

## Academic Arguments

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Outside of academia, the word “argument” has a clear meaning. You may think of a fight between friends or something very tense and emotionally charged. In academia, the word “argument” can reference ideas caught in heated debate with a lot of back and forth between opponents, or the word can reference something much more subtle, like simply making a claim. Most of the time in academia, the word “argument” will mean making a claim. Much of the difficulty in writing argumentative papers comes from making your claim (called a thesis) and supporting that thesis. In order to fully support your thesis, you must have two things: evidence and your analysis of the evidence.

### Evidence

When you defend your argument, you must provide evidence that supports your thesis. This will vary based on your paper and genre, but evidence can come in the forms of:

- Textual evidence from a piece of writing
- Visual evidence from a video or artwork
- Audio evidence from a video, song, or lecture

The examples listed above are not the only kinds of evidence you can provide, but they are the most common. Keep in mind, providing evidence is not enough. Once you give evidence that supports your claim, you must analyze it in a way that will show your thesis is a potential option for the audience to consider.

### Analysis of the Evidence

Analyzing evidence is the tie that binds your thesis to the evidence you provide. Imagine your thesis is something like:

*Shakespeare believes dreams reveal our true desires in life by unveiling our subconscious.*

The thesis makes a claim. Now, our reader would ask us, how do you know this to be true? Therefore, our next step is providing evidence that supports our argument.

*In his tragedy “The Dust Mites”, Shakespeare alludes to dreams as the main character’s true desire to be queen.*

In the example above, we used the non-existent tragedy of *The Dust Mites* to support our argument. At this point, we know the evidence links back to the argument, but now we have to show how the evidence relates to Shakespeare believing dreams reveal our true desires. Think of it this way: the evidence supports our argument, and the evidence analysis supports our evidence. With support in mind, here is how we can analyze the evidence:

*Throughout the story, Shakespeare gives multiple examples of the main character purposefully taking potions to sleep, to dream. The only way the main character can find her path is through sleep. In sleep, the main character’s subconscious mind shows her what she must do to meet her destiny.*

If you ever have doubts about how your evidence and analysis support, ask a friend or a Writing Center tutor to read your paper. Outside audiences are good ways to test your arguments for clarity, coherence, and evidence support. To set an appointment with a Writing Center tutor, contact us:

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