

HOW ARGUMENTS GROW FROM QUESTIONS

The argument in a research paper is different from the loud, nasty arguments between opponents that occur in the media. A research argument is like an amiable conversation in which you and your readers reason together to solve a problem. But those readers won't accept that solution until they hear a good case for it: good reasons, reliable evidence that grounds those reasons, and your responses to their reasonable questions and reservations.

Your argument can answer your readers' questions only if you can first imagine those readers asking those questions for you to answer. After all, each of us can believe what we want, for whatever reason we want, but we have no right to ask others to believe it unless we can give them good reasons to do so, reasons that make sense *from their point of view*.

This sounds challenging, but it's more familiar than you may think, because in fact you have that kind of conversation every day with your family, your friends, and your classmates.

As you build your argument, make sure you can answer these five questions:

1. What is your claim?
2. What reasons support it?
3. What evidence supports those reasons?
4. How do you respond to objections and alternative views?
5. How are your reasons relevant to your claim?