## ARGUMENTS

### Structuring an Argument
Instead of an outline of topics, consider using this classical Greek rhetorical outline by functions. Note that some of these points might take several paragraphs.

### 1. Opening – The Introduction
To build credible ethos, to demonstrate to the audience that one is a reasonable person of good will who shares core beliefs with the audience.  Some classic openings include
> a quotation
> a question
> an anecdote

### 2. Providing Background Information
Arguments need to situate the reader with historical background.  If the argument is about lowering the drinking age, provide information about how and why and why the drinking age was set to where it is now.  This should include information as to differences by localities, particularly if the argument is going to proceed by parallel cases – i.e. "in Germany… therefore in America…"  Some of the statistics can be saved for the Proof section.

### 3. Defining the terms and explaining the issues
Continuing the above example, tell the reader "What is meant by drinking age?"
"What are the consequences?"  "Consequences for whom?"

### 4. Presenting the thesis
The argument's claim – particularly for a deliberative argument about policy (i.e. what should be done) -- plus reasons.

### 5. Giving Proof
This includes statistics, examples, quotes, and any other evidence to persuade a reader of the validity of the thesis.  The ordering of these should match the reasons given in the thesis statement.  Thus if the thesis is that "More nuclear power plants should be built because nuclear power is cheaper and reduces dependence on foreign oil" then the proof of cheapness comes before the proof of dependence on foreign oil.  However, it is generally agreed that if some of the arguments/proofs are stronger than others, then one should start and end with strong ones and sandwich the weaker arguments in the middle.

### 6. Answering opposing arguments.
Specific arguments must be provided (with speakers' names etc) and then refuted (or acknowledged but dismissed as not sufficiently pressing), whether by challenging the speaker's factual accuracy, logic, or expertise.  If no opposition is found, consider whether the argument is really a debatable point.  Sometimes hypothetical "critics" can be alleged: "Critics might charge that…, but…" . However, for this assignment, actual opposition must be found and cited.

### 7. Concluding
Sum up the points of the argument to show how the weight of evidence proves the thesis, while the opposition has been refuted.


Ideas from *Rhetoric in the Classical Tradition* by Winifred Bryan Horner. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.  232.

**The Toulmin Model**

1. **Make your claim**: the position or claim being argued for; the conclusion of the argument.
2. **Qualify your claim**: reasons or supporting evidence that bolster the claim.
3. Present **good reasons as support**: the principle, provision or chain of reasoning that connects the grounds/reason to the claim.
4. Explain the **underlying assumptions**: support, justification, reasons to back up the warrant.
5. Provide **additional evidence**: exceptions to the claim; description and rebuttal of counter-examples and counter-arguments.
6. Acknowledge **possible counter arguments**: specification of limits to claim, warrant and backing.  The degree of conditionality asserted.
7. Draw your **conclusions**

More on the Toulmin Model: http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~digger/305/toulmin_model.htm

## Activity: Identify an Argument

Read an article—either online or in print—that discusses a current event. Use the Toulmin model to identify the main parts of the argument in the article you have chosen to analyze. Analyze it using the list of criteria for evaluating arguments. What are the main problems you can identify? What argumentative strengths can you describe? Identify the author's claim, audience, purpose, and tone. In three to five paragraphs, explain your reaction to the article. Consider questions such as the following: Do you agree with the author's claim? Do you think you are a member of the intended audience? Does the tone of the article seem appropriate to the intended audience and purpose? If not, what would you change to better accomplish the author's purpose?

 (You may want to answer one or more of the following sets of questions as you evaluate the effectiveness of the author's argument in the context of the target audience.)

- Does the author effectively create an **ethos** which will lend him or her credibility with <u>this</u> audience? What is this ethos? What information or strategies does the author use to create his or her ethos? How does this information or do these strategies fail or succeed at creating an effective ethos for the target audience? Will the audience consider the author of "good sense," "good will" and "good character"?
- Does the author use **pathos** in a manner which will be effective with the target audience? What emotions does the author appeal to? How does the author attempt to manipulate the audience's emotions? Does he or she succeed or fail at appealing to this audience's emotions?
- Does the author use logical arguments and strategies which will appeal to the target audience? What **logical strategies** does the author use? How do these strategies fail or succeed in creating audience adherence to his or her argument?
- Does the author clearly establish a primary claim or thesis early in the essay? What is the claim? Will the audience find this claim reasonable?
- Does the author use grounds/reasons that effectively create audience adherence? What grounds will the audience find reasonable? What grounds might this audience reject, if any? What grounds might the audience find fallacious? Why and how are these grounds effective in creating this audience's adherence to the claim? Or why and how are they not effective?
- Does the author establish backing/support which will be effective in creating audience adherence? What kinds of backing/support does the author use? (Personal experience or observation, expert testimony, appeal to authorities or experts, examples, statistics, facts, studies/reports, etc.?) Why are these kinds of backing effective in creating audience adherence? Or why aren't they effective?