Toulmin Argument Part 1: Claim, Grounds, and Warrant

**Student Name**: Click or tap here to enter text. **Date**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Instructor**: Click or tap here to enter text. **Course**: Click or tap here to enter text.

# About This DLA

## Important Note

All the activities (4) in the DLA must be completed in their entirety before receiving credit for completion. Students are welcome to meet with a tutor if they need help, but please be aware that students might need a second appointment for review and signature in that case. If your instructor wants evidence of this completed DLA, return this form to him or her with the tutor’s signature included.

## Learning Outcomes

Through computer and other independent work, you will be able to define Toulmin argumentation, identify its key components, and perform a Toulmin analysis of an argument.

## Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

# Understanding Toulmin Argument

Toulmin argumentation is a mode of both constructing and analyzing arguments. While Toulmin argumentation is not the only way to examine or build an argument, it is a useful tool for understanding and structuring the various components of an argument. The Toulmin argument has six main components: the claim, the grounds, the warrant, the qualifier, the rebuttal, and the backing. This DLA will concentrate on the first three elements: the claim, the grounds, and the warrant. Let’s look at a very small argument and examine it using the Toulmin method:

***You should take your umbrella because it is raining outside.***

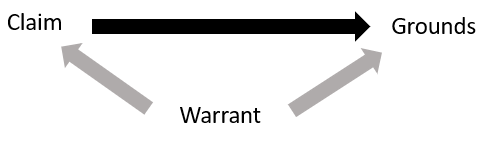
**The claim:** You should take your umbrella.  
**The grounds:** It is raining outside.  
**The warrant:** You don’t want to get wet.

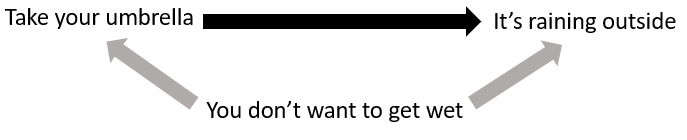
Note: The order of these components is not always fixed. Using the same example, you can also say “It is raining outside, so you should take your umbrella.” In this example, the claim comes after the grounds.

**The claim** in the argument is what you are saying someone should think or do; for example, “Capital punishment should be illegal,” or “Mt. SAC should have a spring break.” The claim is the purpose or goal of the argument: *take your umbrella!*

**The grounds**, which can be stated or unstated,is the reason or evidence that supports your claim. It’s the *because* of the argument, as in when a parent says “*Because* I said so!” to a child who asks “Why?” too many times. Examples of a claim followed by the grounds would include: “Capital punishment should be outlawed ***because sometimes the innocent are executed***,” and “Mt. SAC should have a spring break ***so that students can rest and recover before their finals.***” When a claim and the grounds are combined into a single sentence, like they are in these examples, an enthymeme is formed.

**The warrant** is the underlying assumption, often unstated, that connects the claim and the grounds; it’s the glue that holds them together. In essence, the warrant is the shared understanding that makes the reader feel a compelling connection between the claim and the grounds. It might be helpful to understand this relationship between claim, grounds, and warrant as a kind of inverted triangle:





Note: Since warrants are often unstated, there are a number of similar ways any particular warrant might be phrased. We could also say here that the warrant is “people ought not to get wet,” or “people should avoid getting wet.”

## Understanding Warrants

It’s important to understand that the connection between a claim and the grounds is only as strong as the shared acceptance of the underlying warrant. If you are the type of person who enjoys the feeling of rain on your skin, then you would not find the above argument persuasive. In this example, it’s not that you disagree with the grounds—you can see that it is indeed raining—you just don’t accept the unstated warrant that “you don’t want to get wet.” You might think people *should* sometimes get wet in order to feel alive or connected to nature. This would be a counterargument (or rebuttal) to the original warrant.

If we look at the earlier argument regarding capital punishment, we can also deduce the underlying warrant:

**Claim:** Capital punishment should be illegal.  
**Grounds:** Sometimes innocent people are executed.  
**Warrant:** Anything that can lead to the execution of the innocent should be illegal.

This warrant relies on a shared assumption that innocent people are entitled to an absolute legal protection from punishment for a crime they didn’t commit. This is a strong value in many cultures around the world. Among liberals in the US, this warrant would find a great deal of agreement. While conservatives would also agree that the innocent should not be executed, some of them might counter-argue that just because mistakes sometimes occur, that does not justify ending capital punishment. They might argue that while these errors are very regrettable and everything should be done to avoid them, the deterrence factor justifies the use of capital punishment even if sometimes mistakes are made. After all, deterrence may save more innocent lives than capital punishment ends. The point here is that you should try to use warrants that your readers are likely to share, or be prepared to support your warrant with backing.

Note: Rebuttals and backing will be covered in depth in Toulmin Argumentation Part 2: Qualifiers, Rebuttals, and Backing.

# Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

## 1. Toulmin Method

Define the Toulmin Argument in your own words.

Click or tap here to enter text.

## 2. Identifying Claims and Reasons

In the spaces below, identify which part of each sentence is the **claim** and which part is the **grounds**.

1. Taxes must be lowered because these high rates are bankrupting businesses.

**Claim**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Grounds**: Click or tap here to enter text.

1. Mt. SAC needs to build a parking structure because lack of parking can be an obstacle to an education.

**Claim**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Grounds**: Click or tap here to enter text.

1. Harmful UV rays can give you cancer so you should wear sunblock.

**Claim**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Grounds**: Click or tap here to enter text.

1. College should be free for all because more people would be able to attend college.

**Claim**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Grounds**: Click or tap here to enter text.

1. The president has committed high crimes and misdemeanors so he should be impeached.

**Claim**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Grounds**: Click or tap here to enter text.

## 3. Identifying Warrants

Use your own words to identify the warrant in the spaces provided below the enthymemes. (Remember, an enthymeme expresses a claim and the grounds in a single sentence). The first one has been done for you as an example.

*Example:*

**Enthymeme**: Taxes must be lowered because these high rates are bankrupting businesses.

**Warrant**: Anything that bankrupts businesses should be reduced.

**Enthymeme**: Mt. SAC needs to build a parking structure because parking should not be an obstacle to an education.

**Warrant**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Enthymeme**: Harmful UV rays can give you cancer so you should wear sunblock.

**Warrant**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Enthymeme**: College should be free for all because more people would be able to attend college.

**Warrant**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Enthymeme**: The president has committed high crimes and misdemeanors so he should be impeached.

**Warrant**: Click or tap here to enter text.

## Chose 4a or 4b below.

## 4a. Work with Your Own Writing

Identify a topic you have been asked to write on in any class. State your **claim** about this topic, your **grounds** for this claim, and one or more **warrants** that support the argument.

**Claim**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Grounds**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Warrant(s)**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**If you do not have your own writing, complete 4b below.**

## 4b. Developing Claims, Reasons, and Warrants.

Develop a claim, grounds, and a warrant for FIVE of the following topics:

* Absences
* Climate change
* E-cigarettes
* Dreamers
* The electoral college
* Kanye West
* Parking at Mt. SAC
* Scooters or skateboards

The first one has been completed for you as an example. The second one is missing a warrant and the third one needs the grounds and a warrant. For the last two you need to provide a claim, grounds, and warrant.

*Example:*

**Claim**: Students should not need to complete paperwork for late adds.

**Grounds**: Extra paperwork makes it more difficult for students to get the classes they need.

**Warrant**: Anything that makes it more difficult for students to add classes should be eliminated.

*The claim and grounds are provided. Needs a* ***warrant****.*

**Claim**: Flavored e-cigarettes should be banned.

**Grounds**: The flavor of e-cigarettes attracts children and leads to nicotine addiction.

**Warrant**: Click or tap here to enter text.

*The claim is provided. Needs* ***grounds*** *and a* ***warrant****.*

**Claim**: The government needs to pass stricter emission laws to combat climate change.

**Grounds**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Warrant**: Click or tap here to enter text.

*Needs a* ***claim****,* ***grounds****, and a* ***warrant****.*

**Claim**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Grounds**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Warrant**: Click or tap here to enter text.

*Needs a* ***claim****,* ***grounds****, and a* ***warrant****.*

**Claim**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Grounds**: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Warrant**: Click or tap here to enter text.

## 5. Review

Go to https://mtsac2.mywconline.com and use the [Mt. SAC Writing Center Appointment System](https://mtsac2.mywconline.com/) to make a DLA appointment, or sign-up to see a tutor on the “**Walk-in**” list in the Writing Center. During your session with a tutor, explain Toulmin Argumentation and your answers to the exercises. How will knowledge of these concepts improve your writing?

Student’s Signature: Click or tap here to enter text. Date: Click or tap here to enter text.

Tutor’s Signature: Click or tap here to enter text. Date: Click or tap here to enter text.

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