



Foldering

In supporting your position on a debatable issue you will most often make multiple arguments. Most instances of academic argumentation require the writer or speaker to produce more than one reason that their position is valid; it's only in small assignments, typically, that you make a single argument to express your view or interpretation or conclusion. In organizing your thinking about and analysis of a text or a set of documents or a data set, you can put your ideas and evidence into separate categories or “folders,” related to the separate kinds of arguments you might make. We call this portion of the argument building and preparation process “foldering.”

The metaphor – and it is often a metaphor, though it can also be done literally – comes from the process of separating information or documents into folders, on Google Drive, for instance, or on one's computer or even (as was the norm in the past) in file folders inside a filing cabinet. To make a close comparison, Document-Based Questions in history and social science often use the term “bucketing” for organizing the categories or types of evidence that can be gleaned from documents pertaining to a historical or social issue.

The metaphor of the foldering should help you think of the process of putting like or similar evidence and ideas together – of grouping or combining them – as you organize your thinking and process the textual backing you find for your overall interpretive position. Folders are not themselves argumentative claims, though they help move you along toward formulating finished claims that are directly supported by the best of your textual evidence in each one that you choose to use.