

What Is an Academic Argument?

According to Stanford writing professor Andrea Lunsford, everything is an argument! Everything from tweets, film, songs, speeches, reviews, text messages, billboard broadsides, t-shirts, and hairstyles seeks to convince an audience of a particular message.

Written arguments differ from everyday, informal verbal fisticuffs. Arguments in academic contexts always begin from specific issue questions. Writers use arguments to explore various ideological positions of other writers and critics in the public sphere in response to the social and political concerns of audiences. Arguments work to justify specific claims with strong logical reasoning and persuasive appeals to an audience's sense of strong character, social values, and deeply held beliefs. In academic essays, thesis statements combine persuasive claims and sound logical reasoning and aim to convince an audience to change their perspective or actions towards a particular issue.

1. Read Gordon Harvey's [A Brief Guide to the Elements of the Academic Essay](#).
2. Watch philosopher [Daniel H. Cohen's TED Talk, "For Argument's Sake."](#)
 - Take notes on the author's main message. Identify what kind of examples he uses to support that message.
 - Identify the three kinds of arguments Daniel explains.
 - Consider which of the three is the best kind of argument for the upcoming assignment.