

## The Toulmin Claim-Evidence-Warrant Model<sup>1</sup>

In a good essay, you make an overall point, asserting a **claim** that is not obvious and could be contested. Why read, write, or argue about something upon which everyone agrees? You will need to make and support your claim in an engaging and innovative way to keep the reader's attention. Your claim should not be too vague or too general because such a claim won't be very interesting to your readers, and is hard to support with specific evidence anyway.

**Evidence** is the data you use to support your claim. You can use facts or statistics, expert opinions, your own research, or anecdotal evidence (stories), perhaps even from your personal experience, though this latter kind of evidence requires a persuasive argument that it can be taken as objective support for your claim.

A **warrant** is the way you explain how the evidence you've offered supports your claim. It shows why and how you've proven your point, and perhaps also demonstrates the broader significance of your claim and evidence taken together. The warrant should be a reasonable interpretation, following from the evidence presented, without illogical steps or leaps of faith expected from your reader.

### Example

**Claim:** Your addiction to Oreo cookies actually drives climate change.

**Evidence:**

- Oreos contain palm oil harvested by some of the worst offending companies for clearing rainforests to plant non-sustainable palm plantations.
- As reported by Greenpeace, “The maker of Oreos, Mondelez, still buys its palm oil from the world's largest and dirtiest palm oil trader.”<sup>2</sup>
- Clearing rainforests causes the CO<sub>2</sub> trees had stored to be released into the atmosphere, adding to global warming.

**Warrant:** Buying Oreos contributes to rainforest destruction which adds to global warming, so environmentally conscious chocolate cookie lovers should select another brand that is more committed to sustainability until Mondelez makes more responsible sourcing choices.

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1 Introduced in 1958 by Stephen Toulmin, this is a broadly used model of argumentation here applied to persuasive writing. For more detail, see the updated 2003 version of Toulmin's work, *The Uses of Argument, Updated Edition*, Cambridge University Press.

2 Navarro, A. (2018) World wakes up to Oreo's dirty palm oil secret. Greenpeace  
<https://www.greenpeace.org/international/story/19521/the-world-wakes-up-to-oreos-dirty-secret/>