Writing Exercise: Structuring Arguments

Today I want you to focus on structuring and writing an argument to be used in your essay. This exercise is designed to get you to practice constructing arguments.

Before Writing an Argument

Before writing an argument, you need to understand what it is and how to effectively structure an argument. An **argument** is the whole persuasive act of convincing an audience of a claim. We'll be adopting the Toulmin Model as an easy to use formula for organizing your arguments.

- Structuring Arguments
  - Your argument is built out of 5 questions:
    - What is my **claim**?
    - What **reasons** support my claim?
    - What **evidence** supports my reasons?
    - Do I acknowledge **Alternatives/Complications/Objections**, and how do I respond?
    - What principle makes my reasons relevant to my claim? What are my **warrants**?
  - What are "reasons"?
    - A statement that gives reader cause to accept claim
    - Reasons must be based on evidence
      - CLAIM because REASON
  - What is "evidence"?
    - The researched "facts" that indicate why my reasons are correct, which supports my claim
      - CLAIM because REASON based on EVIDENCE
    - In order to convince my readers, I must structure my argument around compelling reasons, in a clear, logical order, <u>based on evidence my readers will accept</u>
    - Readers will not accept a reason until they see is <u>anchored in what THEY consider a bedrock of established fact</u> (i.e., sufficient, representative evidence needs to be convincing to THEM)
  - What are "Counterarguments"?
    - Possible objections your reader might have/argue against your claims which you must answer.
    - You must anticipate these objections and respond appropriately
      - CLAIM because REASON based on EVIDENCE. Despite COUNTERARGUMENT
    - TIPS:
      - Read your argument as someone who wants you to be wrong and will look for any weakness in your argument
      - Anticipate how your audience might object to your framing of the problem or your solution
      - Address alternatives—why is your solution best
      - Challenge your support—reasons, evidence, etc.—Is it sufficient? Is it credible? Is it representative?

        - Consider what **concessions** are necessary to make
            - A concession is a factor/objection that we cannot dismiss but doesn't necessarily
        - If you cannot reasonably respond to the counterargument, then maybe your argument is not the right one and you need to make adjustments.
- What is a "warrant"?
    - The principle that makes my reasons relevant to my claim.
    - How do the reasons make sense as support for my claim
    - A general circumstance that lets you draw conclusions about a general consequence
        - CLAIM because REASON [justified by WARRANT] based on EVIDENCE
    - Testing warrants:
        - What were your reasons for selecting this evidence for this stance?
        - Why did you think this particular piece of evidence was well suited to your stance?
        - How does this piece provide evidence that is different from other evidence sources you selected?
        - How are pieces of evidence you have selected related to each other?

Writing an Argument

1. Think about your (hypo)thesis for your essay and right down the main reasons that support it.
    a. EX: Kids shouldn't be allowed to eat sugar
        i. REASON 1: childhood obesity will be reduced
        ii. REASON 2: dental problems/cavities will be reduced
        iii. REASON 3: improves energy and sleep cycles
2. Pick one of these reasons, and turn it into a **claim** (creating a sort of topic sentence)
    a. EX: Restricting sugar will reduce childhood obesity
3. Brainstorm several **reasons** why this claim is correct, drawing upon your research
4. Select one particularly strong reason and find/provide multiple pieces of **evidence** from your research that supports that reason—list them out
5. Pick one strong piece of evidence that supports the reason that supports the claim and write a few sentences that state the claim, identify the reason the claim is true, and provides evidence for why the reason is proof of the claim
6. Now, write an additional sentence or two that EXPLAINS how the evidence/reason are relevant to the claim—a principle for why they apply and prove the claim is correct—your **warrant**
    a. EX: Explain why/how background checks make getting a gun harder and why it is significant
7. Put it all together!