

CHAPTER 1

ASSEMBLING ARGUMENTS: AN INTRODUCTION

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The smartphone revolution began In January 2007 at the Macworld Conference & Expo in San Francisco. At that conference, Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple, presented the first rendition of the iPhone. In doing so, he made the argument that traditional phones were obsolete. Back then, most phones lacked the functions of the new iPhone. During the course of Jobs's argument, he presented reasons to support his claim (the different features of the new phone) and evidence to back up those reasons (demonstrations of how the different features worked), as Figure 1.1 below shows.

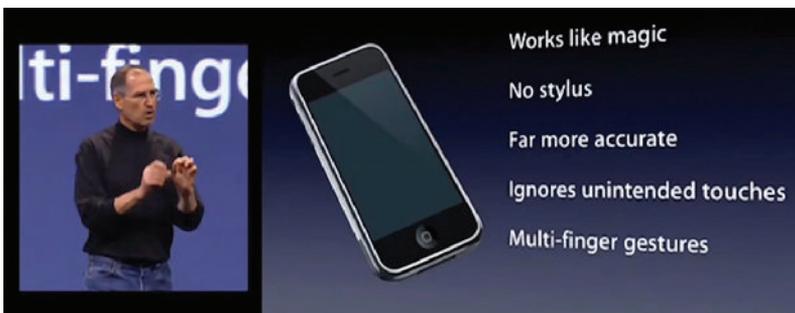


Figure 1.1 Steve Jobs, keynote address at Macworld 2007.

Steve Jobs's arguments persuaded many people of the superiority of this product, inspiring a great deal of devotion and making the first iPhone the highest selling smartphone of the time.

Other device makers have failed to match Apple's dominance, but not simply because of how the competing device worked or how the technology was assembled. When the next new device reinvents the iPhone, or some other product or process we take for granted, that device will be a success or failure in part because of the arguments offered by its creators. Arguments will be offered when the product is first conceptualized and designed. Arguments will be offered to shareholders and investors to fund the product's development. And arguments will be offered on conference stages and in advertisements to customers, to be spread through word of mouth as friends and co-workers persuade one another to buy it. How persuasive arguments are assembled is what this chapter is about.

MODULE I-1

ARGUMENT DEFINED

An **argument** is an attempt to persuade someone to think, believe, or act differently by offering reasons in support of a conclusion. Successful arguments persuade readers or listeners to change an opinion, a belief, or a behavior. In this module, we will examine some of the broadest categories of and reasons for argument and discuss some strategies for writing arguments. We'll also take a look at the type of argument of most immediate concern to students: academic arguments.

Strategies for Argument

Whatever their purpose and subject, writers of effective arguments employ strategies, or tricks of the trade, to persuade audiences. Some basic strategies include appeals to readers' or listeners' tendency to trust authority, appeals to their emotions, and the use of different types of reasoning.

Three ways to appeal to an argument's audience. Arguments are persuasive if they appeal to their intended audience, just as cooking a friend's favorite food for a birthday party is a way of appealing to her appetite and thereby communicating your feelings. The three common rhetorical appeals are described briefly below and in more detail in Chapter 17.

- **An ethical appeal, or *ethos***, involves an author or speaker moving the audience to believe that the source of the message is trustworthy and authoritative. It is an effective strategy because an audience tends to trust writers and speakers who are authorities on the issue at hand. Citing recognized experts in a field, including the academic degrees and publishing record of a source, and carefully documenting your sources using a widely accepted documentation style, such as the system recommended by the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the American Psychological Association (APA), are ways of making an ethical appeal.
- **An emotional appeal, or *pathos***, does just what it says: it appeals to the emotions of the audience in an attempt to move its members to think, believe, or act differently. For example, the SPCA shows images of animals in distress to provoke pity and thereby motivate the audience to send in a donation.
- **A logical appeal, or *logos***, relies upon logical reasoning and solid evidence to persuade. Most logical appeals are based on two types of reasoning: inductive and deductive.

Types of Reasoning or Logic

Reasoning is a means of connecting the evidence you have discovered to your conclusion, using logic. The two types of reasoning described below are commonly used in a wide variety of arguments. They are described in greater detail in Chapter 17.

- **Inductive reasoning** starts with observations about the world or your surroundings; you then use these observations to draw a conclusion that you believe is probably true. Induction is an exploratory form of reasoning because it can lead to previously undiscovered conclusions.
- **Deductive reasoning** uses one or more rules or general truths to come to a conclusion. Unlike induction, deduction involves the application of known truths or undisputed knowledge.

The chapters in Part II describe in detail many different types of arguments and ways to approach your subject and engage your audience. Part II also includes a number of useful strategies that can help you build persuasive arguments. Although you no doubt make many arguments in your daily life and at work, the type of argument you are probably most concerned about is an academic argument.

Characteristics of Academic Arguments

An **academic argument** is a specialized way of persuading an audience to think, believe, or act differently for the vital purpose of advancing knowledge. The goal of an academic argument is not simply to win or persuade. Scholars construct

arguments to find, develop, test, and contribute knowledge to the ongoing exploration and discussion among others in a discipline or specialty.

Different disciplines and professors have various specific requirements for a successful academic argument. In general, however, if you are going to join the discussion in a field by making your ideas public in an academic context, you need to know that your audience will expect an argument composed of the elements listed below.

- **A thesis:** Academic arguments are built around a clearly stated thesis, or conclusion, which the reasons and evidence support. The thesis is the assertion to be proved. It typically appears at the beginning of an argument and is often restated and expanded toward the end. For more on the thesis and its role in research and guiding the reader, see Chapters 2 and 17.
- **Evidence:** Academic arguments often include data and other types of information that are used to support the reasons that in turn support the thesis. Evidence must be acceptable, valid, and authoritative in the eyes of the audience if the reasons are to have any persuasive power.
- **Reasoning:** In academic contexts, reasoning is used to connect an argument's reasons (or 'premises') to its conclusion, in order to demonstrate that the conclusion is true. The standards of reasoning and appropriate conclusions may vary from one discipline to another, even when the subject matter is the same. A biologist may reason toward a conclusion about the constitution of the human body, while a dance professor may reason toward a conclusion about the ideal movements of that body. In both cases, the subject is the human body; but the reasoning of the biologist is not likely to look very much like the reasoning of the dance professor.
- **Knowledge of the larger debate:** As stated above, academics argue to contribute to the ongoing exploration and discussion within a particular discipline. To join the conversation, the authors of an academic argument must demonstrate that they know what has already been said (discovered or disputed) by other scholars. Also, they must show why their ideas are relevant and how they contribute to the larger debate.
- **Adherence to conventions:** **Conventions** is another term for the grammar, punctuation, style, format, and tone that adherents of an academic discipline or specialty will expect. Though all disciplines have some conventions in common, such as spelling, different disciplines have different expectations. An argument that does not correctly use the conventions scholars or professors expect will not be persuasive and may suggest that the author or speaker is not ready to join the conversation.

Non-Academic Arguments

Not all arguments are academic. Many discussions in popular media may not be seen as persuasive by an academic audience or welcome in an academic setting. For example, **debates**, in which two people or two teams try to “score points,” declare their opinions, or play to the crowd, can be a setting for arguments. However, debates may not be perceived as exploring or contributing to knowledge. **Quarrels**—angry disagreements—happen when people become frustrated with their inability to persuade and either forget to use or give up using reasons and evidence to support their points (see Figure 1.2). One familiar type of quarrel is common to cable TV panel discussions, which are more about the fireworks of clashing personalities than an attempt to discover truth using reasons and evidence. Academics are as passionate as any other profession; however, cool restraint is the expected demeanor of a seeker of truth.

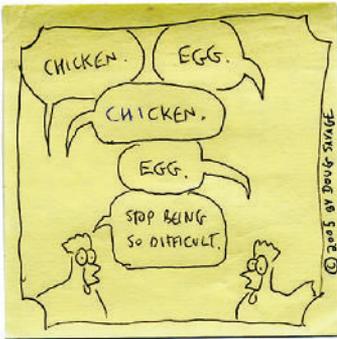


Figure 1.2
Sometimes a quarrel just isn't worth the effort.

Tweets or sound bites, features of media discussions as well as political campaigns, are summaries of positions or short assertions lacking evidence. Tweets or sound bites are closer to bumper stickers than reasoned argument because they lack evidence and reasoning.

Some assertions and disputes are not arguments at all. Self-indulgence and bullying have no place in argument. Self-indulgent speakers talk to hear their own voice and brag about their accomplishments. Though such behavior can seem like an argument, it is rarely persuasive. Bullying or threatening the audience in some way also is not persuasive in an academic setting because the bully is neither using reasons and evidence nor contributing knowledge.

Visual and Multimedia Arguments

Most of the time, academics and others use language to make arguments, but they can also make them using imagery, sound, and technology, as Steve Jobs did when he introduced the first iPhone. You can find videos of Jobs's presentation, titled “Rein-

vent the Phone,” on YouTube. His “keynote” is still a good example of a persuasive multimedia argument.

Visual arguments such as the one in Figure 1.3, which are most frequently encountered outside of the academic world, may look very different from written arguments. Visual, multimedia, and textual arguments, however, are built for the same purpose and all are composed of reasons and evidence.

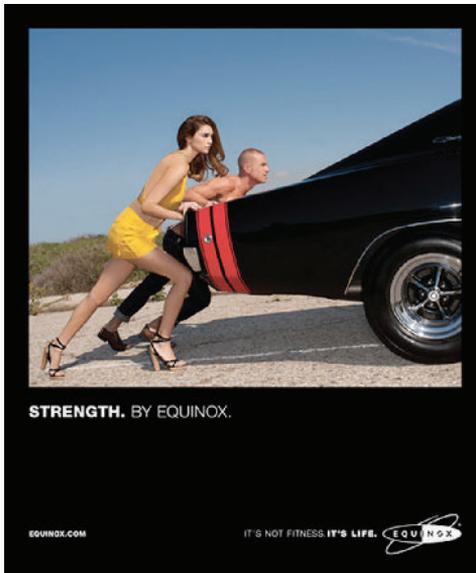


Figure 1.3

Terry Richardson’s Equinox ads are provocative and have proven successful in targeting a specific clientele that understands fitness as fashion.

A **visual argument** makes use of elements such as imagery and text, negative and positive space, layout and color, as well as info-graphics such as charts and graphs to persuade someone to think, believe, or act differently. For example, the advertisement shown in Figure 1.3 makes a cause-and-effect argument. The strength of the man is caused “BY EQUINOX.” More prominently, the ad would have you believe that the beauty of the woman demonstrating the same strength as the man is also a product of Equinox gyms.

You do not have to be a graphic designer or an advertiser to develop visual arguments. Each time you update your Facebook profile with photos or graphics, you are using images and text to persuade others of your personality, qualities, likes, and dislikes.

As multimedia capabilities and tools become as common and easy to use as a smartphone, the expectations for persuasive visual arguments will increase. If you can build a strong argument, you can build a strong visual argument. For more on visual arguments, see Chapters 8 and 25.

Invention, Audience, and Authority: Three Lenses for Viewing Argument

Whether you are constructing a written or visual argument, and whatever the argument's context, it is natural to feel overwhelmed by the many decisions you have to make as you move through the process of composing a persuasive argument. However, if you look at your task through these three lenses, a great deal of the noise and confusion will melt away:

Invention: Information retrieval and synthesis. In other words, what you find out about an **issue**—a matter about which people disagree—and how you put this information together.

Audience: The people you are attempting to persuade. Understanding the audience's thoughts and expectations is the key to your persuasive power.

Authority: Traits and qualities that establish your credibility, leading an audience to pay attention to and be persuaded by your argument.

Invention, audience, and authority are the essential perspectives that shape three parts of this text. Each of these parts focuses upon a central task of building a successful argument:

Invention: Part I. Invention and Research

Audience: Part III. Appealing to Your Audience

Authority: Part V. Projecting Authority

Each of these parts will give you practical tools, tricks of the trade, time-saving exercises, and simple solutions to the problems that pop up whenever you try to build an argument.

MODULE 1-2

INVENTION AND RESEARCH: HOW WILL YOU FIND IDEAS AND EVIDENCE?

Invention is the process of retrieving and synthesizing information and ideas in order to generate new perspectives, ideas, and arguments. An effective invention process suits an individual's style of composing and helps that writer move from frustration to inspiration and break writer's block. The type of information you seek

and where it can typically be found should determine your invention process. When you retrieve the information from within your head, the invention process is called *looking within*. Chapter 3 presents invention strategies that will help you look within, including freewriting and imposing artificial limits on your writing. When you seek information outside your own thoughts and beyond your own experience, you are *looking around* by consulting friends and peers or going into the field to observe. Chapter 3 will also help you look around to invent. *Looking to research* helps you look beyond your immediate experience and the experiences of others that you consult to seek the ideas of scholars and other experts, that is, the authorities in the field. Chapters 4 and 19 will help you locate and gather the ideas of scholars and experts. Chapter 20 will help you analyze and evaluate what you have gathered so you can draw informed conclusions.

How Invention Saves Time and Effort

Whatever your composing task, you usually have only a limited period of time to complete it. Within that time, you must gather ideas and information, organize your material and write a draft, and then revise and proofread your writing. When you use one or more invention strategies to develop some ideas to work with, organizing, drafting, revising, and proofreading become much less daunting tasks.

However, the more time you spend looking at a blank page or procrastinating out of fear that you have nothing to say, the less time you will have for the other stages of the composing process. See the Breaking the Block box entitled “Invention Never Stops” for an invention strategy that can help you in this situation.

Breaking the Block Invention Never Stops

Everyone experiences writer’s block. It is important to remember that writer’s block is not necessarily caused by a lack of ideas. Often, writers get stuck because they have too many ideas to choose from and too many potential audiences to talk to.

To overcome writer’s block, you can use invention throughout the composing process. In addition, you are surrounded by the most valuable invention tool ever discovered—friends and peers.

INSTRUCTIONS: For one week, record your ideas as Step One describes, and then share them with others. Remember to include the day and time of each recorded thought.

Step One: Record Your Ideas

- Keep some means of recording your ideas near you at all times. It could be a notebook, a scrap of paper, or your smartphone's notes or voice memo app.
- Do not judge or dismiss any idea that comes to mind until you have kept it for a week and thought about it numerous times.
- When you have a great idea or a great question, or when you see something amazing, record your thoughts before they evaporate.

Step Two: Share Your Ideas

- Bounce your ideas off friends and peers.
- Write down or record how others respond to your ideas. Also, don't forget to write down your own thoughts and responses.
- Remember that critical responses are just opportunities to re-see and reshape your thinking.

Step Three: Give Your Ideas the Respect They Deserve

- At the end of the week, review all your notes or listen to the recordings you made.
- Look for connections between your ideas and observations and the responses of friends and peers.
- Categorize and prioritize the ideas and responses using some or all of the following, or other categories that seem appropriate to the task:
 - Big ideas I must develop now
 - Ideas related to big ideas
 - Thoughts that need time to develop
 - Problems to be solved
 - Solutions looking for a problem

How Writers Use Research to Discover Ideas

You may think that research consists simply of finding an assigned number of sources to support a thesis. Finding sources that confirm your existing opinions is not research, however. Instead, research is a process of discovery.

Research is another kind of invention. When you conduct research, you internalize information outside of your own experience so that you can challenge and

develop your understanding. Research is necessary because new ideas are built upon existing ideas. When you learn about the ideas of others, observe the world around you, and engage in critical thinking and conversations with knowledgeable sources, you will develop a deeper, more informed perspective on your subject, you will have more to say, and your argument will be more persuasive. In short, you do research to discover what you do not know so that you may know more.

When a student reads a scholarly article or when reporters review court records, they are doing research. Research is not limited to print sources such as scholarly books and papers, however. When a sculptor studies the anatomy of a hand, she is doing research. When the famous scientist, anthropologist, and author Jane Goodall observes chimpanzees in their natural habitat, she is doing research. There is no single way to do research. There are, however, good and bad research methods. Chapter 2 will help you make a research plan and Chapters 4 and 19 will show you the tricks of the trade that researchers use to be thorough and efficient.

Researching How People Think and Talk

Through research, you will also gain an understanding of the expectations of your audience as you discover how your intended audience or those who work in a specific discipline or field think and talk about your subject. Use your understanding of how your audience thinks and what they expect to shape your argument.

Individuals in the film industry, for example, think and talk about *aspect ratios* and *medium shots*, whereas those in the computer industry talk about *LANs* and *bit rates*. If you are writing a paper for a history professor, clues to your professor's expectations will be found in the arguments written by other historians, or in the way that professor formulates her ideas in class.

Knowing how members of your audience think, what they value, and how they will understand you is as important as knowing what you want to say. When the writers of an episode of *CSI* want realism, they ask real crime scene investigators what word they would use to describe a piece of evidence and what procedures they would follow in a given situation. The writers of *CSI* also need to know the words a detective would *never* use to describe evidence. The audience of *CSI* expects realistic dialogue, and the writers do their best to meet this expectation. The same is true of the academic world.

Research helps you determine what you want to say and how to say it. Chapters 15 and 16 explain how to read the situation that you and your audience will share and how to discover audience expectations so that you can shape what you want to say appropriately and persuasively.

Using Invention and Research to Shape Your Voice and Authority

Invention and research provide ideas and ways to talk about those ideas. Research can also help you determine the evidence that an audience trusts, respects, and will listen to. Imagine that you are working on a new app for mobile devices that helps students prioritize their daily activities, and you need to make a pitch for it to three entirely different audiences: your friends, potential investors, and a software engineer.

Investors like those in *The Shark Tank* reality TV show will want to hear about the likelihood of sales and returns on investment. Your friends, on the other hand, might be interested in how the app will help them plan their day. However, if you are trying to describe the app's functions to a software engineer or an app developer, you may need to use technical terms to describe how the app will gather calendar data and then migrate it to an SMS (a Short Message Service on a cell phone).

Research and reading in this area will not only help you understand how app developers talk but also help you join their conversation as a respected voice. Of course, an engineer can understand your app as your friends do, but if you can use the language an engineer uses and the information she respects, you and your ideas will have much more persuasive power and be more appropriate for the intended audience.

MODULE I-3

AUDIENCE: WHO WILL CONSIDER YOUR ARGUMENT?

Any argument you make will most likely sound persuasive to you. Creating an argument that persuades others is a greater challenge, however. The success of an argument depends upon two main things:

1. **The argument itself**—the thesis, reasons, and evidence you assemble.
2. **Your understanding of the audience** you are trying to persuade.

Building an argument without your audience in mind is like packing a bag without knowing where you are going. Should you take a parka or swimsuit, formal or casual clothes? An audience can be a single person across a desk from you, a crowd in an auditorium, or many different people who will read your writing at different times and in different places. If you obtain a good understanding of your audience, you will find that the decisions you must make as you write become easier.

Clarify Your Audience

A friend who knows you well—who is aware of your interests, passions, and needs—will often give you a more appropriate gift than someone who hardly knows you. A coach who studies the strengths, weaknesses, and strategies of an opponent will give her team a greater chance of success. In the same way, a writer who uses invention strategies and does research with a carefully defined audience in mind will be more persuasive than a writer who does not.

Mistakenly, though, writers sometimes limit their invention and research as they build their argument. For some, invention strategies may seem a waste of time as a deadline approaches. For others, the “rightness” of their argument is so clear to them that they feel no need to conduct further research to discover additional evidence that supports their reasons or will help them respond to opposing views. In both cases, writers need to look at their argument from the perspective of a typical audience member, rather than relying on their own judgment of what is persuasive. In the end, your knowledge of your audience’s beliefs and ways of reasoning—and how you apply that knowledge—will help determine whether your argument succeeds or fails.

Types of Audiences

Audiences are always complex, but in general there are three different kinds of audience members for an argument:

1. **The Doubters:** those who strongly disagree with you and are unlikely to change their minds despite your reasons and evidence.
2. **The Choir:** those who already agree with you and need no further persuasion.
3. **The Receptive:** those who have not considered your position, are undecided, or are leaning in a different direction but will give you a chance to make your argument.

Remember that your audience’s disposition—doubters, members of the choir, or the receptive—depends upon the nuances of your argument. If a person or the members of an audience are doubters and disagree with you, it is usually not because they are irrational or stubborn. It is more likely that the members of your audience have a different perspective on the issue or their values are different from yours. Chapter 18, *Using Contemporary Rhetoric*, will show you how to use two different ways of understanding arguments—the Toulmin and Rogerian models—to better understand the audience you hope to persuade.

To persuade those who think, believe, and act differently, you must look beyond your own experience to consider the perspective of your audience. Invention and research, described in the previous section, can help you understand and persuade your audience. In addition, the following Conventions in Context box provides some strategies for learning about the audience for an argument.

Conventions in Context Research Your Audience

Debbie Lyons-Blythe is an Angus cattle rancher from White City, Kansas. What would you need to know before you could try to persuade her to buy a different pickup truck, try yoga, or vote in support of a new oil pipeline? Before you can persuade members of your audience, you must research them. Here's how.

Read the Location

If a place, a region, or even a virtual place such as a specialized discussion board defines your audience, learn as much as you can about that place. You might check the website of the local Chamber of Commerce, for example, or look at community web pages or voter registration statistics.

Read the Culture

If the members of your audience have common cultural traits such as age, career path, membership in a faith community, or a distinct interest, study the magazines, newspapers, and blogs your audience is likely to read.

Read Their Disposition

Once you have a sense of your audience's background, try to think as its members do. Then consider the values and beliefs that inform or shape their opinion.

Draft a Profile

In a brief paragraph, describe one member of your audience and what one person in your audience may think about your position. For example, Debbie Lyons-Blythe would probably agree with a local newspaper editorial that opposed an oil pipeline crossing her cattle pasture. However, like other local landowners, she may feel strongly that she has the right to use her land as she wishes, and so she may have no problem with neighbors choosing to lease their land to the pipeline company.

MODULE 1-4

AUTHORITY: WHAT WILL PERSUADE YOUR AUDIENCE?

If you spent all your time with like-minded people who were willing to put your wants and needs before their own, you would have no need to make arguments. In addition, you would hear few arguments and have little opportunity to learn anything new. Few people other than dictators live in such circumstances. If you want to share what you know, make a change, stay on a particular course, help others, or prepare for the future, you need to make an authoritative argument.

A **good argument** is well reasoned and makes use of solid evidence. An **authoritative argument** is a good argument that demonstrates expertise in some way. In rhetorical terms, **authority** consists of the traits and qualities that lead an audience to pay attention to and be persuaded by an argument. Authoritative traits and qualities are displayed by a speaker or demonstrated by a text. However, these traits and qualities have no effect if the listener or reader does not recognize the authority to begin with.

Markers of Authority

Authority must be apparent or visible in an argument to be recognized by an audience. Each audience understands authority differently, and in different situations different markers of authority will be recognized. Strong arguments draw upon markers—indications—of authority that the audience will recognize: the traits and qualities of the writer that demonstrate his or her extensive knowledge, experience, achievement, or scholarship about a specific subject.

For example, the two images in Figure 1.4 portray two very different situations. When Joseph Francis Dunford Jr., four-star Marine Corps General and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, gave his inaugural address at the Marine Barracks in Washington, his authority was obvious to a wide audience. The authority of the “godfather of street skating,” Rodney Mullen, speaking at TEDxUSC, is obvious to a more specific audience: skateboarders. The markers of authority pictured on the left are very different from those on the right, yet both speakers are authoritative and persuasive.



Figure 1.4 Speeches by Rodney Mullen (left) and General Dunford (right). Watch both on YouTube and notice the different traits and qualities of authority expressed by both.

Gaining Authority by Establishing a Reputation or Representing an Institution

An individual can gain authority in two ways: by building a reputation or by representing an institution. Well-known speakers or writers can draw upon their reputation as a source of authority. Oprah Winfrey, for example, is known to be a brilliant multimedia producer and star who is also generous and empathetic. These traits and qualities shape the way in which readers, listeners, and viewers perceive Winfrey's publications and other activities.

Just as many people recognize the unique markers of authority that Oprah Winfrey possesses, most people can also recognize the medals of distinguished military service worn by General Dunford because two well-known, respected institutions, the Defense Department and the Marine Corps, have recognized his service, expertise, courage, and military mind.

As a result, when Oprah Winfrey speaks about the difficulties faced by orphans in South Africa or the challenges women confront in executive positions, her audience is likely to be receptive to her views because of what they know about her. Similarly, most people who hold a high rank in the military and who wear a uniform decorated with medals, such as General Dunford, will command attention and, at least initially, be seen as credible.

Authority drawn from having a public reputation or representing an institution is not available to most people, however. If the audience for your argument does not know you, and your hard work and brilliance have yet to be recognized by a prestigious institution such as a university, you need to demonstrate your authority by other means.

Demonstrating Authority within an Argument

If you are present to share your ideas, one means of establishing authority is to take control of the traits and qualities you are exhibiting. If you are writing an argument, and may never meet your reader, the path to establishing authority is the same: you need to take control of the textual traits and qualities that are marks of credibility and use them to create authority. To help you build authoritative arguments, Chapters 20 and 21 will help you find and use information and evidence. In addition, authorities you do not personally know yet still trust demonstrate their expertise by sharing their sources and presenting their arguments in the most understandable way possible. Chapters 22 and 25 will help you document your sources and select the medium that best suits your purpose, message, and audience.