

Listening and Note-taking Strategy #5

Listen for and note arguments

In an academic context, an “argument” does not consist of people fighting and calling each other names. (At least, we hope not!) Instead, an academic argument refers to making a *claim*, such as a thesis, and supporting it with *evidence*. Evidence may take the form of examples, research, data, observations, or other information. Speakers may also cite, or quote, another person or publication to support their claim.

Arguments may be presented in different ways:

Sometimes the claim comes first, which is then followed by the evidence.



Listen for cues like this to indicate that a claim is now being supported by evidence:

- “How do we know this? Well, ...”
- “There is some research to back this up...”
- “Let’s look at the evidence...”
- “This has been confirmed by several studies...”

Sometimes the evidence is presented first, ending with the claim:



Here are some cues that tell you a claim is coming next:

- “What can we infer from this?”
- “All of this points to one conclusion...”
- “This has led scientists to believe...”
- “This research suggests that...”



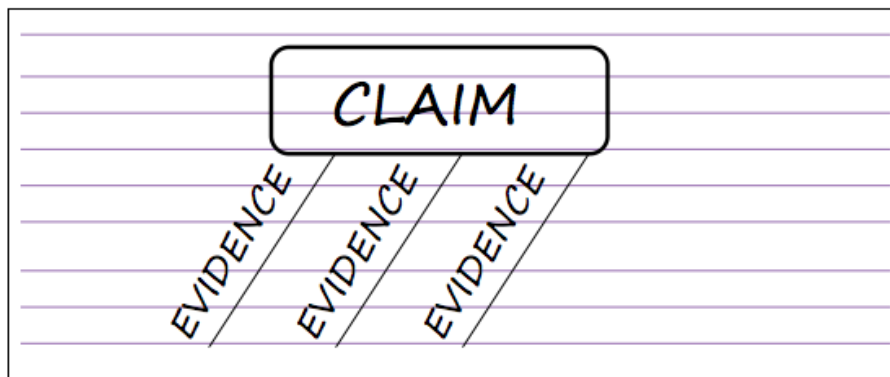
And at other times, the argument is more random and haphazard:



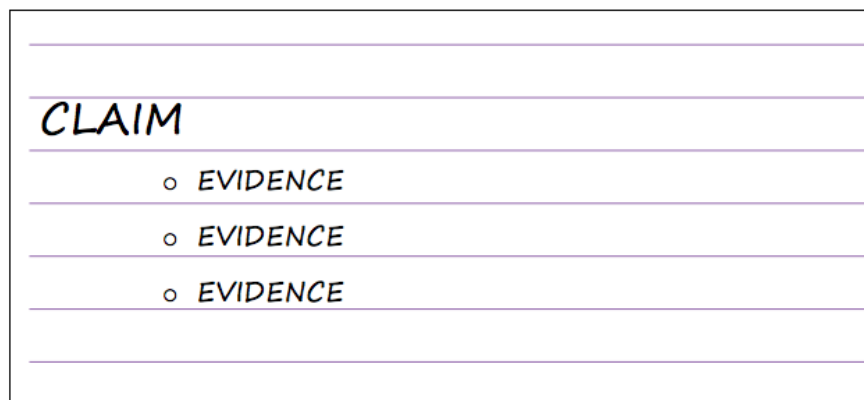
Because people are not always organized and linear when they speak, an argument might be a mix of pieces of evidence and the claim, repeated and rephrased often. In this case, listen for phrases like those above to help you understand the relationship between ideas as they are presented.

Taking notes on an argument

When you hear a speaker present an argument, be sure to write both the claim and any evidence in your notes. Some people prefer to make a visual representation of the argument:



But for others, just a list will suffice:



Practice taking notes on arguments so you can find your own personal note-taking style!



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