Cheat Sheet Module 9

Essential Concepts

Argumentative Essays

- **Argumentative essays make a clear, evidence-based claim.** These essays take a stance on a debatable issue and support it with facts, reasoning, and evidence rather than personal opinions or emotional appeals.
- **There are different types of arguments to suit different purposes.** Common approaches include causal (cause/effect), evaluation (judging based on criteria), proposal (suggesting solutions), narrative (story-based), rebuttal (refuting another view), and definition (arguing how something should be defined).
- **Strong thesis statements are specific and defensible.** A good argumentative thesis is debatable (open to disagreement), assertive (clearly takes a position), evidence-based (can be supported with facts), focused (narrow enough to be manageable), and reasonable (makes a logical, fair claim).

Logical Arguments

- **Arguments are structured with claims, premises, and conclusions.** A logical argument starts with a claim (what the writer wants to prove), supports it with premises (reasons or evidence), and arrives at a conclusion that logically follows. Recognizing this structure helps both in constructing and analyzing arguments.
- **Deductive and inductive reasoning serve different purposes.** Deductive reasoning begins with a general rule and applies it to a specific case to guarantee a conclusion, while inductive reasoning draws general conclusions from specific observations. Both are valuable, but inductive arguments only suggest likelihoods, not certainties.
- **Evaluating arguments means testing the truth and logic of premises.** Even a well-structured argument fails if its premises are untrue, biased, or based on unreliable sources. A good evaluation includes checking for relevance, sample size, credibility, and logical consistency.
- **Arguments can include hidden or unstated premises.** Writers often assume their audience shares certain beliefs, but those assumptions (like "natural means safe")

should be questioned. Identifying these suppressed premises is essential for fair and critical analysis.
- **Diagramming arguments clarifies logical relationships.** Outlining claims, premises, sub-conclusions, and how they connect can help assess an argument's strength and coherence. Paragraph structure can also reflect an argument's logic, with topic sentences often presenting key premises.

Rhetorical Appeals

- **Use logos to build a clear, logical argument supported by strong evidence (facts, statistics, data) and structured reasoning.** To be effective, your evidence must be sufficient, typical, accurate, and relevant (STAR), and your reasoning must avoid fallacies or manipulation.
- **Use pathos carefully to connect with your audience's emotions.** Emotional appeals can create empathy, engagement, or urgency, but they must be balanced with logic and evidence to maintain credibility. Overreliance on pathos or manipulation can weaken an argument.
- **Use ethos to establish your credibility and authority.** Build trust by showing your expertise, citing reliable sources, and treating opposing views fairly. Tone and professionalism also affect how believable you seem to your audience.
- **Kairos—the right timing—enhances all rhetorical appeals.** Even well-crafted logic or emotion can fail if it's poorly timed. Arguments are most persuasive when they respond to the current moment, showing awareness of social, historical, or cultural context.
- **Effective arguments balance logos, pathos, and ethos.** Persuasive writing draws on all three appeals in appropriate measure. Strong arguments use reason as a foundation, emotion to connect, and credibility to build trust.

Logical Fallacies

- **Know the difference between facts, opinions, and arguments.** A fact can be proven true or false, an opinion is a personal belief without evidence, and an argument combines a claim with reasoning and support. A strong argument turns an opinion into a persuasive point by backing it with relevant, logical evidence.
- **Logical fallacies weaken arguments by using flawed reasoning.** These fallacies often seem convincing but rely on errors like false assumptions, emotional manipulation, or misleading logic. Recognizing fallacies helps you think critically and avoid being misled.
- **Spotting fallacies strengthens your own writing and critical reading.** By identifying weak reasoning in sources—or your own drafts—you can revise arguments to be more logical, fair, and persuasive. Always question how claims are supported and whether the logic truly holds up.

Counterarguments

- **Strong arguments address opposing viewpoints.** Including a counterargument shows that you understand the full conversation around your topic. Even if you can't fully disprove opposing views, engaging with them lets you highlight their weaknesses or limitations while strengthening your own position.
- **Effective rebuttals require fairness, respect, and evidence.** Represent opposing perspectives accurately and respond with credible sources. Use a calm, respectful tone—attacking opponents or making exaggerated claims damages your credibility more than it strengthens your case.
- **Qualifying language adds nuance and flexibility.** Words like *most*, *some*, or *likely* help avoid overgeneralizations and make your argument harder to refute. Absolute claims are easier to disprove, so using qualifiers can protect your argument from being undermined.
- **Organizing rebuttals improves clarity and impact.** You can present counterarguments and rebuttals in a separate section (block method) or weave them into individual body paragraphs. Whether using a classical structure or Toulmin's schema, addressing objections in a structured way makes your argument more persuasive and complete.

Glossary

academic argument

   a thoughtful, evidence-based claim that takes a clear position on an issue or topic. Unlike a personal opinion or a summary of multiple perspectives, an argument makes a specific claim and supports it with logical reasoning, relevant evidence, and a consideration of opposing views

appeals to ethos

   a rhetorical strategy that builds credibility and trust by demonstrating the speaker's or writer's knowledge, character, and reliability

appeals to logos

   a rhetorical strategy that uses logic, evidence, and reasoning—such as facts, statistics, or data—to persuade an audience. Strong appeals to logos rely on clear arguments and valid reasoning

appeals to pathos

a rhetorical strategy that seeks to persuade by evoking emotions such as sympathy, anger, or excitement in the audience

argument diagramming

a method of visually mapping out an argument by identifying its conclusion and supporting premises. This helps clarify how reasons are connected to the main claim, often using indicator words to signal structure

argumentative essay

a type of academic writing that makes a clear claim about a topic and supports it with evidence and reasoning, often addressing and refuting opposing viewpoints

argumentative thesis statement

a clear sentence that expresses the writer's main claim and position in an argumentative essay. It must be debatable, assertive, reasonable, evidence-based, and focused

claim

a statement or opinion that expresses a position on a topic; it needs support to become a complete argument

conclusion

the main point of an argument that logically follows from the premises; it's the outcome the argument aims to prove

counterargument

an opposing viewpoint that challenges or disagrees with the writer's main claim

deductive reasoning

top-down reasoning; a method of reasoning in which a certain conclusion follows general premises

fact

a statement that can be proven true or false through evidence or observation

inductive reasoning

bottom-up reasoning; a method of reasoning in which several premises provide evidence of a probable conclusion

kairos

> a rhetorical appeal that emphasizes the importance of timing and context to make an argument most effective at a particular moment

logical argument

> a structured form of reasoning that supports a claim using evidence (premises) to reach a conclusion. it includes a clear main point (claim), supporting reasons (premises), and a logically connected outcome (conclusion)

logical fallacy

> a flaw in reasoning that weakens an argument, often caused by misleading connections, faulty logic, or unsupported assumptions

opinion

> a personal belief or judgment that cannot be proven and often reflects feelings, preferences, or interpretations

premise

> a reason or piece of evidence used to support a claim, often introduced by words like because, since, or as

rebuttal/refutation

> a response to a counterargument that challenges or disproves it, using evidence or reasoning to strengthen the original position

STAR criteria

> a method used to assess the strength and validity of logical arguments by examining their evidence. The four components are: sufficiency, typicality, accuracy, and relevance

Toulmin's Schema

> a model for analyzing and constructing arguments that includes six elements: a claim (the main point), data (supporting evidence), a warrant (the connection between data and claim), backing (support for the warrant), a rebuttal (an acknowledgment of exceptions or counterpoints), and a qualifier (a statement indicating the degree of certainty), with the first three considered essential and the latter three used as needed

unstated premise

> a hidden assumption in an argument that is not explicitly stated but is necessary for the argument to work; also called a suppressed or implicit premise