Toulmin Model of Argument:

The twentieth-century British philosopher Stephen Toulmin noticed that good, realistic arguments typically will consist of six parts. He used these terms to describe the items.

Data: The facts or evidence used to prove the argument
**Claim**: The statement being argued (a thesis)
Warrants: The general, hypothetical (and often implicit) logical statements that serve as bridges between the claim and the data.
Qualifiers: Statements that limit the strength of the argument or statements that propose the conditions under which the argument is true.
Rebuttals: Counter-arguments or statements indicating circumstances when the general argument does not hold true.
Backing: Statements that serve to support the warrants (i.e., arguments that don't necessarily prove the main point being argued, but which do prove the warrants are true.)

Toulmin's diagram of arguments typically looks something like this example:
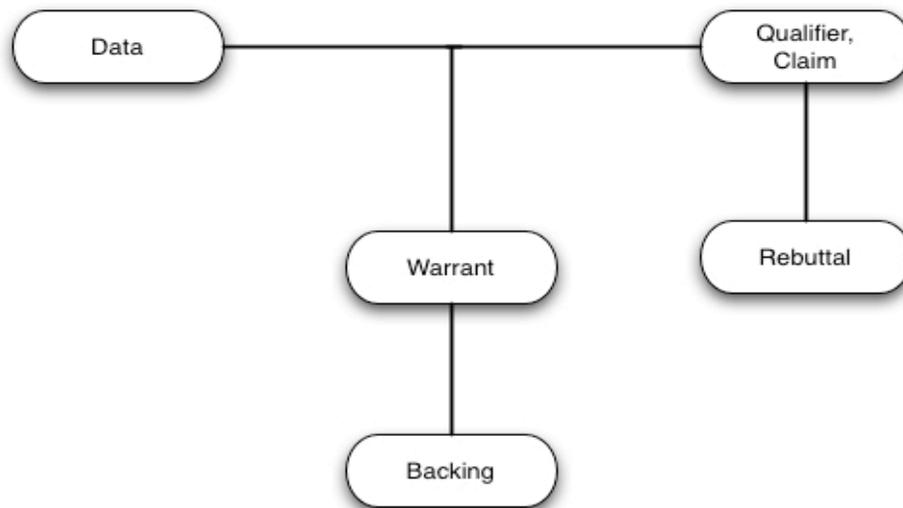
Toulmin Model of Arguments

An argument written in this manner unfolds to reveal both the strengths and limits of the argument. This is as it should be. No argument should pretend to be stronger than it is or apply further than it is meant to. The point here isn't to "win" or "beat" all the counter-arguments; the point is to come as close to the truth or as close to a realistic and feasible solution as we possibly can. Note that opening structure of "Data" leads to "Claim with qualifiers" is similar to the structure of a thesis in the form of an enthymeme, in which [one clause presenting a reason or evidence] leads to [another clause presenting an argument.]

Toulmin's model reminds us that arguments are generally expressed with qualifiers and rebuttals rather than asserted as absolutes. This lets the reader know how to take the reasoning, how far it is meant to be applied,

and how general it is meant to be. Here is an example from John Gage's *The Shape of Reason* in which the various parts of an argument are labeled:

> *Congress should ban animal research (Claim #1) because animals are tortured in experiments that have no necessary benefit for humans such as the testing of cosmetics (Data). The well being of animals is more important than the profits of the cosmetics industry (Warrant). Only congress has the authority to make such a law (Warrant) because the corporations can simply move from state to state to avoid legal penalties (Backing). Of course, this ban should not apply to medical research (Qualifier). A law to ban all research would go too far (Rebuttal).*
>
> *So, the law would probably (qualifier) have to be carefully written to define the kinds of research intended (claim #2).*

The Toulmin model is useful for analyzing an argument you are reading. That was Toulmin's original purpose--the analysis of how arguments work. On the other hand, some students find it useful to use the Toulmin model as a basis for structure and organization. We might organize our essay in the following manner:

I.   Introduction of the problem or topic.
    A. Material to get the reader's attention (a "hook")
    B. Introduce the problem or topic
    C. Introduce our **claim** or thesis, perhaps with accompanying **qualifiers** that limit the scope of the argument. (NB: This will help you cut the topic down to a manageable length.)
II.   Offer **data** (reasons or evidence) to support the argument.
    A. Datum #1
    B. Datum #2
    C. (and so on)
III. Explore **warrants** that show how the data logically is connected to the data
    A. Warrant #1
    B. Warrant #2
    C. (and so on)
IV.   Offer factual **backing** to show that logic used in the warrants is good in term of realism as well as theory.
    A. Backing for Warrant #1
    B. Backing for Warrant #2
    C. (and so on)
V.   Discuss counter-arguments and provide **rebuttal**
    A. Counter-argument #1
    B. Rebuttal to counter-argument #1
    C. Counter-argument #2
    D. Rebuttal to counter-argument #2
    E. (and so on)
VI.   Conclusion
    A. Implications of the argument, summation of points, or final evocative thought to ensure the reader remembers the argument.