

## The Toulmin Model: Merging Rhetoric with Argument



*It's a restless hungry feeling  
That don't mean no one no good  
When ev'rything I'm a-sayin'  
You can say it just as good.  
You're right from your side  
I'm right from mine  
We're both just one too many mornings  
An' a thousand miles behind*

--Bob Dylan, "One Too Many Mornings"

Bob Dylan's lyrics suggest a sort of resigned acceptance of a dispute: a dead end. But not all arguments have to end that way. The audience knows that a reasonable voice sees not two sides to an issue, but multiple perspectives. Merging rhetoric and argument, the rhetor will be able to engage the audience and to encourage them to consider his or her position. Presenting the rhetor as reasonable, trustworthy, and honorable by using the classical appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos is key to winning the audience's trust. The argument must be well thought out and planned while also allowing for "loopholes" or concessions. This should all be constructed in a way that will be effective with the target audience.

We know that **Rhetoric** is not the use of language to mislead or manipulate. It is the use of language to compel, to persuade, and to encourage cooperation. Likewise, **Argument** is not a conflict in language or a contentious quarrel. It is a process of reasoned inquiry and rational discourse. Simply put, it is "making a case" for your beliefs. In his 1959 book, *The Uses of Argument*, British philosopher Stephen Toulmin presented a model for creating an argumentative position. He constructed a model that encompasses all of the rhetorical aspects that need to be considered when formulating a position in an argument. The features of an immature argument—extreme or one-sided positions and illogical reasoning—are not likely to be effective with the audience, so using this model to plan ahead is beneficial.

### The Toulmin Model consists of the following components:

- **Data**-evidence, reasons, or grounds for the claim (everything collected in the canon of invention).
- **Warrant**-expresses a subordinating claim that leads from the data to the claim.
- **Backing**-evidence that backs up and supports the warrant
- **Qualifier** (usually, probably, in most cases, most likely) restricts the terms of the claim and limits its range.
- **Condition of Rebuttal**-explains the problems others might have with the claim; can be seen as the exact opposite of the claim.
- **Counterargument**-your response to both the qualifiers and the condition of rebuttal.
- **Claim**-an assertion that is the conclusion reached after testing the evidence that supports a belief.

The following diagram illustrates the Toulmin model:

