

ARE: 3 Parts of an Argument

There is a difference between an opinion and an argument. An opinion is an expression of preference; it does not require any support (although it is stronger *with* support). An opinion is only the first part of an argument. Argument consists of assertions, reasoning, evidence.

Three Parts of an Argument: A-R-E

A- Assertion (statement or claim)

R- Reasoning (elaboration and explanation)

E- Evidence (support and used to help prove and show)

To be complete, arguments should have three parts: an assertion, reasoning and evidence (easily remembered with the mnemonic ARE).

An **ASSERTION** is usually a simple statement, such as “Homework is a waste of time,” “Television news is boring,” or “Tomato soup is better than grilled cheese sandwiches.” An assertion is the thesis statement or the main point of an argument.

REASONING is the “because” part of an argument, as in the following examples:

- “Homework is a waste of time because it takes time away from other activities that are more important.”
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- “Television news is boring because it doesn’t talk about issues that are relevant to me.”
- “Tomato soup is better than a grilled cheese sandwich because it is more nutritious.”

Reasoning can be simple or complex, but when working with students who are new to this process, the most important things to emphasize are the use of the word “because” as a cue and the need to connect the statement and the reasoning.

Just as reasoning supports an assertion, **EVIDENCE** supports reasoning. There are many different kinds of evidence, ranging from expert testimony or statistics to historical or contemporary examples.

- “Homework is a waste of time because it takes time away from other activities that are more important. For example, we end up doing worksheets of math problems instead of getting outside and getting fresh air and exercise.”
- “Television news is boring because it doesn’t talk about issues that are relevant to me. For example, I never see stories about the issues that kids deal with every day.”
- “Tomato soup is better than a grilled cheese sandwich because it is more nutritious. For example, tomato soup contains important vitamins such as lycopene, while grilled cheese sandwiches really don’t have that much nutritional value at all.”