

## Toulmin's Model of Classical Argument

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According to Stephen Toulmin, a 20<sup>th</sup> Century philosopher, argumentation can be seen as two opposing points of view vying for support among members of a specific audience. In many cases, there may be only one person making an argument, but the counterargument(s) is always present in the mind of the orator and, more importantly, in the minds of the audience members.

### Toulmin's Five Parts of an Argument

#### 1. Claim with reason

The *claim with reason* is the primary argument the orator is trying to make and the reason he/she believes the claim is correct.

Example: *The death penalty is an effective tool of criminal justice, because it acts as a deterrent that keeps potential criminals from committing crimes.*

#### 2. Grounds

The *grounds* are made up of the pieces of evidence an orator uses to support his/her claim with reason.

Example: *Psychologists estimate that 35% of would-be violent criminals do not commit a crime because they are afraid of getting caught and punished by state and federal law enforcement.*

#### 3. Warrant\*

The *warrant* is the underlying (and often unstated) assumption that supports the claim and grounds. This is often the sticking point of most disagreements, no matter how strong the evidence is on either side of the argument.

Example: *It is justified to kill violent criminals.*

#### 4. Backing\*

The *backing* is the evidence that is required to support and/or prove the warrant. Some arguments that rely upon a debatable warrant include a persuasive discussion of the backing; others that have a warrant that is generally agreed upon do not need to include backing because the warrant is a given.

Example: *Violent criminals do not respect life; therefore, we need not respect theirs. or Civil society is built on the premise that a person's punishment should be equal to his/her crime; therefore, if a man takes another's life, the state has the right to take his.*

#### 5. Rebuttal

The *rebuttal* is the point at which an orator anticipates his opponent's counterargument. Counterarguments are often built around disagreements about the warrant and/or backing, because it is difficult to argue against pieces of scientific evidence.

Example: *Some may say a state that kills its citizens is inhumane, but we must consider the consequences of not punishing a criminal who takes another's life. Sparing the life of a murderer sends the message that murder is okay, that we are soft on crime, and that the life of a criminal is just as important as a law-abiding citizen.*