

Go Higher Module 2- Arguments

Critical thinking is the basis of good decision-making. It is the process of objectively analysing an issue in order to reach a judgement or find a solution.

The concept of “arguments” is fundamental to critical thinking. Arguments here do not refer to verbal quarrels or a heated exchange of words between people. That is the day-to-day connotation.

For example, consider the following:

Person A: “Swimming is the best exercise for everyone.”

Person B: “No, it is not!”

Person A: “Yes, it is!”

Person B: “No, it is not!”

This is not an argument in the context of critical thinking. It is a shallow, rather unproductive conversation.

Now, compare it to the following exchange:

Person A: “Swimming is the best exercise for everyone.”

Person B: “No, it is not!”

Person A: “Yes, it is! It provides a full-body workout and is easy on the joints.”

Person B: “No, it is not the best exercise. There are better exercises than swimming if one has a shoulder injury or wants to build bone health.”

This is classic argumentation, with the presentation and elaboration of reasons. Arguments involve a process of reasoning. In the first conversation, only opinions were exchanged. The second conversation has opinions supported by reasons. If there is a conclusion that is based on at least one reason, then the statement qualifies as an argument.

An Argument is any statement(s) that includes reasons/evidence in support of a conclusion.

Argument = Reasons (s) + Conclusion

Example 1: Travelling is important for mental health as it shows us different perspectives on life.

Example 2: Reading the newspaper is interesting because the day’s paper is like a new chapter in an evolving story.

Example 3: Football is exciting to watch since the game changes at lightning speed.

The underlined portions are the conclusions of the arguments. The remaining parts of the examples are the reasons supporting the conclusions.

So, to put it simply, any statement(s) that includes “what” you are saying (i.e. the point, the conclusion) along with “why” you are saying it (i.e. the evidence/reasons) is an argument. From this meaning, we can learn to both identify arguments and break them down.

We need to break down arguments to understand them. When you see any communication-spoken or written, ask “why do you say so” or “how is that possible”. This part that answers the ‘why/how’ is the reason/ premise of the argument. Next, identify the statement that the reason is supporting. That is the conclusion.

Structure of an Argument: Premises and Conclusions

In an argument, there is only one conclusion supported by at least one premise or piece of evidence.

Forms of Conclusions with Examples

- Opinion- That was a great movie!
- Claim- That movie was directed by James Cameron.
- Rebuttal- No, that movie was a waste of time.
- Advice- You should look up the IMDb rating before choosing which movie to watch.
- Suggestion- You should watch The Terminator.
- Decision/ choice- I will watch The Terminator on Sunday.
- Goal, plan- I’ll complete directing my short film by December.
- Policy- I watch only those movies that are rated above 8 on IMDb.
- Procedure- The shooting of the movie is preceded by its casting and set selection.
- Request- Could you give me two tickets for The Terminator please?
- Demand- Hand over the tickets to the movie.
- Rule- This movie can be viewed only by persons above the age of 18 years.
- Schedule- The Terminator will be on at the theater three days a week for the next month.
- Structure/System- Film producers, film distributors, cinema halls and viewers comprise the film viewership system.
- Law- According to the Cinematographic Act, movies will be sanctioned for public exhibition after a complete examination by the Censor Board.
- Scheme- Vodafone subscribers will get a 50% discount on movie tickets every Monday.
- Action- Producers of The Terminator have released it directly on online platforms.
- Event- The cast of The Terminator met fans at the mall today.
- Statistic (data point)- The Terminator achieved sales of \$115m on its opening weekend.
- Expectation- Producers see The Terminator going on to become the highest grossing film of all time.
- Prediction- No movie will exceed The Terminator’s box office record for the next 10 years.
- Hypothesis- Action movies have a higher chance of turning a profit rather than romantic movies.
- Theory/ Pattern- Every fourth movie is a box-office hit in this city.
- Architecture/ Design- The plot of the movie involved the criminal constantly putting obstacles in the path of the police detective attempting to solve the murder.

Forms of Evidence/ Premises

Any supporting:

- data
- facts
- beliefs
- methods

- calculations
- measurements
- studies
- research, and/or
- strategies

We'll analyse Go from a critical reasoning perspective now.

There are multiple levels of argumentation in Go.

On a macro level, Go is about building an argument in which the conclusion is the goal/objective to win. The evidence/method supporting this is the plan a player has to secure greater points.

On a micro-level, every move involves making an argument:

- a. The move made is the conclusion- it is the decision made by a player.
- b. The player's local and global plan to win, the pieces on the board, the player's beliefs about the board position, and the move variations s/he has considered, are the evidence.

All the moves one makes should be in the form of a clear argument- "My move is a winning move because" and one should consciously attempt to understand one's opponent's move as- "My opponent has made this move because".