

Arguments of Fact

- ★ Factual arguments attempt to establish whether something is or is not so.
- ★ Facts become arguments when they're controversial in themselves or when they're used to challenge or change people's beliefs.
- ★ Arguments of fact report on what has been recently discovered or explore the implications of that new information and the conflicts it may engender.

Arguments of Fact

Purpose: Various publics, national or local, need well-reasoned factual arguments on subjects to make well-informed decisions. Such arguments educate audiences.

- ★ In addition, we need factual arguments that correct or challenge beliefs and assumptions that are held widely within a society on the basis of inadequate or incomplete information.
- ★ Factual arguments address broad questions about the history or myths that societies want to believe about themselves.

- ★ These arguments broaden readers' perspectives and help them make judgments on the basis of better information.

To Characterize a Factual Argument...

...Look more closely at some phenomenon or behavior, and explore questions such as *What if?* or *How come?*



Such observations can lead quickly toward **hypotheses**--that is, toward tentative and plausible statements of fact whose merits need to be examined more closely.

Writers then have to uncover evidence to support the hypothesis.

★ Factual arguments try to rely on **hard evidence** (quotations from interviews, news photos, videos, etc.).

Sample Factual Arguments: See pages 217-218

Any factual argument that you might compose--from how you state your claim to how you present evidence and the language you use--will be shaped by the occasion for the argument and the audiences that you intend to reach.

General Advice for Developing the Factual Argument

- 1) **Identify an Issue:** You want to be careful not to argue matters that pose no challenge to you or your audiences. You're not offering anything new if you try to persuade readers that smoking is harmful to their health.
- 2) **Research your Hypothesis:** Whenever possible, go to *primary sources*.

General Advice for Developing the Factual Argument

- 3) **Refine your Claim:** As you learn more about your subject, revise your hypothesis to reflect what you've discovered. You can make more reasonable claims by including *qualifiers*.
- 4) **Decide which Evidence to Use**
- 5) **Present your Data to match Subject & Audience**

Arguments of Definition

- ★ Definitions matter. Definitions matter because they are, in fact, arguments that define the concepts by which we live and operate.
- ★ A term can be defined in many ways--by what it is, by what it isn't, by what it includes, by specific examples, by what authorities (such as Mark Twain) observe, and by feelings.
- ★ These arguments can include or exclude; think of what falls between *is* and *is not* in a definitional claim.

--How would you define *intelligence*?

★ It is possible to disagree with dictionary definitions or to regard them merely as starting points for arguments.

Kinds of Definition:

Formal These are what you find in dictionaries. Many arguments involve deciding whether an object meets the criteria set by a formal definition. *Challenge formal definitions!*

Kinds of Definition:

Operational These identify an object or idea by what it does or by what conditions create it. For example, *Is murder ever justified?* Arguments arise from operations definitions whenever people disagree about what the **conditions** define or whether these conditions have been fulfilled. (See pg. 258)

Example These define a class by listing its individual members. Arguments of this sort focus on who or what may be included in a list that defines a category. For example, *What products should be listed under Smart Phones? What movies are considered Classics?*

General Advice for Developing the Definitional Argument

- 1) **Formulate a Claim:** These do not become arguments until they are attached to reasons, data, **warrants**, and evidence.
- 2) **Craft a Definition:** This will be *crucial* to the shape of your argument! Analyze your own diction. You can't just offer up a definition as part of your argument and assume that readers will understand or accept it. Every part of the definition has to be weighed, critiqued, and defended.
- 3) **Match Claims to Definitions:** Revisit your subject to see if it fits your definition; it's possible that you may have to revise your claim.
- 4) **Present your Data to Match Subject & Audience**