

IDENTIFYING ARGUMENTS WELL-CRAFTED ARGUMENTS

Def. A **well-crafted** (version of an) argument is an argument that is stated in such a way that its logical features are explicit.

Six principles for producing well-crafted arguments

Principle 1. Identify the premises and the conclusion

Argument 1

The defendant is not guilty of murder since she is insane.

Well-crafted version of Argument 1.

1. The defendant is insane.
2. So, she is not guilty of murder. (1)

Argument 2

Observational data are scientific. On the assumption that observational data are scientific, they can in principle be shown false. Therefore, observational data can in principle be shown to be false.

Well-crafted version of Argument 2.

1. Observational data are scientific.
2. If observational data are scientific, then observational data can in principle be shown false.
3. So, observational data can in principle be shown to be false. (1, 2)

Premise indicators

Because	after all	since
The reason that	for	in light of the fact that
As	based on the fact that	

Conclusion indicators

So	thus	therefore
Accordingly	hence	consequently
Implies that	we may infer that	it follows that
Which proves that		

Note: The premises sometimes come after the conclusion in ordinary English

Note: It's usually best to identify the conclusion first.

Note: Conventions for constructing well-crafted arguments

- Place the conclusion last, using the word 'So' to indicate it.
- Number the premises and the conclusion.
- Conditional statements are put as "if..., then..."
- At the end of the conclusion, place a parenthesis with the number of each premise that is supposed to directly support it.

Principle 2. Eliminate excess verbiage

- *Def. Excess verbiage* is a word or statement that adds nothing to the argument.

There are four prominent kinds of verbiage: discounts, repetition, assurances, and hedges.

1. Discount

An acknowledgement of a fact or possibility that might be thought to render the argument invalid or unsound, or otherwise defective.

Argument 1

Although the defendant plunged the knife into the victim's chest 36 times,
she is not guilty of murder since she is insane.

Argument 2

Observational data are scientific. On the assumption that observational data are scientific, they can in principle be shown false. Therefore, even though one or two well-regarded philosophers of science think otherwise, observational data can in principle be shown to be false.

Discount indicators

Although	While it may be true that
Even though	While I admit that
In spite of the fact that	I realize that..., but
Despite the fact that	I know that..., but

2. Repetition

Restating a premise or conclusion, perhaps changing the wording a bit.

Argument 1

The defendant is not guilty of murder since she is insane, simply mentally incapacitated.

Argument 2

Observational data are scientific. On the assumption that observational data are scientific, they can in principle be shown false. In other words, they are falsifiable. Therefore, observational data can in principle be shown to be false.

3. Assurance

A statement, word, or phrase that indicates that the author is confident of a premise or inference.

Argument 1

Without a shadow of reasonable doubt, the defendant is not guilty of murder since she is insane.

Argument 2

As virtually everyone will agree, observational data are scientific. But equally undeniable is the fact that, on the assumption that observational data are scientific, they can in principle be shown false. Therefore, it is plain that observational data can in principle be shown to be false.

Common assurances

Obviously

everyone knows that

No doubt

it is well known that

Certainly

no one will deny that

Plainly

this is undeniable

Clearly

this is a fact

4. Hedge

A statement, word, or phrase that indicates that the arguer is tentative about a premise or inference.