

Argument - Tutor Hints

An *argument* doesn't always involve screaming and throwing things. In reading, an *argument* makes a point and then provides persuasive and logical evidence to back it up. Each person advances and supports his or her point of view about something.

On a test you may be asked to

1. recognize the point (the main idea) of the argument.
2. decide if the author's support is *relevant*.
3. decide if the author's support is *adequate*.

Relevant support - Does it apply to the point? Sometimes an author may try to back up his argument with information that comes from some other unrelated subject. You should be able to tell if his or her *details* actually support the *main idea* or not.

Hint: If it sounds right to insert the word **because** in front of a *supporting detail*, you probably have a statement of relevant support.

Adequate support - Is there enough support to prove the point? Is the support strong enough, that is, is it based on data, findings, or relevant expert opinions? Or is the author trying unsuccessfully to back up the argument with his own opinions, vague predictions, generalizations, or guesses? Watch for weak supporting words such "can," "might," "could," or "may."

Example: Which argument provides better support? Why?

Argument #1: You shouldn't go outside because you may get struck by lightning.

Argument #2: You shouldn't go outside because 3 people have been killed by lightning in the past hour.

Practice:

- *What is the point (main idea) of each argument?
- *Which sentences provide support relevant? Why or why not?
- *Which sentences do not provide relevant support? Why or why not?
- *Was the support adequate?

1. ¹It is hazardous and dangerous to drink and drive. ²For one thing, alcohol impairs judgment. ³Yours and your passengers' safety is at risk. ⁴It also gives you bad breath which might offend your friends. ⁵Other drivers on the road are in danger when a drunk driver is on the road. ⁶Drinking alcohol in excess may induce vomiting, and can cause a severe headache in the morning. ⁷People die every day in accidents involving a drunk driver.

2. ¹All public libraries should hold "amnesty days," which are days on which overdue books may be returned without paying a fine. ²When our community's library had an amnesty week, it received over 2,500 books that might never have recovered otherwise. ³One of these books had been kept for over fifteen years. ⁴But amnesty days aren't exactly fair to those library patrons who return their books on time or pay their fines responsibly.

Answers:

1. Main Idea - ¹It is hazardous to drink and drive.

Relevant Support Sentences - #2, 3, 5, 7.

Not relevant support - #4, 6

2. Main Idea - Sentence #1

Relevant Support Sentences - #2, 3

Not relevant support - #4