

Key Components of Academic Argument

Summary (“They Say”)

- Argument-centered instruction involves summarizing views from two sources: (a) opponent debaters, and (b) text, used for evidence in the structured argumentation
- Summary requires careful and close listening and reading
- Key criteria: accuracy, concision, and relevancy to argumentation and refutation

Argumentative Claims (“I Say”)

- All student expression formatted as argumentation
- Secondary arguments organized by overall position
- Models and templates evolve into independent thinking
- Key criteria: clarity, focus, directedness, organization

Evidence/Reasoning

- Every argument must be supported by evidence
- Reasoning explains how the evidence proves the argumentative claim
- Textual evidence is the focus of rebuttals and refutation
- Key criteria: precise alignment with claim, credibility, sufficiency, strength of reasoning

Refutation

- An argument unanswered is conceded – “silence = assent”
- Formal note-taking (“flowing”) is crucial
- Refutation is the locus of critical thinking
- Key criteria: responsiveness, comprehensiveness, depth of thinking, level of difficulty

Evaluation

- Rebuttals or closing statements must resolve or reconcile the contradictions in favor of the speaker’s position
- Key criteria: framing, narrative accounting, evidence-basis, argument closure