

CORE OF AN ARGUMENT = CLAIM + REASONS + EVIDENCE

When your teacher says that you must *make* an argument to support your answer, don't think of *having* an argument. Instead, imagine an intense yet amiable conversation with people who want to know the answer to your questions as much as you do. They don't want to hear about your opinions but about reasoned claims you can support. They want to know what reasons led you to your claim and what evidence makes you think those reasons are true. They'll expect you to consider their point of view and address any questions or concerns they might have.

To create an argument, you will have to answer the questions that any rational person would raise when asked to do or believe something new. Each answer corresponds to one of the parts of argument.

Claim: What's the answer to your question?

Once you raise your research question, readers naturally want to know the answer. That answer is what you claim and then support.

*Although many people think that black musical artists of the 1950s and 1960s were harmed when white performers "covered" black records by creating their own versions to sell to white audiences, I claim that the practice of racial covering actually helped the original artists more than it harmed them.*_{claim}

Reasons: Why should I believe that?

Unless your answer is obvious (and if it is, the question is probably not worth asking), readers will not accept it at face value. They'll want to know why they should accept your claim as true.

*Although . . . , I claim that the practice of racial covering actually helped the original artists more than it harmed them.*_{claim} *because without covers white teens would not have heard or bought the original recordings,*_{reason 1} *because covers gave white audiences a taste for blues, R&B, and gospel,*_{reason 2} *and because white teens then began to seek out the work of black performers.*_{reason 3}

Evidence: How do you know that?

Even when your reasons seem plausible, responsible readers won't accept them just because you said so. They expect you to ground each reason in the factual evidence you collect from sources.

*Although . . . , I claim that . . .*_{claim} *because . . .*_{reasons} *My evidence that white teens would not have heard or bought the original recordings is as follows: [sales statistics, information on record distribution and radio play, quotations from performers and producers at the time, etc.]*_{evidence for reason 1}