

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**NARRATOR:** Reading and writing arguments.

An argument is a claim put forward along with reasons or evidence to support it. In addition to claims and evidence, arguments consist of several key elements which you will want to be aware of, whether you are reading or writing an argument.

The claim is the writer's thesis statement. It takes a position on a debatable topic. And it may be proven or disproven with evidence. Writers of arguments need to state their claim clearly and directly. Readers must be able to find the claim in order to follow the argument.

Evidence is the support for the claim. It may come in the form of facts, statistics, authoritative opinions, anecdotes, or examples. Writers of arguments must provide supporting evidence in order to persuade their audience of their claim. Readers must evaluate the evidence provided by the writer and determine whether it is sufficient, credible, and relevant, to the claim.

An assumption is something that is taken to be true without proof.

Bias means showing favoritism towards something or prejudiced against something. Writers must be aware of their own assumptions and biases, which can weaken an argument if unacknowledged. Readers must find hidden assumptions and biases in arguments. Readers should understand the difference between unproven assumptions and actual proof. And they should be skeptical of any argument that shows a strong bias.

Appeals are persuasive strategies. Logical appeals use reasoning. Emotional appeals rely on feelings. Writers can use a combination of appeals with their evidence. Effective arguments do not rely too heavily on either logic or emotion, but provide a balance of both. Readers must understand how the appeals relate to an argument. And they should be aware of arguments that draw too strongly on

emotional appeals.

Authority is the author's expertise or credibility, which is also called an ethical appeal. Writers must establish their authority in order to convince readers of an argument. Writers who are not experts rely on evidence from authoritative sources in order to establish credibility. Readers must assess the writer's authority. Weighing both the writer's own expertise and his or her presentation of supporting evidence.

Logical fallacies are errors in logic that can weaken or completely derail an argument. Common logical fallacies include ad hominem attacks, which question a person's character rather than his or her position on an issue. And non sequiturs, which use faulty reasoning when relating one issue to another. Writers must avoid logical fallacies if their arguments are to be sound. Readers must learn to recognize flaws in logic in order to critically assess an argument.

Remember, an argument is a claim put forward along with reasons or evidence to support it. Other key elements to understand when reading and writing arguments include assumptions and bias, appeals, authority, and logical fallacies.