not participate in the electoral process. Many countries, like the United States, prioritize absolute freedom and see it as a fundamental democratic principle. Implementing compulsory voting would undermine this freedom by imposing a legal obligation to vote. This coerces individuals to participate in a process they may not wish to be a part of for a variety of valid reasons, such as political disillusionment or protest. This coercion could lead to increased dissatisfaction with the government.



Champ's Work: Finding CDWI in the Real World

This activity will help you better understand the CDWI model and recognize it in real-world applications.

Go to your favorite news source and find an article. See if you can identify the claims, data, warrants, and impacts used by the writer to convey their points. Imagine if one of these components was missing. Would the article still be as informative?

Summarize the article below by summarizing a claim and its associated data, warrants, and impacts.

Claim: _____

Data: _____

Warrant: _____

Impact: _____

Concept Checkpoint



1. Explain the simplified Toulmin Model (Claim, Data, Warrant, Impact) and the role of each component in an argument.
2. Why are a clear claim and relevant data crucial for constructing an argument?
3. How does a warrant connect the claim and its supporting data in an argument?
4. What is the role of impact in an argument?

5.3 Putting Argumentation Into Practice

Now that we have a strong understanding of persuasive language and the ways to structure your arguments, it's time to put these elements into action!

Arguments in Debate

As a debate competitor, you will participate in many rounds of debate, whether these are at tournaments or in your classroom. During each round, you'll advocate that you either agree with the topic or disagree with the topic, which means that you need to be prepared to argue on both sides.

We're going to walk through the structure of a debate round step-by-step in later chapters, but now that you understand how an argument works, you can see the foundations of a debate start to form.

In each debate round, you will make a few different structured arguments as part of your case, giving you multiple opportunities to make strong arguments to persuade your audience.

Offense vs. Defense

Offense refers to arguments that are reasons to vote for one side over the other.

These arguments aim to persuade the audience that your position is correct or preferable. It involves presenting reasons, evidence, and examples to support your claims. Your case will consist of offensive arguments.

Defense refers to arguments that decrease the impact of your opponent's offense. Defensive arguments are reasons your opponent should not win. These arguments generally undermine the arguments made by your opponent.



In short, offensive arguments are reasons the judge should vote for you, and defensive arguments are reasons the judge should not vote for your opponent.

Ensuring that you focus on offense while adequately making defensive arguments against your opponent is the simplest way to meet judge expectations and work toward winning.

Tips For Strong Arguments

Clear and concise arguments not only enhance your persuasiveness but also facilitate effective communication with your audience. You should consider the following principles to develop arguments that are both clear and concise:

Clarity of Thought: Clear arguments stem from clear thinking. Before constructing your argument, take the time to thoroughly understand the topic. Clarify your own position and identify the main points you want to convey. This clarity of thought will lay the foundation for constructing a coherent and well-structured argument.

Strong Claim: A clear argument begins with a strong and focused claim. Your claim should be concise, specific, and clearly state your position on the topic. It should encapsulate the main idea you are advocating and focus the argument on one specific advocacy rather than a broad selection of possibilities. A strong claim sets the direction for your argument and provides a clear point of focus for both you and your audience.

Supporting Evidence: It is crucial to provide supporting evidence to bolster the strength of your argument. This evidence

can take the form of facts, statistics, expert opinions, research findings, or examples. Select evidence that is relevant, reliable, and compelling, and present it in a clear and concise manner. Avoid overwhelming your audience with excessive evidence, and instead focus on quality over quantity.

Logical Reasoning: Clear arguments rely on logical reasoning to establish a coherent flow of ideas. Ensure that your argument follows the modified Toulmin structure you just learned, with each point building upon the previous one. Use logical connectors such as "therefore," "because," or "in conclusion" to guide your audience through the logical progression of your argument.

Organization and Signposting: A clear argument is organized and easy to follow. Use clear and concise language to articulate your points and employ signposting techniques to guide your audience through your argument. **Signposting** involves using phrases like "first," "next," "in addition," or "finally" to signal transitions between different points and sections of your argument. This helps your audience navigate your argument and understand the logical flow of your ideas.

Conciseness: Be succinct.

Just not that succinct. Conciseness is crucial in debate, where time constraints often dictate the length of your presentation. Strive to express your ideas succinctly, using precise language and eliminating unnecessary or repetitive information. Focus on delivering the most impactful and relevant points in a concise manner, avoiding tangents or excessive elaboration.

Practice and Feedback: Developing clear and concise arguments requires practice and refinement. Take the time to rehearse your arguments, ensuring that each point is expressed clearly and concisely. Seek feedback from peers or coaches to identify areas where you can further enhance the clarity and conciseness of your arguments. Constructive feedback can help you refine your communication skills and improve the effectiveness of your arguments.

By following these principles and continuously honing your argumentative skills, you can develop clear and concise arguments that captivate your audience and effectively convey your perspective.

Clarity and conciseness are key to making a lasting impact in the world of debate, but you can also utilize these principles in every aspect of your life!

Whether you're writing an essay for school, coming up with a story, drafting a letter to apply for a college or job, or any other form of communication, you can apply what you've learned about arguments and persuasiveness.



Champ's Work: Watch an Oratory

One of the best places to see clear and concise argumentation and Aristotle's tenets of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos is in the National Speech and Debate Association Original Oratory final round. Consider the following video from Haris Hosseini's oratory, "Simply Put."

Watch "Simply Put"

www.debatetextbook.com/simply-put



Video courtesy of the National Speech and Debate Association

Here are some questions to consider:

What are Hosseini's arguments (or main points)?

What do you notice about the structure of arguments or points provided?

How does the speaker build a connection with the audience with his argumentation?

How does he utilize Ethos, Pathos, and Logos throughout the speech?

Speech Notes from Champ’s Work

Concept Checkpoint



1. What are the key principles to develop arguments that are both clear and concise in the context of a debate?
2. What is the difference between offensive and defensive argumentation?
3. How can logical reasoning and organization techniques (like signposting) enhance the clarity and flow of your arguments?
4. Why is supporting evidence crucial in debate, and how should it be selected and presented for maximum impact?

Chapter 5 Review



Applying Key Ideas

Want to practice your skills? Here are a few exercises to help you improve:

1. Watch your favorite TV show and try to find an example of how a character makes a structured argument using the claim, data, warrant, and impact structure
 2. Find an article or op-ed piece related to a topic of your interest. Identify the claims, data, warrants, and impacts used by the author. Evaluate the strength of their arguments and discuss whether you agree or disagree with their viewpoint.
 3. Write a persuasive letter to a local politician or community leader advocating for a specific change or policy. Use persuasive techniques and the CDWI model to construct your argument.
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Discussing Key Concepts

Here are some key concepts to discuss that will help you better understand what you've learned:

1. Why do you think scholars have debated the best ways to persuade an audience since the earliest records of communication? Do you think there will ever be "one best way" to persuade an audience?
2. What makes the CDWI structure effective at helping to organize arguments?
3. Think of a time that you witnessed a particularly bad argument. How could this have been improved by either the use of persuasive devices or the CDWI structure?
4. Who are some of the greatest speakers in history, and why do you think they earned that status?