Argument Paper

- Argumentation is a well-organized, reasoned method, by which one declares his or her position, belief, or conclusion to be logically sound.
- Argumentation involves taking a stand on an issue and giving evidence to support the proposed point of view.

**Some Purposes of Argumentation:**
- The primary purpose of argumentation is not to persuade an audience act, but rather to demonstrate effectively the validity (or invalidity) of an idea.
- Another purpose is to defend the given position as feasible, even if others are not convinced.
- An argument paper may be aimed to question or refute an opposing position.

**Points to Remember:**
- A good argumentation paper appeals primarily to reason, employing a logical chain of rationale to lead the reader to a particular conclusion.
- An argumentation paper must provide evidence to support its claims.
- Strong argumentation papers also refute opposing arguments.
- Sometimes an appeal to emotions or ethics may be appropriate, but these should only reinforce the logic of an argument, not take the place of it.
- The strongest point should go first, and then the weaker points should follow in order from strongest to weakest.

**The Two Main Forms of Argumentation**

There are two primary types of argumentation used to move from evidence to a conclusion.

1. **DEDUCTIVE REASONING**

Deductive reasoning proceeds from a general principle or assumption to a specific conclusion.
- This kind of reasoning uses an “if-if-then” format:

  - **Major premise:** If: General statement or assumption
  - **Minor premise:** If: A related, but more specific statement.
  - **Conclusion:** Then: Must be drawn from the two premises.

- For example:
  - **Major premise:** If: Racism should not be tolerated.
  - **Minor premise:** If: The current admission policy at Jones University is racist.
  - **Conclusion:** Then: Therefore, the policy should not be tolerated.
If both premises are true, then so is the conclusion. If either of the premises is false, then the conclusion will also be false, even if the reasoning is sound. In the following example, the reasoning is logical, but the conclusion is false because the major premise is false:

**Major premise:** All cats are white.

**Minor premise:** My pet, Queenie, is a cat.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, Queenie is white.

If the audience can be convinced to accept both premises, and if the conclusion follows them, then the flow of logic should convince the audience to accept the conclusion as logical. Therefore, try to select premises that can be well-supported. Otherwise, inductive reasoning should be used.

## 2. INDUCTIVE REASONING

Inductive reasoning proceeds from individual observations to a more specific, probable conclusion. This kind of reasoning uses no strict form.

- All relevant evidence must be stated, and the conclusion drawn should fit the evidence better than any other conclusion.
- First, decide on a question to be answered.
- Gather all evidence relevant to the question and the answer.
- Move from evidence to a conclusion by making an educated guess based on the evidence at hand.
- The more information gathered, the smaller the gap between the evidence and the conclusion.
- A conclusion’s probability is increased by the amount of evidence presented. To avoid reaching a false conclusion, try to consider possible conclusions and choose the one that best fits the evidence.

An example of inductive reasoning:

**Question:** Who stole the cash from my bedroom dresser drawer?

**Evidence:**
1. The money was there before I left for work, but not when I came home.
2. There was no sign of forced entry into the house.
3. My brother, John, was home for lunch (he left the milk out on the counter), but he was gone when I arrived home in the evening.
4. No one else is home during the day.
5. John complained to Mom that he wanted his allowance early, but she refused to give it to him.
7. His new shoes cost about the same amount of money that I am missing.

**Conclusion:** My brother stole the money from my drawer and used it to buy new shoes.