Arguments & Persuasion
Reasoning & Emotion
The Gentle Art of Arguing
Because people **believe** a certain way about certain things, they **act** a certain way. For example, some people think the environment is important to the health of all people, therefore they act a certain way toward the environment.

When people strongly believe certain things, and act in certain ways, they want other people to believe and act the way they do. They try to persuade others to believe and act the way they do.
To persuade means to get someone to **believe** or **do** something new or different from what they currently believe or do. There are different ways that people try to persuade other people.

The word “argue” means to present with evidence to convince someone else. It is often thought of in a negative way (like when you argue with your parents), but not all arguments have to be negative.
Types of Arguments

**Reasoning:** When using reasoning in your argument, you use logic or common sense to persuade—you use brain power to convince the other person. This type of argument often uses facts or reasonable-sounding opinions that help prove the point. Using good reasoning is often called “sound reasoning.”

**Emotions:** When arguing with emotion, you try to make the other person feel a certain way—it doesn’t matter if the argument makes sense.
# Types of Reasoning Arguments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facts</th>
<th>Opinions/Common Sense</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sources can prove it</td>
<td>no sources available</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Evidence/Proof</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tr>
<td>data that backs up what is said—has sources</td>
<td>sounds like evidence—no sources</td>
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<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Tale</th>
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<tr>
<td>stories that back up what they say—has sources</td>
<td>stories that sound true—no sources</td>
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Positions. When arguing, there are at least two sides to the argument. Each side is called a *position*. Your position in an argument is different from your opponent’s position. It is important that people know what *your* position is as soon as possible.

A person’s position is often made with a statement such as: *I think...*, or *I believe...*, or *People need to...*, or *The government should not...*, etc. These are called position statements.

To sound more convincing, the statements often sound like facts: *The government is...*, or *People are...*, etc. Be careful when you read or write something that sounds like a fact—make sure there is proof to back it up.

If you are *for* something (you *do* want that thing to happen), you are *pro* that position; also known as a *proponent* of that thing.

If you are *against* something (you *don’t* want that thing to happen), you are *con* that position; also known as an *opponent* of that thing.
Definitions.

When presenting an argument, it’s important that people know what each position means when they use certain words.

For example, when someone says:

*The worst basketball team is the Los Angeles Lakers!*  
What does the person mean by “worst”?

If someone says:

*Lady Gaga is the best!*  
What is meant by “the best”?
Quantifiers

A quantifier is a word that tells us the *quantity*, or *how much*, of something. In reasoning, it’s important that you are as precise (exact) as you can possibly be. Precise quantifiers are things like 1, 2, 3, etc.; all, none, both, every, any, each, etc.—these mean a very specific amount, and if you use them, you had better mean exactly that. All means **all**. None means **none**.

However, in arguments, people will often use quantifiers that have imprecise meanings: a bit, a bunch, a few, a good deal, a great many, a little, certain, enough, lots, many, most, much, part, plenty, several, some, tons, probably, maybe, etc. People often use these words to make something sound better or worse than things really are.

For example, if there are only two people in the world who believe that the earth is made of turtle shells, people making an argument could say, “Some people believe the earth is made of turtle shells.” Even though this is a true statement, it makes it sound like there are more people who believe the turtle shell theory than really do.
Common Sense. This term means *what most people believe to be true*, with or without any proof. In other words, it’s an opinion. An example of common sense would be something like, “People should share with others.” There probably isn’t any proof that you should share, it just makes sense to most people that you should share.

In arguments, avoid using common sense when you can use facts instead. If you do need to use common sense, make sure it is something that is agreed on by nearly everyone in the world (not just a group you belong to: religious, political, etc.).
**Emotions.** People will often try to get you to believe something by appealing to your emotions. They will make you feel bad, good, ashamed, scared, etc. about a belief or behavior. There is no reasoning behind it, they just are so desperate to get you to agree with them that they will use any method available.

Never use emotions when you are trying to persuade others.

Always question a person’s motives if they are trying to persuade you with emotions.
**Volume.** A popular method of arguing is by being the loudest (or most frequent). Just because some talks louder, or repeats their position more frequently, does not make them right nor does it make sound reasoning.

You see examples of this all the time on TV, the radio or even when arguing with a friend. Always look and listen for the evidence (facts) a person uses, not the volume of their argument.