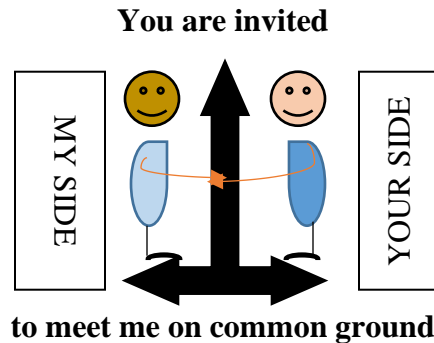


Rogerian Argument

Known also as an **Invitational Argument** or **Collaborative Rhetoric**, the **Rogerian Argument** is a non-confrontational style of writing an argument, created by psychologist Carl Rogers in his personal therapy sessions. Rogers calls this “empathetic listening” (qtd. in Ramage 141). This approach to conflict resolution is an attempt to:

- Be fair and balanced.
- Find common ground.
- Fully understand (and empathize with) the other side of an argument.

Think of it as an invitation for your opponent to meet you in the middle:



Goal

The ultimate goal of your paper is to create a dialogue with the opposition. When an argument is presented in a non-threatening way, the other side is more likely to fully listen, understand your point of view, and be willing to work cooperatively with you. In the prompt the instructor will assign the topic for the essay.

Five-Part Structure

- 1) **Introduction:** Engage with your opponent (the other side). Show your good-willed intentions by fairly describing the conflict in a way that shows you fully understand your opponent’s point of view in a respectful manner. Some things to consider include:
 - Identify the problem your opponent and you want to solve.
 - Create a friendly relationship with your opponent.
 - Show your opponent you are informed about their side of the argument.
 - Show why this problem is relevant at this time (*kairos*).
 - It is essential to create an effective Rogerian Argument thesis.

Include in your thesis: Topic, acknowledgment of the opposing viewpoint, a balanced presentation of your own viewpoint with a summary of the already-presented evidence from your introduction.

Example thesis: While Opposition Viewpoint Writer’s Viewpoint Topic Evidence 1 civilian gun ownership is acceptable for personal protection, the idea to eliminate gun control laws is not the best solution. Responsible Evidence 2 gun ownership will lower the number of gun-related accidents, Evidence 3 keep guns away from children, and limit access to guns that can potentially be used for mass shootings.

- 2) Context:** In this case, context is referring to word choice. You are creating a summary of the opponent's point of view. Items to include in this area:
- Summarize the opponent's side by choosing words, phrases, and sentences that show your understanding of the opponent's point of view.
 - Show your opponent you respect their viewpoint, by using neutral and accurate word choices.
 - "Many people would agree that a key element to gun ownership is dependent upon being a responsible owner."
 - Invite your opponent to consider several sides of this issue.
 - "There is a movement to make guns less accessible to mentally ill persons. However, that is a vague term and needs setting clear definitions to the term mentally ill. Meanwhile, other groups of people want to completely eliminate semi-automatic gun ownership and unlimited amounts of ammunition."
- 3) Writer's Position:** You are stating your point of view of the argument. You are establishing a common ground, which you already shared with your opponent. Some things to keep in mind as you write this:
- Show maturity by considering views you find threatening or deeply disagree with.
 - Show how your own views have grown from listening to your opponent's views.
 - Try to show your understanding of the opponent's views by expanding upon them to apply them to new examples or other situations.
 - "It is necessary to keep firearms out of the hands of the mentally ill in order to avoid devastating school shootings as we have seen in recent years. There needs to be a limit on the type and number of guns and how much ammunition an owner can have."
- 4) Benefits to Opponent:** You are trying to get your opponent to see how your side of the issue would be beneficial to them. You can think of this as a type of negotiation.
- Respectfully encourage your opponent to listen to your views to understand them as thoroughly as you understood their viewpoint.
 - List possible solutions that will benefit as many people as possible.
 - "Having thorough background checks would keep guns only in the hands of a responsible individual. Limiting how many guns and ammunition amounts, as well as the types of firearms used, would decrease mass shooting deaths."
- 5) Conclusion:** Wrap up your thesis (main idea) and restate in different words (not repeat) your shared issue. Other things to consider including in this section are:
- Remind your opponent how your viewpoint has changed because of their viewpoint.
 - Offer your willingness to keep an open channel of communication going forward.
 - Express an interest in further problem solving on the shared issue.
 - Gun ownership is possible for responsible adults with a clean background check. Guns for self-protection and hunting are fine for responsible people to own. However, allowing unlimited guns and ammunition, as well as semi-automatic weapons, in the home is asking for an increase in unnecessary deaths. Despite these opinions, please consider this an open invitation to continue discussing this particular issue further.

Sources:

- Lunsford, Andrea A., and John J. Ruszkiewicz. *everything's an argument*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013.
- Ramage, John D., et al. *Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings*. Pearson, 2019.
- Schick, Kurt, and Laura Schubert. *So What? The Writer's Argument*. Oxford University Press, 2017.