

Argumentation

Argumentation is the process by which you steer anyone listening from what they initially think or believe to what you want them to think or believe; in short, it is persuasion through the use of evidence, reason, and logic. Argumentation, along with interaction between the speakers, is what debating is really about. Without these, you just have a bunch of people talking in a room.

Entire libraries have been written on argumentation; this is not the place to repeat all that has been said. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a basic outline of what an argument is and how it works, as well as what makes arguments effective.

What Do We Mean by an Argument?

When most people refer to an argument, they're referring to a heated conversation between individuals or a disagreement between countries or political parties. Debaters define the term differently and more specifically. An argument is a line of reasoning—a series of logically connected statements—that persuades listeners that, if something they accept about the world currently is true, then the speaker's claim about how the world should be must also be true. Debaters refer to distinct lines of reasoning within the speech as separate arguments; "I liked her argument on the UN providing legitimacy for the intervention, but the argument on democratic justification needed more evidence." Usually a speech will contain more than one argument; taken together, a series of arguments offered by speakers on a team are the case in support of their side of a motion.