Toulmin Argumentation: 
A Super-Thorough Explanation

**Claim**
A claim is a statement that a writer asks his audience to accept. This is the same idea of claim that we've covered before in WR121 and WR122. A claim + a reason = an enthymeme. A claim is a hypothesis, a theory, or an opinion that the writer feels confident that she can prove within the body of the argument.

*Kermit the Frog should be considered an American icon.*

Many writers start with a claim, but then find that it is challenged. The audience will expect the writer to prove her claim. This is where the argument's grounds become important.

**Enthymeme**
The enthymeme of any argument is a claim, paired with a "because clause," or reason, in the same sentence.

*Kermit the Frog should be considered an American icon, because he is responsible for teaching generations of American children the importance of being true to oneself.*

**Grounds**
The grounds (or data or support) is the basis of an argument's real persuasion. The grounds are comprised of all the proof an author offers in support of his claim (and in expansion of his enthymeme's reason). The grounds are the "truths" on which the claim is based. Types of grounds include proof of expertise, statistics, case studies, expert testimony, and the results of studies and experiments.

*From his "birth" in 1955, Kermit the Frog has befriended children through his presence on Sesame Street, The Muppet Show and numerous muppet films.*

*Kermit's philosophy, keenly illustrated in the song "Rainbow Connection," continues to inspire people of all ages to reach for their dreams, despite any obstacles.*

*On Kermit's 50th birthday, the United States Postal Service released a set of new stamps featuring photos of Kermit and several of his fellow Muppets.*

Writers must be prepared. Some audience members will accept the argument's grounds without question, and some will dismiss it out of hand. Others will dig deeper, requiring more explanation. This is where the warrant is important.

**Warrant**
A warrant links data and other grounds to a claim, legitimizing the claim by showing the grounds to be relevant. The warrant may be explicit or unspoken and implicit. It answers the question "Why does that data mean the claim is true?"

*People know who Kermit the Frog is.*

Warrants may be based on values that the writer assumes he shares with the audience (these warrants can be based in logos, pathos or ethos).
Backing
The backing (or support) for an argument gives additional support to the warrant by answering different questions. Sometimes the warrant is not broadly understood or broadly accepted. In this case, a speaker or writer may have to defend the warrant—this defense of the warrant is known as the argument's backing. All reasons that support the warrant (instead of the claim) are called backing.

Members of every generation since the Baby Boomers have been able to see Kermit on television during their childhood.

Since 1955, most households have had television sets.

Qualifier
The qualifier (or modal qualifier) indicates the strength of the leap from the data to the warrant and may limit how universally the claim applies. They include words such as "most" and "usually" and "often."

Most Americans since the 1970s have seen Kermit star on both Sesame Street and The Muppet Show.

Rebuttal (or Concession & Rebuttal)
Despite the careful construction of the argument, there may still be counter-arguments that can be used. These may be rebutted either through a continued dialogue, or by pre-empting the counter-argument by giving the rebuttal during the initial presentation of the argument.

While some people may feel that Kermit the Frog preaches a view of life that is too idealistic or naïve, it is true that it is Kermit's lack of cynicism that makes him an iconic figure in the lives of children and a role model of whom most many parents approve.

The Toulmin Argument in Diagram Form

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grounds</th>
<th>Warrant</th>
<th>Claim</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>work to prove the claim, but must be qualified.</td>
<td>the assumptions a writer hopes the audience will share with him.</td>
<td>the argument's hypothesis or opinion.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Qualifier</th>
<th>Rebuttal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>limits the scope of the grounds.</td>
<td>an explanation of (then refutation of) a key counter-argument.</td>
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<td>any data offered in defense of the warrant.</td>
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