

Week 5 (10-5 thru 10-9-09)

Strong vs. Weak Arguments



Monday 10-5-09



Tuesday, October 6, 2009



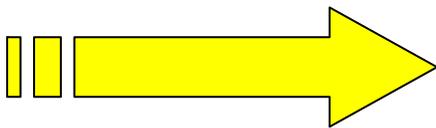
Reading activities



This week, we are going to be working on **Strong vs. Weak Arguments**.

STRONG ARGUMENT: Statements that are backed up by reasons, facts, and examples related to the topic.

WEAK ARGUMENT: A series of personal opinions that are not backed up by facts and examples and may not be related to the topic.



FCAT TIP:

How do we know when is an argument is strong or weak?

STRONG ARGUMENTS:

1. Begin with an opinion about the subject.
2. Give relevant facts and reasons as support.
3. Arguments are clearly and logically organized.

WEAK ARGUMENTS:

1. Use opinions that are unrelated to the subject.



2. Not supported by facts or reasons.
3. Not clear or logical in organization.

When effective writers choose their arguments, they think about the **audience**, their potential readers. For example, if you are writing a persuasive letter to your teacher to try to convince her to give you less homework, which of these two arguments do you think will be more effective?

1. If you gave us less homework, we would have more time to watch our favorite TV shows.
2. If you gave us less homework, we would be able to spend more time reading AR books.

The second argument is clearly stronger because the reason used to back it up (more time reading AR books) will be well received by the audience, in this case, a teacher.

Why is it important to recognize strong and weak arguments?

In order for you to become a more effective reader, you have to examine what you read with a critical eye. This will allow you to read between the lines so that you can understand the writer's purpose and ultimately agree or disagree with the writer's point. Understanding about arguments will also make you a better writer since you will be able to put your ideas together in a clear and convincing way. Readers might disagree with you, but they will also see that you know how to support your opinions with strong arguments.



Practice Activity 1

Read the following sentence. Which of the three arguments is the strongest one? Why?

- 1) Smoking should be banned in public places because:
 - a) it is bad.
 - b) it gives people bad breath and makes their teeth yellow.
 - c) secondhand smoke is harmful for nonsmokers.



Wednesday, October 7, 2009

Practice Activity 2

Read these three letters that were published in the Miami Herald. Then answer the questions.

Letter 1

Miami-Dade is the only county in the nation that borders two national parks—Everglades and Biscayne. These parks protect and preserve nationally known marine ecosystems that attract visitors from all over the world and provide us with amazing places to appreciate and recreate. Unfortunately, both parks face serious threats from developers who want to build new homes near the parks.

- 1) What is the author's purpose?
 - a) to convince developers to build new houses.
 - b) to convince readers to visit the Everglades.
 - c) to convince readers not to allow developers to build new homes near the parks.
 - d) to provide readers with information about two national parks.

- 2) What are the arguments the writer uses to support his/her point of view?
 - a) Miami-Dade has two parks.
 - b) The two parks protect ocean life, attract tourists, and provide us with places to enjoy.
 - c) Developers destroy national parks and are greedy people.
 - d) Miami-Dade County should encourage residents to visit its two national parks.

Letter 2

On a recent Saturday morning at 9 a.m., I was driving from Brickell toward Matheson Park. All the roads, including Brickell Avenue, Main Highway, and Old Cutler Road had been taken over by bicyclists riding in groups on the middle of the road. With total disregard of car traffic or safety, they ignored traffic signals, ran red lights, and cut in front of cars. Police regulation is needed.

1) What is the author's purpose?

- a) to convince readers about the need for police regulation to ensure that bicyclists obey traffic laws.
- b) to encourage people to exercise more.
- c) to protect bicyclists from dangerous drivers.
- d) to warn people about the dangers of driving on Saturday mornings.

2) What are the arguments the writer uses to support his/her point of view?

- a) Roads in Brickell are dangerous for drivers.
- b) People should not drive around the Brickell area on Saturday mornings.
- c) Bicycle riders in Brickell do not obey traffic laws and are a hazard to drivers.
- d) Bicycle riders shouldn't ride in groups.

Letter 3

I have just arrived in Miami and already have noticed the problem of safe driving. A few days ago, I passed my driver's license exam. I was surprised by how easy it was. I didn't even look at the driving manual, but I passed the written exam with only one question missed out of 40. The driving exam was even easier as the examiner didn't ask me to exit the shopping center's parking.

I come from Spain, where getting a driver's license can take up to four months. In Miami, I obtained it in four hours without effort.

Driving is physical, mental, and reflex-demanding. None of those aspects were evaluated during the exams I took.

1) What is the author's purpose?

- a) to illustrate how easy it is to get a driver's license in Miami and how this might have a negative effect on safe driving.
- b) to explain how easy it is to become a driver in Spain.
- c) to convince people that longer written tests can improve road safety.
- d) to tell about his experiences as a new immigrant in Miami.

2) What are the arguments the writer uses to support his/her point of view?

- a) It takes only a few days to obtain a driver's license in Miami while in Spain it can take up to four months.

- b) More rigorous written and driving tests can solve the problem of safe driving in Miami.
- c) Newly arrived immigrants should wait up to four months before they can get a driver's license.
- d) Immigrants from Spain shouldn't take any tests to get a driver's license if they already have a valid driver's license.



Thursday, October 8, 2009

Practice Activity 3

Directions: Read the following passage. Find the writer's arguments.

Rights versus Responsibilities

Wearing clothing with the names of alcoholic beverages and cigarettes on it is a clear violation of school policy. Last week, several students came to school wearing this type of clothing and were promptly sent home to change. The school administration called the parents of these students, informing them of the rules violation and stating that a one-day suspension would follow in the event of a second offense.

The policy is clear, and the consequences are fair. Yet I've been hearing a great deal in the halls this week about how the policy violates the Constitution of the United States and the right to free expression. "This is America," one of the students told me. "I have the right to do whatever I want."

Not exactly. No American has the right to do whatever he or she

wants. Freedom of speech, for example, is not absolute. Former Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said that freedom of speech does not mean a person can shout "Fire!" in a crowded theater and cause a panic. We have a responsibility to society as a whole not to abuse our rights.

In the adult world, there is nothing wrong with wearing a t-shirt with the logo of a cigarette brand or a beer company. It is legal for adults to smoke and consume alcohol. However, it is not legal for those under the age of 18 or 21 to do so. Therefore, the advertisements of products not legal for use by students should not be permitted in a school attended by minors.

"It's just a shirt," one eighth-grade student told me. "I don't smoke. I just

like the way the shirt looks." This student is smart enough to know he shouldn't smoke, but what about students who aren't as matured and well-informed as he is?

Answer key

Practice Activity 1

1) c

Practice Activity 2

Letter 1

1) c 2) b

Letter 2

1) a 2) c

Letter 3

1) a 2) b)

Practice Activity 3

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However, it is not legal for those under the age of 18 or 21 to do so. Therefore, the advertisements of products not legal for use by students should not be permitted in a school attended by minors.

This student is smart enough to know he shouldn't smoke, but what about students who aren't as matured and well-informed as he is?

**Friday
(10-09-09)**



Silent Reading

