

The Classical Argument Model

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about one of the many models of argumentation, and how you can use this model to structure a persuasive essay. You will continue building on your communication skill as you explore how to effectively persuade others through writing. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. The Classical Argument Model

There are several different models for constructing persuasive arguments that are recognized in the field of composition. The point of learning models of argumentation is to give beginning writers options to consider during the stages of the writing process. Writers who are familiar with multiple argumentation models can select the one they believe is best suited to construct an argument on a specific subject and purpose.

For the purpose of this course, we will focus on one model: the **classical argument model**. The classical argument model was designed by the ancient Greek rhetorician and philosopher, Aristotle; it is one of the oldest systems of argumentation. This model is primarily designed to persuade readers to take an action or to share a writer's perspective.

Since the classical model was created when arguments were made in speeches, it emphasizes the use of the three rhetorical appeals known by their Greek names:

- Logos, an appeal to logic or reasoning
- Ethos, an appeal to ethics or credibility
- Pathos, an appeal to emotion



TERM TO KNOW

Classical Argument Model

A methodology for structuring arguments designed by Aristotle to persuade an audience to take an action or share a writer's perspective.

2. Using the Classical Model

An argument built on the classical model consists of five components:

1. **Introduction:** The introduction must be engaging and interesting.
2. **Background:** This is the necessary background information regarding the thesis.
3. **Claims:** These are arguments asserted with force and clarity. This section comprises most of the essay.
4. **Counterarguments:** These address and refute opposing or alternative viewpoints, whether they exist or are viewed by the writer as having the potential to exist.
5. **Conclusion:** This final component must conclude the argument in a way that is satisfying and that clearly identifies what is at stake in the broader context. Traditionally, the conclusion addressed a call to action to the audience, though this is no longer a requirement of the classical model.

There are many reasons why modern writers choose the classical model to structure their work. One of the main reasons is that the classical model is familiar to those who learned (and used) it as students. The classical model is also a good choice for timed writing (e.g., when answering essay questions on tests) because of its simplicity and compatibility with the five-paragraph essay model.



Communication: Skill Tip

Effective communication relies on conveying ideas in an intelligent manner that makes sense to the audience. If a speaker is unorganized in their message, the audience could be confused and is unlikely to be persuaded by the message. By following the Classical Model, your argument follows a logical progression, strengthening your communication skill.

Writers often choose the classical model when their primary goal is persuasion, and because counterarguments can be effectively addressed using this model.



HINT

One reason *not* to choose the classical model is its simple structure. Although it confers advantages in some situations, writers who want to thoroughly develop a complex or detailed argument may be limited by this model. However, the classical model remains a good form of argumentation to understand and apply when appropriate.

3. The Classical Model in Action

Following is an outline of an essay that was constructed according to the classical model:

Topic: *Offering Child Care in the Workplace*

Working thesis: *Our company should offer an on-site daycare service for our employees who are also parents.*

Introduction: *According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), over eighty-percent of families had at least one working parent. In addition, the organization reports that, "Among married-couple families with children, 97.5 percent had at least one employed parent in 2019, and 64.2 percent had both parents*

employed” (2020). It follows to reason, then, that childcare for these families is both a major expense and a major concern. Even among school-age children, parents may need to find childcare during school holidays, teacher workdays, snow days, or days when the child is otherwise unable to go to school.

Background:

- 1. Additional information and statistics about the growing number of working parents*
- 2. Estimates on the costs of childcare*
- 3. Limited supply of quality/accredited childcare agencies; numbers of people on waitlist.*

Claims:

- 1. Having childcare on-site would reduce the number of employee absences. According to HR, thirty-five percent of employees cited a child-care issue as a reason for an absence.*
- 2. Having childcare on-site would increase employee morale.*
- 3. This program would make our company a more attractive place to work. Neither of our competitors offers this service to employees.*

Counterarguments:

- 1. Such a program would be too expensive — Yes, there will be costs, but there are some ideas to mitigate the expense. We will also increase productivity since parents won’t have to take off as many days when childcare plans fall through.*
- 2. This is not the company’s problem — Perhaps not, but caring about the morale and well-being of employees makes us an attractive employer. We can attract more talented people with this service.*
- 3. The company may face additional liability — There are models and precedents we can look into for this possibility. There are also release forms we can put into place.*

Conclusion: *Though offering this service will require an initial investment, the long-lasting benefits to having child care on-site far outweigh this expense. In addition, there are ways to reduce the costs. Quantitative and qualitative research all supports offering child care program as a positive and influential change for our company.*

Begin by evaluating the topic of offering child care in the workplace. The working thesis states that the company should offer this program. The draft outline has been divided into sections according to the classical model, beginning with an introduction that focuses on capturing readers' interest as well as introducing the subject.

According to the model, the next section (background) must provide all of the information that the audience will need to understand the argument. The essay will use research from reputable sources to explain the need and demand for childcare.

The background is followed by a section on claims. In it, the writer will argue that implementing this program will benefit the company by saving money and attracting talented professionals to the company.

The next section in the model is for counterarguments. The sample outline considers several counterarguments, including the assertion that a program like this would be too expensive. The outline's response to this argument is that costs will be offset by a small charge to participate in the program. It will also save the company money people won't miss work. The next counterargument refutes that this is not the

company's problem, because doing so would make them stand out amongst competitors. Finally, the company could be concerned about liability, but the paper will offer examples, case studies, and laws to show how the company can be protected.

The last section specified by the model is the conclusion. In this example, Like many classically-modeled arguments, it ends with a call to action: The company should implement the program.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned one of the most popular models of argumentation: **the classical argument model**, which was designed by Aristotle and relies on rhetorical appeals to convince the audience to share the writer's view. **Using the classical model** involves developing five components: an introduction, background information, claims, counterarguments, and a conclusion. You also looked at an example of the **classical model in action** to see how an argument can come together in an essay through each of the model's required components. Finally, you explored the importance of an organized message in conveying effective communication.

Best of luck in your learning!

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