

Making Claims Workshop

You probably make claims all the time:

- I'm hungry. 😊
- I love school. 🎒
- The weather outside is frightful! 🌩️

This year we are going to get a ton of practice making claims.

But our claims will be about politics. 🏛️

Here's the kind of claim I'm talking about:

- The national debt is out of control.
- The Supreme Court is the most powerful branch of government.
- President Trump will be reelected.

People are pretty good at *making* claims. The hard part is convincing other people that their claim is *valid*.

I like to say that **a claim is only as good as the reason behind it**. You can make any claim you want, the trick is convincing anyone else that your claim is worthy!

Whenever you make a claim, it's helpful to already have an answer to the question: "yeah, but why?"

For example:

You: "The national debt is out of control."

Your Friend: Oh, yeah, why?

You: "I don't know."

End of conversation. No convincing.

You: "The Supreme Court is the most powerful branch of government."

Your bestie: Oh yeah, why do you say that?

You: I dunno!

End of conversation. Zero persuasion.

You: President Trump will be reelected.

BFF: Really, why do you say that?

You: Because. Duh!!!!

Crickets....

See what I mean?!

Whenever you have a claim you need to be ready to back it up with a reason, with a *because*.

That *because*, or *why* is a great skill to have in GoPo. Here is an example:

You: "The federal government can't do that!"

Your Friend: Oh, yeah, why?

You: "Because the 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution reserves that power for the states!"

Your friend: You are so hot! 🔥

You convince your friend and win their undying admiration. 💕

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Here is another example

You: "The Supreme Court is the most powerful branch of government !"

Your bestie: Oh yeah, for real dawg, how so?

You: Because they alone can decide if any Congressional law or executive action is constitutional.

Bestie: Poggers! 🌟

You: President Trump will win reelection!

BFF: Really, why do you say that?

You: Because, Trump has riz, and also money, and also because of fear of the changing demographic of the United States regarding race and ethnicity, Trump will win.

BFF: You really are my best friend forever. Let's dance! 🕺

I think that if you practice making claims you are going to get really good at this. And win lots of arguments. And have tons of friends.

Here's a handy little Rule of Thumb: Whenever you say whatever you think about politics - say why! It's more convincing.

It looks a little like this:

_____	because	_____
(your claim about anything)	<i>why</i>	(reason, fact, argument, logic, data for your claim)

<u>I like ice cream</u>	because	<u>it releases dopamine in my brain</u>
(your claim about anything)	<i>why</i>	(reason, fact, argument, logic, data for your claim)

<u>The weather stannnnks</u>	because	<u>it is 98 degrees + 89% humidity which is too hot.</u>
(your claim about anything)	<i>why</i>	(reason, fact, argument, logic, data for your claim)

Now why don't you practice on a couple of non-politics claims about dogs, ice cream, sports, Taylor Swift, or whatever.

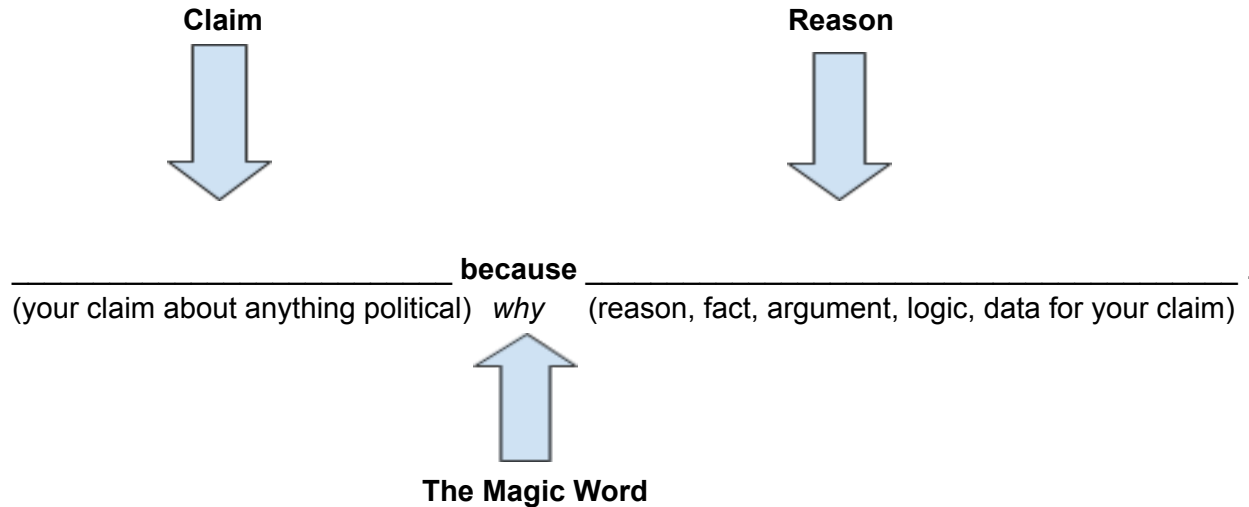
_____	because	_____
(your claim about anything)	<i>why</i>	(reason, fact, argument, logic, data for your claim)

Okay, that might seem super simple, and that's good!

You are going to be asked to make claims all year long in what you say and in what you write. You will be asked, again and again, to support your claim/argument with a reason. If you can do that, you will be good to go! In fact, on FRQ #4 - which you will write later on this year, you will respond to a prompt with a claim. Let's see if we can practice making claims right now.

Now let's practice this making any claim about politics:

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You probably noticed that your argument is not very convincing (to anyone other than you) if you just write a claim and have no reason. Equally, your argument is also not very convincing if you just write a reason but have no claim. You need both a **claim** and a **reason** to begin making a strong argument. And your argument will be strongest if you connect the claim and the reason with the word **because**.

Here is an example of a political claim:

America is not a democracy **because** American elections are neither free nor fair.
(your political claim) why (reason, fact, argument, logic, data supporting your claim)

Here is another example of a political claim:

Federalism is a great system of government **because** if the national government is too powerful and tyrannical it can be checked by the states who have their own power.

Claim ✓

“Because” ✓

Reason ✓

Awesome.

Biden will win reelection in 2024 **because** the incumbent wins 2/3 of the time.

You don't have to agree with this statement, just decide if it gets checks for the following:

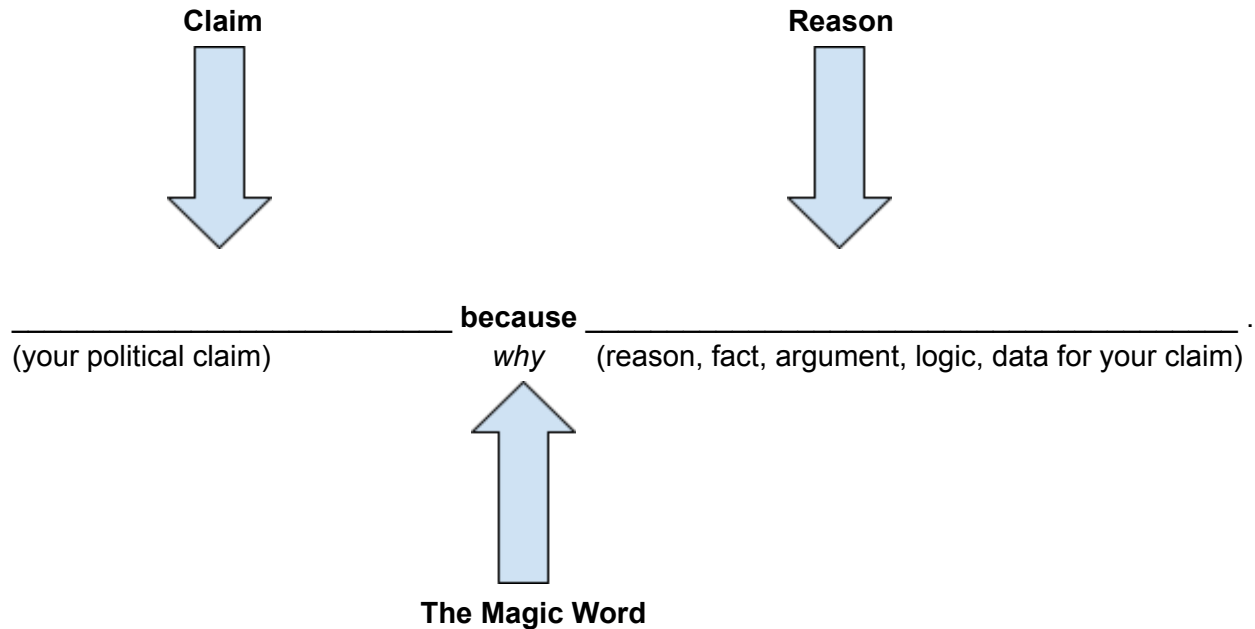
- ☐ Claim?
- ☐ “Because”?
- ☐ Reason?

Now let's try this again, making another claim about politics. This time I will give you a political prompt that is a little more specific, to which you will respond with a claim.

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Here is the prompt: Are checks and balances good for the United States?

Now make a claim:



Now decide if your claim gets checks for the following:

- ☐ Claim?
- ☐ "Because"?
- ☐ Reason?

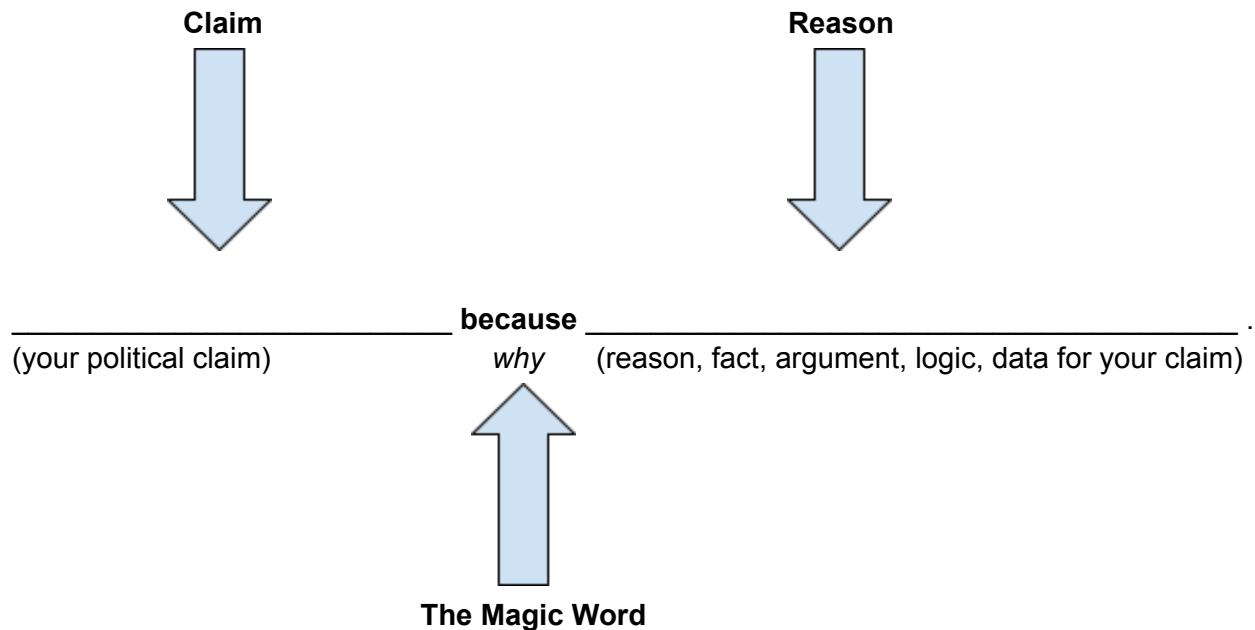
Awesome. You are the best person ever because you can support your claims with reasons, facts, arguments, and logic!

Great, let's try that again.

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Here is another prompt: Should the power of the government be focused primarily at the state or national level?

Now make a claim:



Now decide if your claim gets checks for the following:

- ☐ Claim?
- ☐ "Because"?
- ☐ Reason?

Awesome. You are the best person ever because you can support your claims with reasons, facts, arguments, and logic!

Great. Let's move forward. As I said before, on the AP Exam in FRQ #4 (yes, there are four FRQs!) you will be asked to make a claim about American politics. Your job is to use your

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knowledge of American politics to support a claim. Here's what an AP Government FRQ #4 prompt looks like.

Here is the prompt (writing starter):

1. Environmental regulation is a complex policy area that involves both the states and the federal government. Develop an argument that takes a position on whether the federal government should be primarily responsible for managing environmental policy or if it should be the responsibility of the states.

Notice that the first sentence in this prompt is just information that you probably already know. You can just read that first sentence, agree, and then shake your head yes. The next sentence is where we really get to work. Notice that the second sentence starts with “*Develop an argument.*” Other times this sentence will begin with “*make a claim.*” or “*take a side.*” These are all just different ways of telling you to **make a claim**.

And what do they want you to make a claim about?

They want you to make a claim about whether the **federal government** or the **state governments** should be in charge of managing environmental policy.

This question of federal versus state governments is probably not something you spend a lot of time talking about on dates, at football games, or at the dinner table, **but** it's definitely something you talk about in GoPo class. This question should definitely ring a bell. A Liberty Bell 🛎️, so to speak! 🗣️ If you have studied the Articles of Confederation, Constitutional Convention, Brutus 1, the Constitution, federalism, McCulloch v. Maryland, U.S. v. Lopez, or any contemporary issues like reproductive rights, transgender rights, or state drug laws, you've probably talked about whether power should be concentrated at the federal or state level. So now, you are going to make a claim about who should run environmental policy: federal or state government. For a GoPoPro like you, this should be simple.

Let's practice writing a claim to this FRQ #4 prompt. This really should not be very hard. Our first step in responding to the prompt is to make a simple, clear, and supportable claim.

☐ **Claim/Argument** → Take a side (1 point)

Pick a side: *federal or state?* then say “*because*” and give a reason why!

Write your own claim:

_____ should be primarily responsible for environmental
(*fed or state?*)
policy **because** _____ .
(*?*) (reason)

Remember a good claim will have:

- ☐ Claim (argument, choice of one thing versus another)

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- ☐ “Because”* (The word *because* can be substituted with other words or sentences and can be written in different ways. However, the *idea of because* - a link or a **bridge** between the claim and the reason is necessary to have a strong claim.)
- ☐ Reason?

Now let's look at a couple of sample attempts at claims below.

Which of the following four are acceptable claims?

Check the box if the sample claim is acceptable.

- ☐ *State governments should make environmental policy because they are more directly connected to the people.*
 - ☐ *The federal government is better at environmental policy because they have more capacity and resources to hire leading experts and regulators.*
 - ☐ *Many people have spent a long time arguing about whether the state or the federal government does a better job with making environmental policy to protect the country.*
 - ☐ *In some ways the federal government is stronger than the state governments.*
-

Notice that the first two examples were strong claims and the last two were not.

- ☐ *State governments should make environmental policy because they are more directly connected to the people.*
 - ☐ *The federal government is better at environmental policy because they have more capacity and resources to hire leading experts and regulators.*
 - ☒ ~~*Many people have spent a long time arguing about whether the state or the federal government does a better job with making environmental policy to protect the country.*~~
 - ☒ ~~*In some ways the federal government is stronger than the state governments.*~~
-

Now, let's really stretch our brains and see, whether we agree with it or not, if we can come up with a reason to support both claims.

This time, no matter what you believe, write a claim for **state governments**.

- ☐ **Claim/Argument** → Take a side (1 point)

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Pick a side “because” then say why → Say it!

State Government should be primarily responsible for environmental policy **because**



Give me a reason

Now, this time make a claim (even if you don’t really believe it) for **federal government**.

Federal Government should be primarily responsible for environmental policy **because**



Give me a reason

Now let’s look at the College Board scoring guidelines and see how your claim compares to the claims that earn a point from the College Board. Remember, you don’t have to write exactly the same claim as examples from the College Board, your claim just needs to have a similar structure and a strong reason to get a point.



College Board Scoring Guidelines*

Question 4: Argument Essay		6 points
Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Claim/Thesis (0-1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Responds to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
Responses that do not earn this point:		Responses that earn this point:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Only restate the prompt.Do not make a claim that responds to the prompt.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Respond to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt and establish a line of reasoning.Provide a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning about whether the federal government should be primarily responsible for managing environmental policy or if it should be the responsibility of the states.
Examples that do not earn this point:		Examples that earn this point:
Restate the prompt		<ul style="list-style-type: none">“State governments are better at making environmental policy because they are closer to the people.”“State governments can customize policy better because they act as laboratories of democracy.”
Do not respond to the prompt		<ul style="list-style-type: none">“The federal government is better at making environmental policy because environment issues in one state can impact other states.”“The federal government is better at making environmental policy because policy needs to be the same nationwide.”“The federal government is better at making environmental because the federal government has more resources (financial or institution).”
Additional Notes:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The claim or thesis must consist of one or more sentences that may be located anywhere in the response.A claim or thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning.		

Self-Check

☐ How did you do?

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- ☐ Did your claim about the federal government earn a point?
 - ☐ Did your claim about state government earn a point?
 - ☐ What did you learn about making claims?
-

Let's try again with another prompt:

1. At the Constitutional Convention, the Federalists and Anti-Federalists had different viewpoints about the scope and power of the national government. Take a position on whether the federal government is too powerful today.

Your claim:

Let's try again with one last prompt:

2. At the Constitutional Convention, a Bill of Rights was amended to the Constitution to guarantee personal liberty and freedom. Take a position on whether the Bill of Rights has succeeded at securing our liberty.

Your claim:

Okay. That was great.

Self-Check

- ☐ Take a second and reflect on what you learned from this exercise.
- ☐ Take a second to list any questions you have about making claims.
- ☐ Take a second to make a claim about making claims!

Yay. You're a claim-making GoPoPro! 🏆