

DEFINITIONS OF “ARGUMENT”

1. [A]n argument is a discourse that contains at least two statements, one of which is asserted to be a reason for the other[s]. Monroe C. Beardsley, *Practical Logic*.
2. An **argument** is a set of statements that claims that one or more of those statements, called the **premises**, support another of them, called the **conclusion**. William Hughes, *Critical Thinking*.
3. An argument . . . may be defined as a sequence of declarative sentences, one of which, called the conclusion, is intended to be evidentially supported by the others, called premises. John Eric Nolt, *Informal Logic*.
4. An argument . . . is any group of propositions of which one is claimed to follow from the others, which are regarded as providing support or grounds for the truth of that one. Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*.
5. [A]n argument is an attempt to prove or establish a conclusion. It has two major parts: a conclusion and the reason or reasons offered in support of the conclusion. Robert H. Ennis, *Critical Thinking*.
6. . . . an argument is a group of statements that a person presents such that one of the person’s statements is intended to be the upshot, or conclusion, of the others. These others, called premises, are presented as if they supported or entailed that conclusion. Peter Facione and Donald Scherer, *Logic and Logical Thinking*.
7. An argument is a complex of statements, the truth of some of which (the premises) is, or might be, taken to justify asserting another (the conclusion). Hugues Leblanc and William A. Wisdom, *Deductive Logic*.
8. Discourses containing statements that are set forth as supporting, proving, or making probable what is said in other statements . . . are called arguments. Stephen N. Thomas, *Practical Reasoning in Natural Language*.
9. Arguments are not the heated exchange of words. Rather when we use the word *argument* . . . we mean a message which attempts to establish a statement as true or worthy of belief on the basis of other statements. James B. Freeman, *Thinking Logically*.

An all-around definition:

An argument is a set of propositions, one of which (the *conclusion*) is offered as if it were supported by the others (the *premises*). Richard A. Wright and Ken Tohinaka, *Logical Thinking*.

N.B. The key concepts are (i) *set of propositions*, (ii) *possibly many premises, but only one conclusion*, and (iii) *the author attempts to support the conclusion with the premises*. Remember that a bad argument is still an argument. So, *successful* support is *not* part of the definition of an argument. Rather, successful support of the conclusion is part of the definition of a *good argument*.