



How We Argue: Glossary + Key Concepts

What is an Argument?

- **Argument:** Communication in which the speaker is trying to persuade their audience to believe, feel or do something by giving reasons.
 - **vs. Fight:** In a fight, the speaker is just trying to get their way, regardless of whether or not they change their audience's mind or persuade them to agree.
 - **vs. Description:** In a description, the speaker explains what happened, gives information, or tells a story. Their goal is to inform or entertain the audience, rather than convince the audience of a main point.
- **Why We Argue:**
 - Truth
 - Justice
 - Connection
 - Power (e.g. X-Ray vision)
- **How We Argue:** The virtues of critical thinkers
 - Humility ("I could be wrong")
 - Openness ("You could be right")
 - Value reasons
 - **The Charity Principle:** Treat other people's arguments how you want them to treat yours
 - "I love you and I think you're wrong"

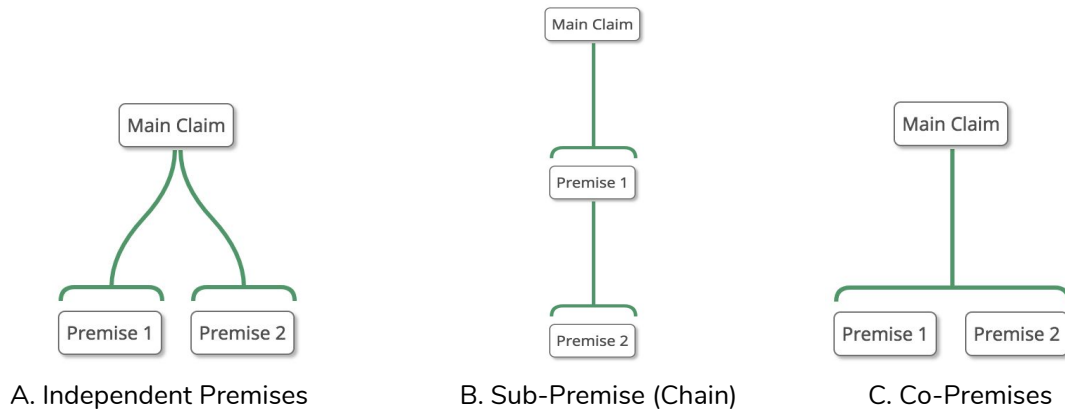
Argument Components

- **Claim:** A statement that the speaker wants you to believe.
 - **Main Claim:** The main point of the argument; the primary thing the speaker wants the audience to believe.
 - **Premise:** A claim that gives a reason to believe another claim.
 - **Evidence:** Concrete, specific factual information presented to support a claim, e.g. quote from a text, historical source, piece of data
 - **Reasoning:** Explains how/why the evidence helps to prove the claim.
 - **Objection:** A claim that gives a reason not to believe another claim.
 - **Rebuttal:** A response to an **objection**.

The Reason Rule

- In an argument map, a **premise** always answers the question "**why believe this?**" about the claim above it. We only include a statement in our map if it gives a reason to believe something else the statement above it.

Argument Structure Types



- A. **Independent Premises:** give you separate, distinct reasons to believe the claim above.
- B. **Sub-Premise (Chain):** a premise that gives you a reason to believe another premise.
- C. **Co-Premises:** work together or “hold hands” to give one single reason to believe the claim above, like two people making a chair with their hands to carry someone else.
- Each **co-premise** logically connects the other **co-premise** to the claim above. It spells out how the other co-premise is relevant to the claim above.
 - If one co-premise is false, the other co-premise does not work as a reason to believe the claim. (Whereas independent premises still work, even if the other premise is false).
 - **Hidden co-premise:** A co-premise that the author assumes but does not explicitly state in their argument. Often the true source of disagreement lies in hidden assumptions.
 - One common form of co-premises is **Evidence+Reasoning** (see definitions above).

Evaluating Arguments

- Two-step test:
 1. Are the premises *true or false*? (How plausible/ reasonable are they?)
 2. Are the support relations *strong or weak*?
 - Are the premises relevant to supporting the main claim?
 - Do the premises give you a sufficient reason to believe the main claim?
- A main claim can be strongly supported by false premises (=sturdy structure, lousy materials) or weakly supported by true premises (=poor structure, solid materials), or both/neither.

	1. Premises/ Evidence (= building materials)	2. Support Relations (= design/ architecture)
Good	True (probable, reasonable)	Strong (relevant, sufficient)
Bad	False (improbable, unreasonable)	Weak (irrelevant, insufficient)