

Argument: An Extremely Quick and Dirty Primer

What is an Argument?

There are a lot of decent answers to this question. For the academic setting in which many undergraduates find themselves, we can say that an argument is an answer to an interesting and debatable question. Argumentative writing usually gives ample room for the expression and proving of an author's idea, which is often expressed through a thesis statement.

How does one create a good argument?

1. Ask good questions. By "good questions" we mean those that are debatable, interesting, have not been sufficiently answered, and/or have been improperly answered.
2. Develop good answers. Here we mean answers which directly confront the question(s) being asked, and which can be backed, usually by research materials.
3. Write out a clear and succinct thesis. Authors' arguments are often hard to grasp simply because they are not written clearly. It is always your responsibility to say what you mean in a clear and straightforward manner. Also, think of a thesis as a promise to do certain specific things in an essay.
4. Find (in research, lecture notes, personal opinion, etc) compelling ways to "prove" that your thesis is legitimate. Think of the thesis as a promise to the reader. Research and other means of "proof" are your main means of fulfilling the promise of the thesis.
5. Create an essay that allows readers to see that the question, answer, thesis, and proofs are legitimate. In addition to saying what you need to say, you should spend time trying to decide HOW to say it, with the objective being to make it more likely that you will actually convince your audience that you are on to something worth writing and reading about.
6. Get feedback from someone who is removed from the process and is motivated to be honest with you.
7. Make revisions and edits in order to increase the essay's readability AND legitimacy