



ARGUING CONSTRUCTIVELY

Participant Guide



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Introduction

Welcome to the “Arguing Constructively to Win” workshop. Persuasion and arguing controversial issues can be very stimulating, challenging, and constructive once you get the hang of it. Because interest and enjoyment is so high in such situations, we could conclude that there are few more rewarding ways of interacting with people. Contrasted with these pleasant experiences are encounters which we would like to forget. All of us have probably participated in arguments which resulted in hurt feelings, anger, frustration, confusion, embarrassment, and even damaged or broken relationships. Such experiences may have led us to conclude that arguing is a destructive form of communication which should be avoided. Some people seem to go to almost any length to avoid a potential argument.

Workshop Objectives

By the end of this workshop you will be able to:

- Define argumentativeness
- Explain the effects of verbal aggression
- Explain the benefits of effective argument
- Explain the Inventional System
- Analyze your adversary
- Invent and present an argument

ARGUMENTATIVENESS SCALE

The argumentativeness scale is designed to measure the degree to which an individual presents and defends positions on controversial issues while simultaneously attacking the positions which other people take on issues. This concept is similar to that of tolerance for disagreement. People with a high tolerance for disagreement are likely to be more argumentative than those people who are low in tolerance for disagreement.

INSTRUCTIONS:

This questionnaire contains statements about arguing controversial issues. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally by placing the appropriate number in the blank to the left of the statement.

5	4	3	2	1
Almost always true	Often true	Occasionally true	Rarely true	Almost never true

- _____ 1. While in an argument, I worry that the person I am arguing with will form a negative impression of me.
- _____ 2. Arguing over controversial issues improves my intelligence.
- _____ 3. I enjoy avoiding arguments.
- _____ 4. I am energetic and enthusiastic when I argue.
- _____ 5. Once I finish an argument I promise myself that I will not get into another.
- _____ 6. Arguing with a person creates more problems for me than it solves.
- _____ 7. I have a pleasant, good feeling when I win a point in an argument.
- _____ 8. When I finish arguing with someone I feel nervous and upset.
- _____ 9. I enjoy a good argument over a controversial issue.
- _____ 10. I get an unpleasant feeling when I realize I am about to get into an argument
- _____ 11. I enjoy defending my point of view on an issue.
- _____ 12. I am happy when I keep an argument from happening.
- _____ 13. I do not like to miss the opportunity to argue a controversial issue.
- _____ 14. I prefer being with people who rarely disagree with me.
- _____ 15. I consider an argument an exciting intellectual challenge.
- _____ 16. I find myself unable to think of effective points during an argument.
- _____ 17. I feel refreshed and satisfied after an argument on a controversial issue.
- _____ 18. I have the ability to do well in an argument.
- _____ 19. I try to avoid getting into arguments.
- _____ 20. I feel excitement when I expect that a conversation I am in is leading to an argument.

Infante, D.A. & Rancer, A.S. (1982). A conceptualization and measure of argumentativeness. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 46, 72-80.

VERBAL AGGRESSIVENESS SCALE

This survey is concerned with how we try to get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally when you try to influence other persons. Use the following scale:

5	4	3	2	1
Almost always true	Often true	Occasionally true	Rarely true	Almost never true

- _____ 1. I am extremely careful to avoid attacking individual's intelligence when I attack their ideas.
- _____ 2. When individuals are very stubborn, I use insults to soften the stubbornness.
- _____ 3. I try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when I try to influence them.
- _____ 4. When people refuse to do a task I know is important, without good reason, I tell them they are unreasonable.
- _____ 5. When others do things I regard as stupid, I try to be extremely gentle with them.
- _____ 6. If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character.
- _____ 7. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, I insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.
- _____ 8. I try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.
- _____ 9. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance I lose my temper and say rather strong things to them.
- _____ 10. When people criticize my shortcomings, I take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them.
- _____ 11. When individuals insult me, I get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.
- _____ 12. When I dislike individuals greatly, I try not to show it in what I say or how I say it.
- _____ 13. I like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.
- _____ 14. When I attack a person's ideas, I try not to damage their self-concepts.
- _____ 15. When I try to influence people, I make a great effort not to offend them.
- _____ 16. When people do things which are mean or cruel, I attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.
- _____ 17. I refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.
- _____ 18. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, I yell and scream order to get some movement from them.
- _____ 19. When I am not able to refute others' positions, I try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.
- _____ 20. When an argument shifts to personal attacks, I try very hard to change the subject.

Infante, D.A. & Wigley, C.J. (1986) Verbal aggressiveness: An interpersonal model and measure. *Communication Monographs*, 53, 61-69

The Inventional System

The system is simply a process by which we can invent our argument and present it logically and persuasively. This system is based on two concepts...

1. Showing there is a need to change the status quo
2. Showing that your proposal will satisfy the need

Peanut Butter Soda Crackers

Major issues: PBSC

Sub Issues:

Problem:

1. What are the signs of the problem?
2. What is the specific harm?
3. How widespread is the harm?

Blame:

1. What causes the problem?
2. Is the present system at fault?
3. Should the present system be changed?

Solution:

1. What are the possible solutions?
2. Which solution best solves the problem?

Consequences:

1. What good outcomes will result from the solution?
2. What bad outcomes will result from the solution?

This system will enable you to have something relevant, and hopefully, intelligent to say on most of the topics you ever encounter. The 4 major issues and their sub-issues are general and can be applied to any topic or proposal.

These questions focus around the idea of problem-solution. Also, if you're able to answer all of these questions for a given proposal which is argued, you can have some confidence that you have reasonably covered the topic. A good system of analysis reduces the chances that you will miss something of importance.

Argument Editorial Activity

Review your editorial article and go through the following questions, discussing the questions within your group. Select a spokesperson to present your answers.

1. What major issues did the writer attempt to cover?

2. Which sub-issues were discussed?

3. Which issues, that were not covered, should have been discussed? Why?

4. Of the issues dealt with, which were argued most convincingly?

5. Which were the least convincing?

6. What could the writer have presented to improve his/her argument?

1.

Position Statements

A position statement is like a thesis or goal. It describes one side of an arguable viewpoint.

Topic:	School uniforms
Arguable Viewpoints:	For/against school uniforms For/against a stricter dress code Against any dress code

To write a position statement, gather a list of reasons to support a particular viewpoint.

Viewpoint:	For school uniforms
Supporting Reasons:	Ensure equality Save money Help schools identify visitors

Viewpoint:	Against school uniforms
Supporting Reasons:	Eliminate freedom of expression Cause teachers to waste time Are too expensive to buy and maintain

Next, write a sentence or two that pulls all the information together and makes your stand clear to the audience.

Examples:	A uniform policy will ensure true equality in schools, save families money, and help schools identify visitors easily.
	Uniforms would cause more problems in a school than they would solve. They eliminate freedom of expression, cause teachers to waste time, and are too expensive.

Position Statements Worksheet

A position statement is like a thesis or goal. It describes one side of an arguable viewpoint.

Topic:	DOH Uniforms
Arguable Viewpoints:	

To write a position statement, gather a list of reasons to support a particular viewpoint.

Viewpoint:	
Supporting Reasons:	

Viewpoint:	
Supporting Reasons:	

Next, write a sentence or two that pulls all the information together and makes your stand clear to the audience.

Examples:	

Argument Prompts and Supporting Statements

Prompts:

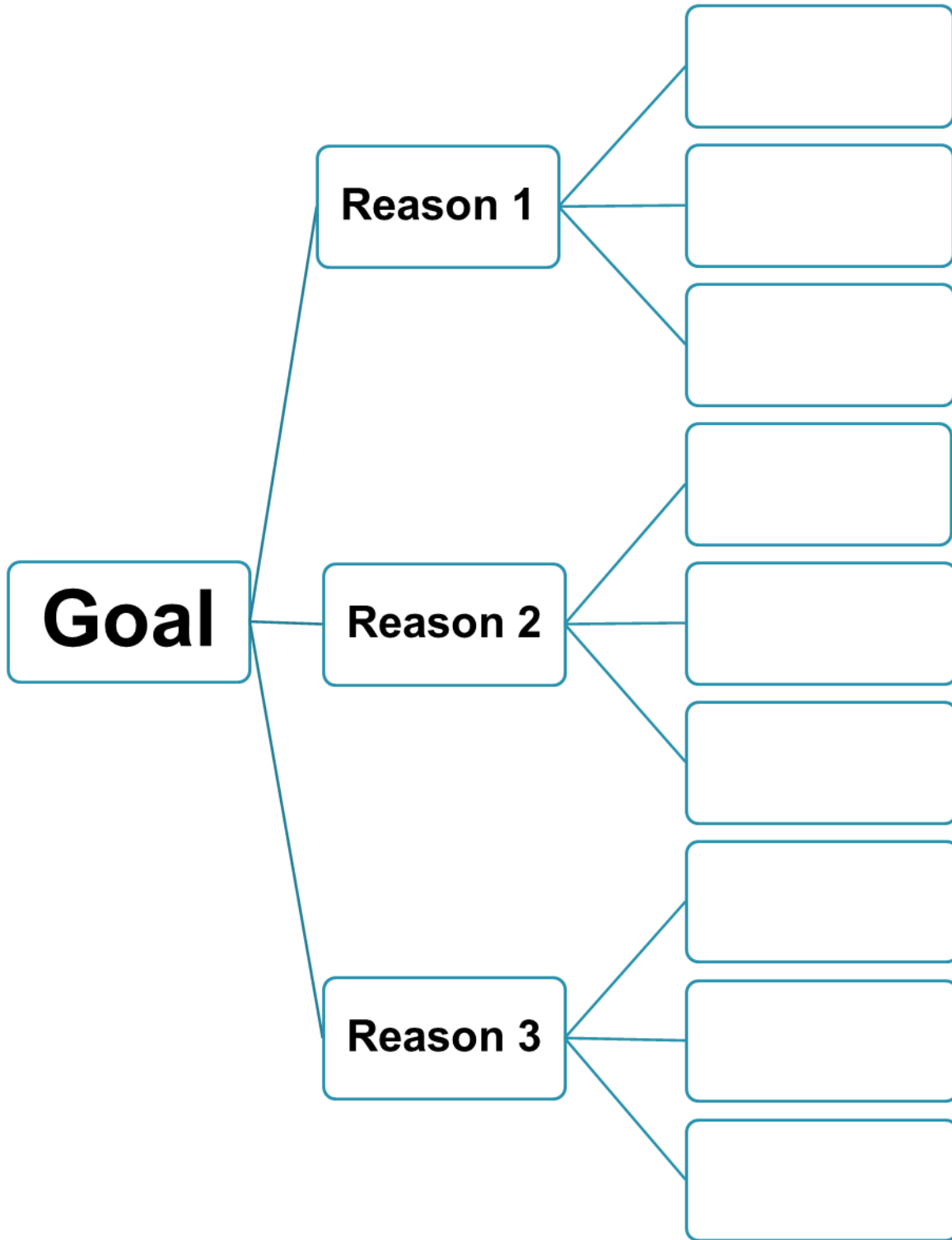
- ❖ **Why do you think that?**
- ❖ **What is your reason for that?**
- ❖ **Can you think of another argument for your view?**
- ❖ **Can you think of another argument against your view?**
- ❖ **How do you know?**
- ❖ **What is your evidence?**
- ❖ **Is there another argument for what you believe?**

Supporting Statements:

- ❖ **The issue we are discussing is...**
- ❖ **My idea is...**
- ❖ **The evidence to support my idea is...**
- ❖ **This evidence supports my idea because...**
- ❖ **Arguments against my idea are...**
- ❖ **I would convince someone who does not believe me by...**
- ❖ **There is a lot of discussion about whether...**
- ❖ **The people who agree with this idea claim that...**
- ❖ **They also agree that...**
- ❖ **A further point they make is...**
- ❖ **However, there are also strong arguments or evidence against this view...**
- ❖ **These opposing arguments are that...**
- ❖ **Furthermore they claim that...**
- ❖ **After looking at different points of view and evidence, I think that...**

Argument Map Worksheet

Facts/Examples



Argument Presentation Rubric

Scoring: Place score for each category in the right-hand column. Total points at the right-hand bottom of the page.

	Criteria				Points
	4	3	2	1	
Content	Arguments capture the attention of the audience. Details provide relevant information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.	Arguments are clear and supporting the details, but one key issue or portion of the argument is unsupported.	Arguments are vague or unsupported. Several key issues are unsupported.	Arguments are not identifiable. Supporting details are typically unclear or not related to the topic.	
Sequencing & Pacing	Details are placed in a logical order and effectively keep the interest of the audience. The delivery makes good use of drama and meets the apportioned time interval.	Details are placed in a logical order, but sometimes make the presentation less interesting. Delivery is patterned, but does not meet apportioned time interval.	Some details are not in a logical or expected order, which distracts the reader. Delivery is in bursts and does not meet apportioned time interval.	Many details are not in any order. There is little sense that the presentation is organized. Delivery is either too quick or too slow to meet apportioned time interval.	
Nonverbal Communication Skills	Movements seemed fluid and helped the audience visualize. The presenter holds attention of the audience with direct eye contact.	Movements or gestures enhanced articulation. The presenter makes consistent use of direct eye contact with audience.	Very little movement or descriptive gestures made. The presenter displayed minimal eye contact with audience.	No movement or descriptive gestures made. The presenter made no eye contact with audience.	
Voice	The presenter uses fluid speech and inflection to maintain the interest of the audience.	The presenter makes satisfactory use of inflection, but does not consistently use fluid speech.	The presenter displays some level of inflection throughout delivery.	The presenter consistently uses a monotone voice.	
				Total	

Argument Presentation Topics

Present an informal argument within your small group at your table. A pair can argue a proposition; the remainder can serve as observers and give an assessment. The entire group should discuss the argument in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. Make a candid assessment of the outcome in terms of who won and why using the “Argument Presentation Rubric” on page 13 in your Participant Guide.

Please be careful in your choice of topics. The following topics should **not** be selected, due to their likelihood of having high levels of ego-involvement:

- Political differences (conservative vs. liberal)
- Religion
- Any topic that includes sex or gender issues

Please select from the following topics:

- Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism)
- Conserving the environment
- Dieting
- Epidemics
- Euthanasia
- Fat tax on food
- Government bans on certain foods for health promotion
- Federal deficit
- Foreign oil dependence
- Free speech
- Gambling/ lotteries
- Human cloning
- Legal system
- Living wills
- Social media
- Media violence
- National drinking age
- Polygamy
- Property rights
- Space exploration
- Surrogate motherhood
- Victims’ rights
- Cameras in courtrooms
- Campaign financing
- Drugs and sports

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FOR ARGUMENT, PERSUASION, OR PROPAGANDA

Purpose:

- What is the message that this document communicates? What is the issue's purpose?
- Why is it important for this issue to be delivered to this audience at this moment in time?
- How does the document communicate its message? Think about use of language, color, space, and symbols.

Audience:

- Who is the audience for this document?
- What does the message suggest about the audience's beliefs and values?
- How accurate are these beliefs with the audience?

Document Author

- Who wrote the message?
- What are the writer's motives for creating the message? How might the writer personally benefit from the audience's acceptance of this message?

Evidence, Support, and Outcomes

- What facts and specific details does the document use? Are the facts verifiable and believable?
- What emotions does the document use to communicate its message? How is the audience likely to feel when they read this message?
- What ethical or moral values does the document use to communicate its message? What relevant values are not supported by this message?
- What will happen if the audience accepts this message?
- What would happen if everyone in the world accepted this message?

Overall Impressions and Conclusions

- What is the overall impression of this message? Summarize the details that you have gathered in your analysis.
- How would you categorize this poster – argument, persuasion, or propaganda? Explain your choice.