The ARGUMENT BUILDER

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The Argument Builder
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FOREWORD

All of us need to make good arguments now and then. Few of us, however, have been trained in the art of building a strong and persuasive argument. Even those people who seem naturally "good at arguing" could benefit from some excellent training. That is what *The Argument Builder* seeks to do: train you in the art of building a strong argument.

When a house is built, the workers consult a step-by-step plan. Materials are assembled and arranged, equipment is brought to the building site, then a hole is dug for the laying of the foundation of the structure. First the foundation, then the frame, then the roof, then the plumbing and electrical lines are installed. Next, the walls are completed, insulated and covered, and the windows are installed. Finally, the finishing work is completed inside the house, which involves fine carpentry and installing fixtures and appliances.

Crafting a good argument may not be as detailed or time-consuming as building a house, but it does involve planning, gathering materials, and assembling the whole in an orderly, compelling manner. Once you become skilled at argument building, you will find yourself building strong arguments quickly and efficiently.

In this book, you will be shown how to plan and build good arguments. You will study excellent examples of some very good argument makers indeed—talented people ranging from classical Greek and Roman orators to biblical writers, Shakespeare, Bacon, Montaigne, and contemporary writers. You will learn what materials to use: examples, statistics, experts, proverbs, analogies, difference, degree, and cause and effect, among others. Using these materials, you will have ample opportunity to practice building good arguments both by studying the masters and seeking to imitate them in your own arguments. You will even have a chance to engage in a debate with your fellow students when you finish the book.

While *The Argument Builder* specializes in building good arguments, its companion text, *The Art of Argument*, specializes in detecting what is wrong in bad arguments. *The Argument Builder* will review some of the fallacies studied in *The Art of Argument*, but you may want to work through T*he Art of Argument* to round out your study of arguments. You may also want to study *The Discovery of Deduction*, our formal logic text that examines the correct form logical arguments should take.

We encourage you to visit the website of Classical Academic Press at www.classicalacademicpress. com, where you will find support materials for *The Argument Builder*. There is also an online forum available, where you can ask questions and discuss the book.

Enjoy your study of *The Argument Builder*. Soon you will be well prepared for building, supporting, and presenting a well-formed argument.

Christopher A. Perrin, Ph.D.
Publisher

Introduction

Have you ever wanted to prove a point but you didn't know how to do it? Have you ever been stuck in an argument in which your opponent seems to have all the valid points but you don't know what to say? If so, this is just the book for you.

This book will teach you an argument-discovery method called **common topics**, which was created by **Aristotle**, one of the greatest thinkers of all time. The common topics present for exploration a list of categories or "lines of argument" that allow you to discover all the possible arguments for your topic.

To help you understand how we will proceed, let me give you an idea of the pattern of this book. Each unit will introduce one of the common topics. Every topic has several subtopics that demonstrate more clearly how the topic can be used. In addition, for many of the common topics, you will also learn some common **fallacies**, or errors in reasoning, committed with these topics. By studying these fallacies, you will learn to form strong arguments from the common topics without falling into some common traps of bad reasoning.

In each chapter, you will read about how you can use a particular common topic and its subtopics to develop a hypothetical argument about curfew (a rule that governs what time you must be in your house at night). As you move through the book, each chapter will use the curfew example to help you understand how the common topic works practically. At the end of each chapter, you will find other examples of the topic, and you will practice using them to develop arguments. After you have completed this book, you will be well on your way to mastering an argument-building method that will be an excellent tool for you to use for the rest of your life.

Imagine this scenario: You have just passed your driver's test, and you are now the proud owner of a license. You are excited about your new freedom and can't wait to go out on the weekends to drive around and hang out with your friends. You are certain that you are entering one of the most thrilling times in your life. Then, you hear the bad news: your parents are a little nervous about your driving alone, and they have set your weekend curfew at 10:00 p.m.—the same time your curfew was even before you got your driver's license. You are crushed! After all, you are nearly an adult, so it seems like you should get a few more privileges. A 12:00 a.m. weekend curfew seems much more reasonable to you. After all, all of your other driving friends have midnight curfews. However, you know, instinctively, not to try that line of argument. Whenever you do try the "But all my other friends…" argument, your mother always responds in the same basic way, with some creative variations: "If all your friends jumped off a bridge, robbed a bank, sold themselves into slavery, pierced their big toe would you do it, too?"

Right now, you may be contemplating two equally unappealing options: committing yourself to a life of mopey martyrdom or throwing the grandest, most spectacular tantrum of your life. Neither of these courses is recommended. Instead, you might consider a third option of presenting a civil, well-reasoned argument for a 12:00 a.m. curfew. After all, the worst that your parents can say is "no," and they may actually be interested in hearing your opinion, especially if your standard M.O. (from the Latin *modus operandi* meaning "standard way of operating") is to try the mopey martyrdom or tantrum options. How would you construct this hypothetical, well-reasoned argument? After all, your best argument up to now has been the "But all my friends are doing it" argument, and that is getting you nowhere. Where would you find good points to which your parents would actually listen? How would you know which arguments were your best ones? How would you know how to state them properly?

In order to find the answers to these questions, it may help if you learn a little more about the famous philosopher, Aristotle, and two of his favorite topics: **logic** and **rhetoric**. Aristotle lived in Athens, Greece, in 384-322 BC.[1] In Aristotle's day, people were becoming more and more fascinated with **rhetoric**, which is the art of effective public speaking. As people joined the profession of rhetoric, they developed different concepts of what defined good rhetoric. For instance, the **sophists** were one group of **rhetoricians**, or public speakers, who focused more on the sound and style of their speeches, rather than on the content.[2] While there is nothing wrong, per se (in itself), with this approach, many other rhetoricians considered the sophists' arguments shallow. In fact, even today, if someone says that an argument is "sophistic," he means that the argument is shallow.

Aristotle did not agree with the sophists' approach to rhetoric, and was instead extremely concerned with the *content* of speeches. He wanted to help his students find all of the available arguments for a given topic. In order to do this, he wrote about something called the common topics, a set of argument categories that a person can use to discover evidence for an argument. The main categories of common topics are: **definitions**, **testimony**, **comparison**, **relationship**, and **circumstance**.[3] Each of these main categories contains several subtopics. For example, under the common topic of comparison, Aristotle discussed **analogy**, **difference**, and **degree**. Aristotle believed that **logicians** and rhetoricians could use these topics to help them create the best arguments possible.

However, awareness of the common topics was not enough. Good rhetoricians also had to be able to reason well using the common topics, so Aristotle also taught about logic in order to help his students use the common topics properly. Logic can be defined as "the art and science of reasoning."[4] In his book *Rhetoric*, Aristotle described two types of logic that people can use to develop the common topics properly.[5] Today we call these two types of logic **deductive** and **inductive**.

Deductive logic comes from the Latin word *deducere*, which means "to draw down." In other words, deductive arguments "draw down" knowledge contained by, or inherent in, a previously stated fact. To help you understand deductive logic better, let's look at the main tool used with this kind of logic: the **syllogism**. A syllogism is an argument that contains a **conclusion**, which is a statement of belief, supported by two **premises**, which are facts used as evidence. The following is a common example of a syllogism:

All men are mortal.

Socrates is a man.

Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

The basic idea of deductive logic is that if the first two statements are true then the last statement must also be true. It is a logical conclusion that follows from the first two statements. That is, the first two statements imply, or point to, the last statement. We could also say that the conclusion is inherent in, or an essential characteristic of, the premises. Deductive logic is a very precise type of logic. If the premises are true, and the argument is arranged properly, then the conclusion must be true.

The second type of logic—inductive logic—is what will be emphasized in this book. The word "inductive" comes from the Latin word *inducere*, which means "to lead to." Inductive arguments are the opposite of deductive arguments. Rather than drawing down knowledge already implied in facts or statements, inductive logic leads us to generalize on observations or examples that we see in everyday circumstances. In other words, inductive logic helps us recognize general patterns and theories that everyday observations or examples indicate.

Many medical and nutritional studies are based on inductive logic. For instance, you have certainly heard people quoting studies that indicate that smoking cigarettes is linked with a high chance of developing lung cancer.

In order to make this conclusion, researchers surveyed hundreds and thousands of people who smoked, and they noticed that a high percentage of them ended up with lung cancer. Of course, these same researchers did additional research to make sure that no other factors, such as pollution or diet, were causing the lung cancer. Once they eliminated other possible sources, and determined smoking as a common habit of all the lung cancer victims, they could establish fairly conclusively that smoking caused the lung cancer. If you refer back to the definition of "inductive logic," you can see that it is the basis of the researchers' conclusion because they observed many examples of lung cancer patients who smoked, and those observations indicated a pattern of smoking as a cause for lung cancer. Just as syllogisms are the foundation of deductive logic, examples are the foundation of inductive logic.

You may notice that inductive arguments are not as precise as deductive arguments. No matter how many convincing examples you observe, there still may be some

"argument," it means that you supply the evidence or proof for what you believe. When people state their conclusions and premises clearly and logically, it can actually help prevent tension and hostility. In fact, as you will see in the next chapter, it is important to approach debates and arguments with an attitude of humility and self-awareness. One of the most important things you can realize before you debate is that you might be wrong, and your opponent might be right.

Before we move on, it is important for you to realize that good logic requires two key skills. The first skill is building good arguments, which is the focus of this book. The second skill is detecting whether or not the other person's argument is a good argument or if it contains fallacies, which are "commonly recognized types of bad arguments."[6] When someone commits a fallacy, his premise does not lead to his conclusion. In this book, we will examine some of the most common fallacies connected with each of the common topics. If you haven't already, I would recommend that you

Deductive logic comes from the Latin word deducere, *which means "to draw down"*

other example that disproves your point. However, if you learn to structure your inductive arguments well, your arguments will be extremely strong, even if they are not 100 percent certain. Our examination of the common topics and their subtopics will help you understand how to use them to construct strong and effective arguments.

Right now, you might feel a little uncomfortable with the word **argument** because it seems that it always involves fighting, tension, hostility, and hurt feelings. Although this unpleasantness can be present when people argue, it doesn't have to be. The Latin word *argumentum* simply means "evidence" or "proof." Therefore, when you have an

also study *The Art of Argument*, which is a companion text to this book. In that book, you will learn dozens of fallacies that people often commit. Learning those fallacies will not only help you sharpen your argument skills, it will also help you to avoid them in your own arguments. When you learn to build good arguments and to critique others' arguments, you will be well prepared to engage in and analyze the arguments you hear every day.

DEFINE

1. Logic_____

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2. Rhetoric_____

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3. Sophists _____

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4. Common Topics _____

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RESEARCH

Research these other famous Greek and Roman rhetoricians and summarize their views and contributions to rhetoric.

1 Demosthenes _____

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2. Protagoras_____

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3. Gorgias _____

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4. Isocrates_____

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5. Quintilian_____

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6. Cicero _____

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CONSIDER

Rhetoric surrounds you every day in speeches, commercials, advertisements, and writing. Considering what you know about the rhetoric of today, do you think it is more in line with sophistic (focus on style) or Aristotelian (focus on content) views on rhetoric? Give two examples to support your idea.

DESCRIBE

Describe two strengths and two weaknesses of both sophistic and Aristotelian ideas of rhetoric.

At this point, you may believe that the main reason to learn logic is so that you can win arguments. That is a common misconception. The most important reason for you to learn logic is to help you understand what is right and true. This is an important distinction to understand. If your main goal in argumentation is to win, you may, inadvertently, commit fallacies and miss the point.

To help you understand this better, there is something important that you should know about yourself: you are very easily deceived, especially by yourself. Don't worry, it's not just you—all human beings are easily deceived. In fact, a man named **Francis Bacon**, who lived from 1561 to 1626, believed that human beings tend to deceive themselves and that they must continually work to free themselves from flawed thinking.[1] He was one of the earliest proponents, or supporters, of the scientific method (yes, you have him to thank for all of those science fair projects and experiments you have done), and he was interested in how people think and search for truth. He developed the scientific method to help people overcome their flawed thinking. In order to help people understand the ways they deceive themselves, Bacon wrote about something that he called the **four idols**.[2]

An idol is something that people worship. Webster's dictionary defines an **idol** as "a false god; a false conception; an object of extreme devotion." In ancient cultures, and in some cultures today, many people worshipped idols made of stone, gold, or other precious metals. When Francis Bacon wrote about the four idols, however, he was not referring to golden or stone images. Instead, he was describing ideas or habits we hold dear that can hinder our ability to think clearly. In other words, our devotion to these ideas and habits can cause us to be prejudiced or biased.[3] Webster's dictionary defines a **prejudice** as a "preconceived judgment or opinion," and a **bias** as a "highly personal and unreasoned distortion of judgment." The four idols Bacon described were the **idols of the tribe**, the **idols of the cave**, the **idols of the marketplace**, and the **idols of the theatre**.[4] As you read about these idols, you may be surprised at how they affect your life and thinking.

The first group of idols, known as the idols of the tribe, is made up of the faults that are common to all human beings. You might think of a tribe as a group of people who live in a certain part of the world. Bacon used the term "tribe" to refer to the whole human race. In other words, Bacon believed that the idols of the tribe were weaknesses that every single human being has in common. These are weaknesses such as **wishful thinking** and **hasty generalization**. For instance, Bacon wrote that our senses are weak and easily deceived, and he said that humans tend to engage in wishful thinking. By this, he meant that we have a natural tendency to accept what we would like to be true or what we believe is true.[5] For instance, did you know that researchers recently have claimed that chocolate, especially dark chocolate, can be good for your health?[6] You might find yourself eager to believe this study because you like chocolate and, if the study is true, you could eat chocolate three meals a day. However, just because you want something to be true doesn't mean it is true. This example illustrates a general tendency of human beings: we like to believe things that are pleasant and comfortable to us,

and we don't want to believe things that are unpleasant or uncomfortable to us. In this case, our idol, or our object of extreme devotion, is our physical or emotional comfort. We care about our comfort and pleasure so much that it can prevent us from seeing unpleasant or uncomfortable truths.

The second group of idols is the idols of the cave. These are faulty thinking patterns that come from our specific backgrounds and social groups. Bacon called these the "idols of the cave" because our upbringing is like a cave that can limit our perceptions of the rest of the world. For example, each of us has been raised in a particular social class (lower, middle, or upper), and we all belong to a certain ethnic group (Caucasian, Asian, African American, Hispanic, Native American, etc., or a mixture of these groups). Whatever our background, we have learned to believe certain things about ourselves, the world, other people, and other groups based on the beliefs and practices of our specific group. Because of this, it is often hard for us to understand the viewpoints of other groups.[7]

For example, poor people often have misconceptions about rich people. They might believe that all rich people are spoiled or have been given their wealth by relatives. They also might believe that all wealthy people are happy. In reality, however, many wealthy people become wealthy by working hard in demanding jobs. Also, not all wealthy people are happy. There are plenty of miserable wealthy people. Many wealthy people also have misconceptions about poor people, such as that all poor people are poor because they are lazy. They might also think that poor people are unhappy because they don't have a lot of money. In reality, many poor people are extremely hard workers who work several jobs just to make ends meet. Also, many poor people are happy because they have great friends and families, and they love their jobs, even though they don't pay very well.

As another example, consider that people who have been raised in Republican families may not understand why people would be Democrats, while people raised in Democratic families may not understand why anyone would vote Republican. These two groups may not understand each other, yet there are intelligent and moral people in both. These examples demonstrate that it can be difficult for us to understand people who hold viewpoints that are different than our own. The idols of the cave represent the cave of our own opinion, which can blind us to the truth in other viewpoints.

The third group of idols, the idols of the marketplace, represents the way in which words can be deceiving. For example, let's say that you decide to go to a popular new movie with a friend. Because tickets for the movie will sell quickly, you tell your friend to get to the movie early so that you can get good seats. In your mind, "early" means "at least fifteen minutes early and maybe twenty," but your friend is a bit of a procrastinator. When she arrives a mere five minutes early, you are upset with her. Your friend cannot understand why you are annoyed; after all, she did get there early. As you can see, sometimes words like "early" can be imprecise because they mean different things to different people. Bacon realized that in order to think clearly, people must clearly define words and use them precisely.[8] However, Bacon also realized that translating our thoughts effectively into words so that others can understand us can be more difficult than it seems.

Sometimes we use words that have several different definitions, such as in the case above. Sometimes we use words that mean something to us but that are unfamiliar to other people. He called word errors like this the "idols of the marketplace." This may seem like an odd title for these errors, but if you think of a marketplace, or a place where people buy and sell things, it may help you understand why he named this kind of error the way he did. When someone tries to sell an object or a service to someone, the salesman must carefully communicate the benefits and value of what he is selling. If he uses words that his customer doesn't understand or words that can mean more than one thing, he will confuse and possibly even lose his customer.

A similar thing happens when we discuss ideas with other people. We aren't *selling* ideas to them, but we are trying to get them to accept, or at least understand, our opinion. People will not be able to do this if we speak over their heads or use words with many possible meanings. That is why it is so important that we use words carefully.

The last set of idols Bacon wrote about were the idols of the theatre. These idols represent "the human tendency to prefer older, more widely accepted ideas over novel, minority opinions".[9] Bacon believed that people often develop whole philosophies based on a few observations, rather than doing a thorough, scientific investigation. Bacon also believed that once people develop a philosophy or a **paradigm**—a model for understanding part of life, nature, or the universe—it is difficult for them to see past this philosophy, and it can blind them to the truth.[10] An

disease. During the Civil War, it was common for doctors to operate on several different patients without washing their hands between surgeries. Of course, this contributed to a high rate of infection and death among their patients. Because doctors at that time did not fully understand the connection between germs and disease, it was very hard for them to accept this connection, even when people like Florence Nightingale (a Civil War-era nurse famous for championing the adoption of improved medical hygiene) presented good evidence for better hygiene. As these examples demonstrate, the idols of the theatre represent our love for our personal philosophies.[12]

As you can imagine, every single one of us is affected by these idols at some time in our life. As we become more aware of ways in which our thinking can be clouded and deceived, it helps us think more clearly. It is important for

These four idols point to the need we all have to gain wisdom.

example of this would be the geocentric, or earth-centered, theory of the universe, which most people believed until the 1500s. Ancient philosophers observed the earth, planets, and stars and determined that the earth was the center of the universe. This was a fairly reasonable conclusion given the instruments and abilities they had to investigate these matters at the time. However, this model of thinking became so fixed in peoples' minds that when scientists, such as Copernicus and Galileo, demonstrated that the sun was the center of the universe, it was difficult for people to give up their belief in the old model. Many people still believed that the earth was the center of the universe and even refused to look at evidence that contradicted that theory.[11]

We often look at examples like this and believe that we could not be similarly deceived. However, instances such as these still occur. For example, even as late as the mid-1800s, people did not understand the link between germs and

you to know that you are especially easy to deceive when you are very passionate or emotional about a topic. There is nothing wrong with emotions, per se, but when we are emotional about a particular topic and desperately want to prove a certain point, it is easy for us to use fallacies, especially if they seem to help us prove our point. As we carefully examine in later chapters each of the fallacies that are connected with the common topics, it will help you to avoid deceiving yourself.

The four idols and their effects on our way of thinking point to the need we all have to gain wisdom. If logic is a tool every person can use, then we can use the tool either wisely or foolishly. Too often, people misuse logic to manipulate, deceive, and attack other people. Logic can be a dangerous weapon or a wonderful tool. I hope that as you proceed through the rest of this book, you will resist the temptation of these four idols and fine-tune your ability to properly use the extraordinary tool that is logic.

As we wrap up this chapter, let's quickly relate the idols to the curfew debate we have been considering. At this point, you feel that your parents' proposed curfew is unfair and that they should be a little bit more lenient with you now that you are older. It is possible that you are right about this. After all, parents are human, and sometimes they make rules that are less than ideal or that are overprotective. However, it is important that you realize that you may be wrong, too. You also are human, and you might think that you are ready for more responsibility than you really are. Also, if you are honest with yourself, you will realize that your parents probably know much more about the potential dangers of driving at night than you do.

If you examine your thoughts and emotions, you may realize that it is difficult to see past your strong opinions and beliefs or to even think about your parents' point of view. If you can see this, you will understand that you are being affected by the idols that Francis Bacon described. If you approach the curfew debate determined to win and prove your parents wrong, you are already starting down the wrong path. Instead, you need to approach the curfew debate with the goal of using logic to state your point well, understand your parents' reasoning, and reach a good conclusion together.

ANSWER

Who was Francis Bacon? _____

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EXPLAIN

In your own words, explain each of the four idols and how they can distort our thinking.

1. Idols of the Tribe: _____

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2. Idols of the Cave: _____

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3. Idols of the Marketplace: _____

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4. Idols of the Theatre: _____

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DEFINE

1. Bias _____
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2. Prejudice _____
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DESCRIBE

Think of a time when you were affected by one of the four idols. You may have noticed the idols clouding your judgment, or you may have noticed them clouding the judgment of someone else. Describe what happened, how it affected you personally, and then write down which idol affected the situation.

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LIST

List three or four words people often use that can be easily defined in several different ways. Explain how these different meanings could result in conflict.

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All people use rules and principles to guide their lives. For many, these rules and principles come from their religious beliefs and morals. Other principles are passed down from important people, like parents or other family members. People also form many of the rules for their lives just by observing life. You do this all the time. For instance, if you believe you need to study hard to get good grades, you have probably observed your friends, older brothers and sisters, and maybe even your parents studying hard to achieve good grades. By observing the examples set by others, you've decided that studying hard produces worthy results.

As another example, consider a common piece of wisdom by which you live: "Look both ways before crossing the street." Do you believe this is a good rule because something terrible happens to you whenever you don't look both ways before you cross the street? Certainly not. Sometimes there are no cars approaching when you cross the street, so you could proceed blindly across the road without injury. However, you have most likely observed or heard of people who received serious injuries because they crossed the street without looking. Therefore, because of these examples, which you could have witnessed from everyday life, you have adopted the rule: "Look both ways before you cross the road." When you reason by example, you observe life, notice a pattern, and form generalizations on that pattern.

In order to construct good arguments from example, you must adopt several important guidelines. First, you should pick a variety of examples from different sources with which you will illustrate your point. Providing only one example, however interesting it may be, certainly doesn't prove anything. For instance, let us say that a man named Peter wants to prove that people who read voraciously get excellent jobs. He might give an example of a friend named Bob who reads a book every day and who has a very good job. However, this does not *prove* Peter's point. It is an interesting example, and might cause us to consider his argument, but it is not enough proof.

Let's say Peter strengthens his argument and demonstrates that Bob has eight brothers and sisters who read a book every day and they all have wonderful jobs. These examples are still problematic. Perhaps all of the people in Bob's family are also extremely skilled business people, and therefore a person could argue that it is the business skills of Bob's family, rather than their voracious reading, that earned them their excellent jobs. However, if Peter can produce examples of voracious readers with excellent jobs throughout history from all over the world, that would strengthen his thesis. When a widespread phenomenon occurs consistently over a lengthy period of time, we begin to note patterns. Because of this, it is wise for you to use a wide variety of examples from a wide variety of sources to support your point.

It is not always possible or necessary for you to list a host of different examples to prove your point. When you argue casually with friends and family, or if you are writing a short essay, it is

not possible to list dozens of examples. In these cases, using a couple of well-chosen examples and perhaps some other arguments taken from other common topics will help you construct a good argument. However, the longer and more complex your argument is, the larger the number and greater the variety of examples you should use.

Second, you must carefully examine the background information of the examples you use. For instance, consider again Peter's argument about people who read a great deal. Imagine that he has another friend named Rachel who has an excellent job and who claims to be a voracious reader. When Peter examines Rachel's reading habits further, however, he discovers that although Rachel thinks she reads a lot, she actually only reads one book a year. Obviously this

You might wonder what you should do if you find counterexamples that contradict your thesis. There are two options. First, if you want to use good logic, you must be willing to admit that your thesis may be wrong. If you decide, at the beginning of the argument, that your thesis is infallible, you might ignore relevant evidence that will help you discover the truth or make it easy for your opponent to refute your conclusion. If you decide that your thesis is wrong, you may need to change it or admit to your opponent that you were mistaken in your views. You may think that this is a sign of failure, but being willing to consider both sides of an issue and to change your views if the evidence demands it is actually a sign of thorough, logical thinking. Second, you must realize that counterexamples do not automatically destroy an argument.

> *If you want to use good logic, you must be willing to admit that your thesis may be wrong.*

would not be a good example for Peter to use to support his argument. Sometimes it might seem like an example supports an argument well, but upon further examination, it actually does not. Therefore, it is always important for people to examine their examples thoroughly to make sure they are solid.

Third, you must consider **counterexamples**. A counterexample is an example that seems to disprove or contradict an arguer's thesis. For instance, imagine that, during his research, Peter discovers that some people who do not read at all have excellent jobs. At first, Peter might be inclined to ignore these counterexamples and focus only on the examples that help prove his point. However, his opponents might present these counterexamples later, and if Peter has not carefully considered the counterexamples so that he can refute them, his argument could be damaged.

Sometimes, as you research the counterexample, you will find that it does not actually refute your thesis. For instance, suppose that Peter examines the group of non-readers with excellent jobs. It may be that these people have not read any books over the last two years, but they usually read a great deal. This actually supports Peter's thesis, rather than contradicting it.

Furthermore, counterexamples are sometimes **anomalies**. Anomalies are exceptions or odd occurrences that don't fit a normal pattern. Almost any pattern or rule has an exception. One or two exceptions do not disprove a general rule. For instance, imagine that Peter surveys 10,000 people, and of those 10,000 people, 98 percent of those who read regularly have good jobs. We can conclude that the remaining two percent are an anomaly and that, generally, people who read a lot do have good jobs. (You might be wondering at this point if it is really true that people who read a lot of books get good jobs. I am not

sure if there are actually any studies on this particular idea. However, research exists which indicates that better-educated people have higher-paying jobs. For more on this, see the exercises in chapter 6, which covers the subtopic of statistics).

Another type of example that is used in arguments is **precedent**. By using a precedent in an argument, you are referring to the past to support a claim or interpretation in the present. For instance, if you believe that it is important to be kind to others, you probably believe this because your parents have taught you this. You probably also believe this because, in the past, you have noticed examples of people who treat others with kindness, and you have decided that, generally, people who act this way get along with others better and have more friends. When you reason in this manner, you are using precedent. That is, in the past you noticed a pattern of behavior that achieved positive results (being kind to others results in good relationships), and that observation now governs how you relate to people. Another form of this type of example is the **legal precedent**, which is a legal decision that sets a pattern or establishes a principle or rule that a court adopts when deciding later cases that have similar issues or facts. When a judge or a lawyer examines a case, he or she considers examples of past similar cases in order to determine a present course of action. For most of your arguments, you will not examine past legal cases, although you might for debates in which you are proposing a change in national policy or law. In a situation like the curfew debate, you can use a form of legal precedent by discussing other rules, past and present, which pertain to the rule you are discussing.

Speaking of the curfew debate, let's look at it a little more closely and consider what examples might prove enlightening. Remember that at this point you have decided that you want to argue for a negotiable 12:00 a.m. weekend curfew. To support this argument, it would help you if you could find several examples of teenagers who benefit from such a curfew. When we examined definition techniques,
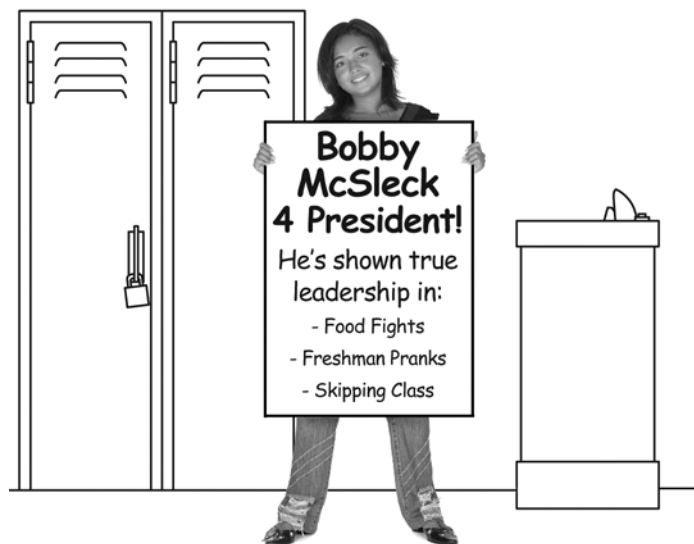
we discussed your friend, David, and his lenient curfew. This example would be especially helpful if David is a responsible, mature teenager whom your parents respect. You should also look for examples of situations in which teenagers are significantly disadvantaged by a strict curfew. Perhaps the teenagers' parents are overprotective, causing the teenagers to miss out on valuable activities. Or perhaps a strict curfew causes constant tension within a family.

To be fair, you should also examine counterexamples. For instance, you might examine examples of teenagers who benefit from strict curfews or suffer from lenient curfews. Remember that these counterexamples do not automatically disprove your thesis. There might be other reasons, irrelevant to your thesis, why a strict curfew is positive and a lenient curfew is detrimental in some situations. For example, perhaps it is not the curfew that causes problems, but certain family dynamics instead. When you encounter anomalies, keep an open mind and continue researching.

As you read the rest of this book, you will learn that examples are the foundation for many of the other common topics. For instance, the common topic of comparison demonstrates similarities between two examples, and the common topic of relationship examines causal connections between examples. Because arguments from example are the foundation of inductive arguments, you will often apply these rules to other argument techniques.

1. Example: _____
_____
_____

2. Anomaly: _____
_____
_____

3. Counterexample: _____
_____
_____

4. Precedent: _____
_____
_____

1. Hebrews 11:1-8, NASB

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval.

By faith we understand the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. By faith, Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

**READ &
ANSWER**

1. Continued
a. What is the thesis of these verses? Write it in your own words.

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b. Think of two other biblical examples that support this thesis and explain why they are good examples.

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**READ &
ANSWER**

2. Francis Bacon's "Of Beauty"

Virtue is like a rich stone best plain set; and surely virtue is best, in a body that is comely, through not of delicate features; and that hath rather dignity of presence, than beauty of aspect. Neither is it almost seen, that very beautiful persons are otherwise of great virtue; as if nature were rather busy, not to err, than in labor to produce excellency. And therefore they prove accomplished, but this holds not always: for Augustus Caesar, Titus Vespasianus, Phillip le Belle of France, Edward the Fourth of England, Alcibiades of Athens, Ismael the Sophy of Persia, were all high and great spirits; and yet the most beautiful men of their times.[1]

a. Put Francis Bacon's thesis in your own words. (His wording is a little unusual, so read it again carefully if you have trouble comprehending his prose. You will find the thesis at the beginning of the paragraph.)

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b. Where are the examples that Bacon gives to support his point? _____
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_____
_____

c. Do you agree with Bacon's thesis? Give one other example to support his thesis and give one counterexample._____
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3. Shelly Johnson's "Dictators and Anarchy"

There is a truth observed in history that dictators often arise when there is a great deal of economic chaos and disaster. For instance, in ancient Rome before Rome became an empire, it suffered from a series of civil wars. Many war generals tried to seize Rome. Finally, Julius Caesar, another war general, came to the throne, and although he was later assassinated, he established a dictatorship (as an emperor) that lasted many years. In modern times, Hitler became powerful after Germany had been devastated by World War I. The Germans were demoralized and faced severe economic crisis. When Hitler promised to restore the former glory of Germany, he was able to gain supreme power.

In addition, many South American countries that have HAD the greatest amount of unrest and chaos also have had some of the strongest dictatorships. In conclusion, times of economic crisis seem to produce the perfect condition for the rise of powerful, and often cruel, dictators.

a. State the thesis of this excerpt in your own words. _____
_____
_____
_____

b. Find an example and a counterexample to my thesis. Is the counterexample you found a true counterexample or an anomaly? Explain your answer. _____
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CRITIQUE

These three arguments all use examples to discuss the following saying: "You reap what you sow." Read each argument twice and then choose which one you feel presents the strongest points, being sure to describe why you think it is the best argument. Then write an assessment of the good and bad points of the arguments you considered not quite as strong.

When using examples to persuade an audience, remember the following rules or guidelines:
• Use a wide variety of examples from many different sources.
• Check background information.
• Carefully consider counterexamples.

1. In the Old Testament we read about a king named Saul who also reaped what he sowed. During the early part of his reign, Saul was described as a valiant, good, God-fearing king. Slowly and increasingly, however, Saul began to disregard God's commands and even sought to kill David, an upright man who later succeeded Saul as king. Later, because of his wickedness and corruption, Saul went mad, and he was eventually killed in battle. The infamous Goliath also illustrates the principle that you reap what you sow. Goliath the Philistine, was a bloodthirsty, merciless warrior who himself died without mercy when the youthful David killed him with a slingshot and then cut off his head.

In our own time, Mussolini and Hitler present perfect examples of this adage. Both of these men led extremely violent lives, killing thousands of people in wars and purges. Not suprisingly, they also died violent deaths.

2. The old saying, "You reap what you sow" has a lot of truth in it. For instance, I know this bully at school named Alf who was always mean to kids, and finally he got suspended. Another bully in the fifth grade tripped a boy in the hall, and he had to stay after school for detention.

3. There is a great deal of truth in the saying, "You reap what you sow." For example, in *Macbeth*, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth conspired to assassinate their king, Duncan. Later, both of them went mad and died violent deaths. In *Hamlet*, Claudius murdered his brother and the king so that he could get the throne, and later, he was killed by Hamlet. Lastly, in *King Lear*, Goneril and Regan are greedy and cruel to their father. In the end, Goneril poisons her sister and then murders herself. These examples clearly show that a person reaps what he sows.

It is true that some evil people do not seem to reap what they sow. There are some evil people who seem to prosper despite their wickedness. However, usually these people are not as happy as they may seem and suffer some evil consequences for their cruelty. For instance, Henry VIII divorced and killed many wives. Although he did not die a terrible death, he did miss out on the peaceful, marital happiness that comes from a long and faithful marriage. In addition, although he desperately wanted a son, he only had one, and that son died at a very young age.

DEVELOP

Now that you are more familiar with arguments from example, develop some arguments from this subtopic that support your thesis statement for the uniform debate. Use the provided questions to help you, and then write a paragraph supporting your argument. Include at least three relevant examples and one counterexample. Remember that unless your counterexample has influenced you to change your thesis statement, you should explain why it really isn't a counterexample after all.

Dress Codes and Arguments from Example

1. If you support the use of uniforms in school, can you think of other schools in which uniforms have been a positive influence? Can you think of other non-academic environments benefited by uniforms? _____
_____
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2. If you do not support the use of uniforms in school, can you think of other school situations in which uniforms have produced negative effects? Can you think of non-academic environments hindered by uniforms? _____
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3. Think of at least two counterexamples to your thesis statement. How do you explain these counterexamples? Unless you are persuaded by your counterexample to change your thesis, you should explain why the counterexamples are anomalous or irrelevant._____
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