

HANDBOOK (CHAPTER 6)

In this handbook, we'll highlight the major, new things that we learned in chapter 6. Please see earlier handbooks for the fundamentals of recognizing, analyzing, and evaluating arguments.

Important Concepts and Terms

- An objection is a reason to think that a claim is false or unacceptable, or that an inference is bad.
- An outference is an opposing relationship that is represented by a red line on an argument map. For example, if an outference goes from claim C1 to claim C2, then C1 is meant to oppose C2.
- A claim objection is an objection that targets a claim in an argument and tries to show that it's false or unacceptable.
- An inference objection is an objection that targets an inference and tries to show that it's bad.
- A rebuttal is a line of reasoning that tries to show that an objection is bad - that an objection has a false/unacceptable claim or a bad inference.
- A pseudo-objection is part of a text that seems to be an objection to an argument, but is, in fact, irrelevant to this argument - pseudo-objections don't target any of this argument's claims or inferences.

I) Recognizing an Argument

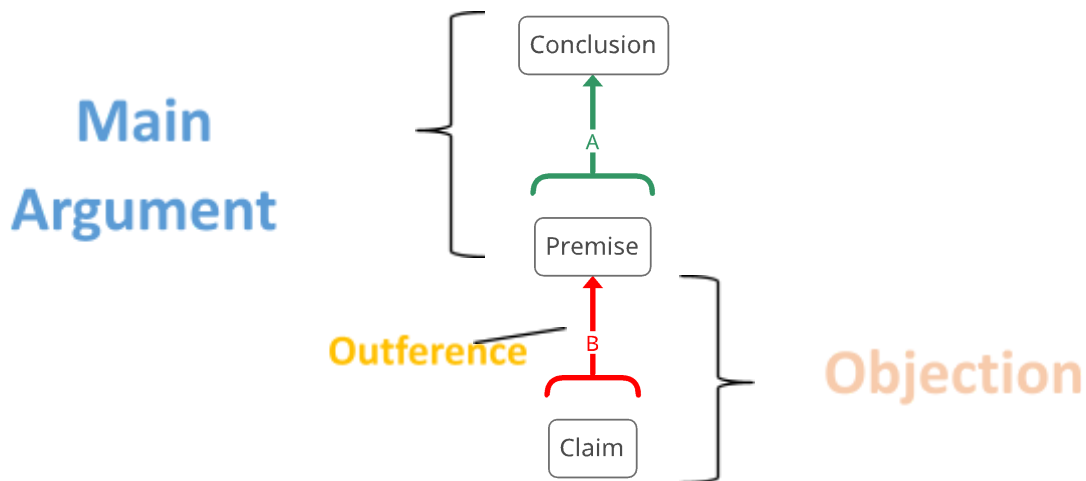
Dialogues can contain arguments. If one participant in the dialogue is trying to establish that something is true by citing other claims as evidence, then this dialogue contains an argument. At the same time, dialogues don't necessarily contain arguments. Sometimes dialogues only contain information or explanations.

Furthermore, the participants in dialogues may give independent arguments, objections, or rebuttals. If participants are giving independent arguments for different ultimate conclusions, we can just treat these as their own arguments and analyze and evaluate them independently.

II) Analyzing an Argument

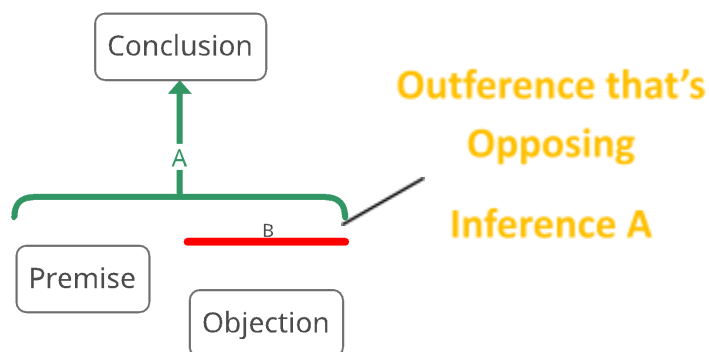
The following indicator expressions can be useful for identifying objections:

- "One objection to my argument is..."
- "In response, some critics argue..."
- "You may object on the grounds that ..."
- "In opposition to this argument, some people claim..."
- "An objector might counter that..."
- "A critic might respond by arguing..."
- "However, this point is vulnerable to the criticism that..."

Claim ObjectionInference Objection

Authors often introduce inference objections with phrases like:

- "Even if reason R is true, conclusion C still doesn't follow."
- "Even though R is true, C is not supported."
- "Although R is plausible, it's unclear why I should accept C."
- "While R may be correct, we should refrain from endorsing C."
- "Despite the fact that R, we don't have a good reason to believe C."
- "I'll grant that R is true. Nonetheless, I'm unsure that C is true."
- "It would be wrong to infer C from R."
- "It would be a mistake to conclude C on the basis of R."



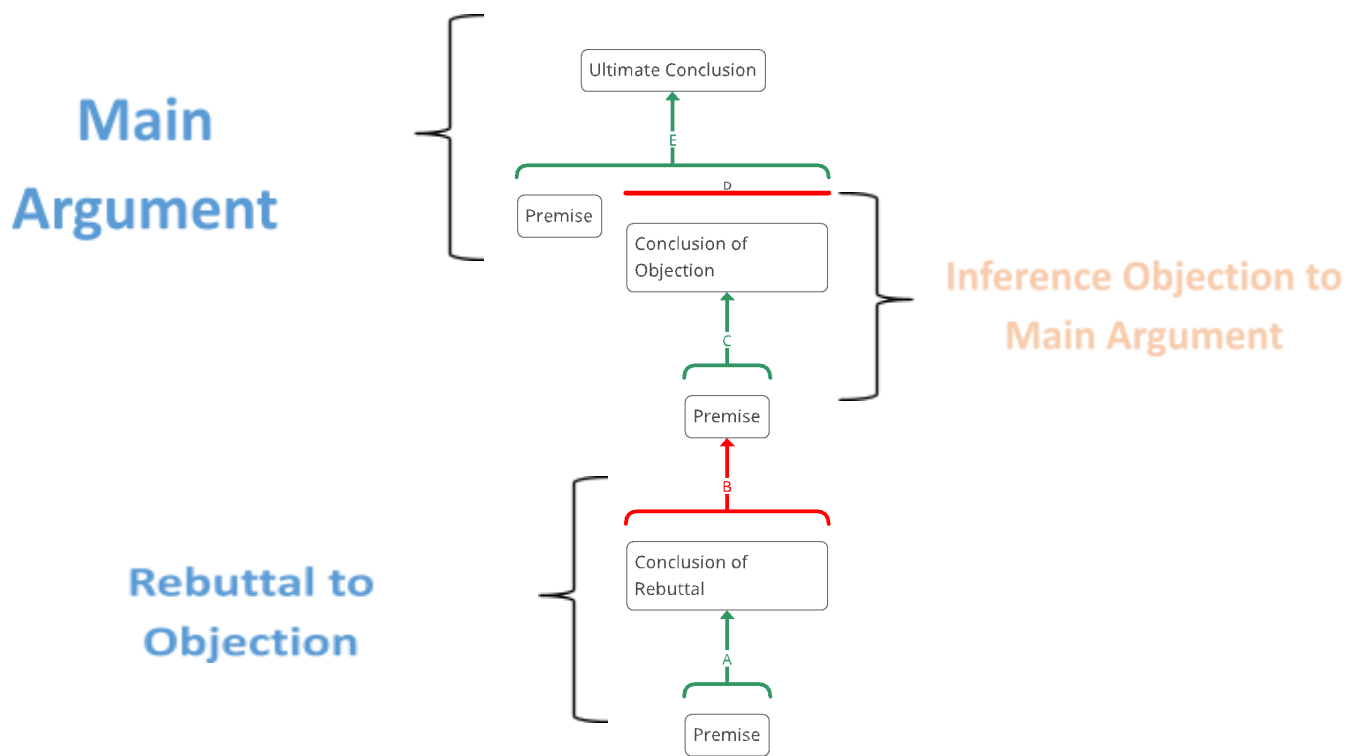
It's a mistake to make the above indicator expressions into claims on the map. Instead, the outference already represents the meaning of these indicator expressors.

Rebuttals

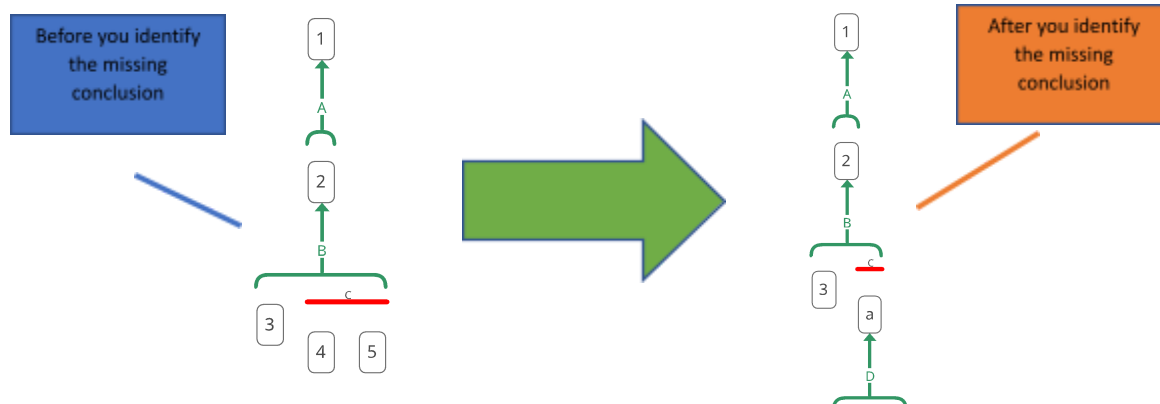
Authors sometimes introduce rebuttals with phrases like:

- 'In response to this objection, I'll argue...'
- 'This objection is wrong because...'
- 'My reply to the objection goes as follows...'
- 'However, the critics of my position are incorrect since...'
- 'This objection to my argument fails in light of the fact...'

Here's an example of a rebuttal to inference objection to the main argument:



If there are two or more dependent reasons below an outference, then there is likely a missing conclusion that you should identify in the objection. Example:



Pseudo-Objections

Pseudo-objections seem to be objections to an argument, but they are, in fact, irrelevant to this argument - pseudo-objections don't target any of this argument's claims or inferences.

You should leave pseudo-objections off of your map. Since pseudo-objections fail to target any claims or inferences in an argument, there's simply no place to put them on a map of this argument.

A hint on identifying pseudo-objections: pseudo-objections often try to show that a person giving an argument is bad in some way or try to show that it's unethical or unwise for someone to make an argument. But pseudo-objections don't target any claims or inferences in the argument itself.

III. Evaluating an Argument

An objection is good if the reasoning justifying the conclusion of this objection is good and the outference that targets a claim is good, too.

Claim Objections

Claim objections target claims in an argument. So, an outference connects the conclusion of a claim objection to the target claim. To test if an outference is good, we use the Reverse Bob Test. We ask: "If a perfectly gullible, perfectly rational person (we could call him 'Bob' for short) believes the conclusion of the objection, how likely is that person to believe the claim that this objection targets?" If Bob is highly likely to believe that the target claim is false, then the outference is good. If Bob is unlikely to believe that the target claim is false on the basis of the objection, then the outference is bad.

Inference Objections

Inference objections target the inference in an argument. So, an outference connects the conclusion of a claim objection to the target inference. To evaluate outferences that attack inferences, we use the Missing Premise Method.

The Missing Premise Method to evaluate outferences works like this:

1. You first identify the missing premise below the inference that the objection is targeting.
2. You move the outference so that it is targeting the missing premise instead of the inference.
3. You use the Reverse Bob Test to evaluate the outference.

IV. Constructing an Argument

1. You should articulate and respond to objections to your argument. But these shouldn't be just any objections. They should be strong objections. To figure out which objections to an argument are strong, you should read and listen to reasonable and well-informed people who disagree with you about your topic. They will often advance strong objections to your argument.
2. You should let your audience know that you are considering and responding to objections. You can do this by using indicator expressions like 'I will now consider objections to my argument,' 'One objection to my position goes like this,' and 'This objection to my position fails because...'
3. You should clearly and charitably present the objections to your argument. This means that you present these objections in the most reasonable and persuasive way possible.
4. Your rebuttal to an objection should be comprehensive. You should avoid quickly dismissing an important objection to your argument. Rather, you should patiently and systematically assemble evidence and reasons to show why this objection is bad.