

## 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, in which everyone battles for their position and no one changes their minds. Instead, imagine an intense yet amiable conversation with people who want to find a good answer to your question as much or even more than you do. They don't want unsubstantiated opinions; they want claims you can support with reasons, and they want the evidence that makes you think your reasons are true. As in a conversation, they will also expect you to consider their points of view and to address any questions or concerns they might have. And they'll expect you to be forthcoming about any gaps in your argument or limitations in your evidence. In short, they want you to work *with* them to achieve the best available answer, not for all time but for now.

You can think of the parts of your argument as answers to different sorts of questions readers might ask. If you can imagine these questions, you can write your argument.

**Claim: *What's the answer to your question?*** Once you raise your research question, readers naturally want to know the answer. We call this answer your claim because it is a statement that you are claiming to be true. Papers can have many claims running through them. A paper's main claim is also called its *thesis*.

Although some people still believe that early education should focus only on reading, writing, and math, elementary schools should actually make teaching languages other than English a priority.<sup>claim</sup>

**Reasons: *Why should I believe that?*** Unless your answer is obvious (in which case, the question was 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 . . . , elementary schools should actually make teaching languages other than English a priority<sup>claim</sup> because we acquire languages best and most easily when we are young,<sup>reason 1</sup> because those who begin second languages as adults rarely attain fluency,<sup>reason 2</sup> and because language instruction fosters an awareness of cultures and societies beyond one's own.<sup>reason 3</sup>

**Evidence: *How do you know that?*** Even when your reasons seem plausible, responsible readers won't accept them just on your say-so. They expect you to base each reason on data you've discovered through your research. These data are your evidence.

Although . . . , elementary schools should actually make teaching languages other than English a priority<sup>claim</sup> because . . .<sup>reasons</sup> Studies of childhood language acquisition show that . . .<sup>evidence for reason 1</sup>