Advancing Your Argument

Day to Do Task	Week 3 Daily Writing Tasks	Estimated Task Time
Day 1 (Monday?)	Read through page 92 and fill in the boxes on those pages; start documenting your time (page 97)	60 minutes
Day 2 (Tuesday?)	Draft a statement of your argument and discuss it with several others, both in your field and outside, then revise it (pages 93–94)	60 minutes
Day 3 (Wednesday?)	Review your article and note where your argu- ment is disappearing and should appear (pages 94–96)	60 minutes
Day 4 (Thursday?)	Revise your article around your argument (page 96)	60+ minutes
Day 5 (Friday?)	Revise your article around your argument (page 96)	60+ minutes

Above are the tasks for your third week. You can add two additional days of writing if you want. Since many students read the information in this chapter and find, to their dismay, that their article does not have an argument, you may have to spend extra time writing this week to stay on deadline. Make sure to start this week by scheduling when you will write and then tracking the time that you actually spend writing.

SECOND WEEK IN REVIEW

If you didn't get as much writing done last week as you hoped, join the club. Very few scholars ever feel that they have done enough. Whether you spent long hours working and don't have much to show for it, or procrastinated when you had every plan of getting a lot done, avoid feeling guilty and start this new week afresh. After all, you have twelve weeks to get it right. If you managed to fit in fifteen minutes to an hour of writing most days, congratulations! You are on your way to making writing a habit.

Either way, take a minute to write in the chart below what you learned this week about making time for writing. What aided or hindered your writing goals? What were the challenges? What worked? Did you find any solutions? What could you continue to do or start doing this week to make time for writing? Was your writing plan for last week realistic or unrealistic? Don't hesitate to make this social. You can call a colleague and do this exercise aloud or write an e-mail to a friend.

Lessons to Be Learned from Week's Writing Experiences

If you are not happy with what you produced last week, remember that your goal in using this workbook is productivity, not perfection. It does not matter if what you wrote last week was genius or schlock. Spending regular time writing is one of the most important things you can do to improve the quality of your writing. Therefore, a focus on producing will get you to the goal of publication. Continue to aim for writing at least fifteen minutes a day.

The first week you identified feelings about writing. You learned what makes for a successful academic writer. You designed a work plan. The second week you studied the various forms of academic articles, learned the myths about what it takes to get published, and the reality about what makes a research article publishable. You then hammered out your topic and worked on an abstract. In other words, you established where you are and how to get where you want to go. This week you are going to identify what makes an article publishable and learn the main key to a successful revision.

COMMON REASONS WHY JOURNALS REJECT ARTICLES

Last week you looked at what makes an article publishable, so let's turn this week to what makes an article unpublishable. In many cases, an accretion of small problems causes peer reviewers and journal editors to return an article, rather than some huge theoretical problem. Editors immediately reject between 10 and 15 percent of submitted articles, without even sending them through the peer review process, for problems that have nothing to do with the originality of the piece. If the journal has recently published an article on the same topic, even if it wasn't as brilliant as yours, the editor really can't accept your article. Likewise, if the editor is working to ensure that a variety of topics or fields is covered, the editor may not be able to accept your article on an overrepresented topic. Some editors admit that they don't have space in their journal pages for all the good articles that they receive (Weller 2001, 52). Finally, an editor may not be able to accept an article if it is no longer timely. See Week 4 (journals) for advice on how to prevent these types of rejection.

If you can learn to avoid being rejected for the following reasons, you will vastly improve your chances of getting into print. I have arranged these mistakes in the order of the workbook itself (not in order of importance). It's a lot to absorb in one session, so don't try. Rather, get to know the general categories of article problems. Then, in each week, you will work on overcoming one or more of

these problems.

Too Narrow or Too Broad

Editors reject articles for problems with focus. A narrow article is one that editors think will not interest enough readers; a broad article is one that will seem unnecessary to readers. The words that reviewers and editors may use to identify this problem include calling the article "too superficial," "too speculative," "too esoteric," "too preliminary," or "too technical." Some signs that an article has focus problems are a failure to do the following: state what is important about the (narrow) research, provide enough examples, estimate the audience's level of knowledge correctly, or match length to topic (e.g., submitting a long article on a narrow topic, or a short article on a broad or deep topic). Fortunately, there are some straightforward solutions.

Contextualize. To avoid having your article dismissed as too narrow, make sure to set your article in a broader context. If you are addressing a narrow problem, describe how it relates to larger problems. Explain the historical background or relation to other debates. With proper contextualization, nothing has a limited purpose and audience.

Aim at a broad audience. To avoid having your article dismissed as too narrow, direct your article to a broad academic audience. Articles written for the classroom often assume a reader more knowledgeable than the author; that is, the professor. You must assume the exact opposite for a journal article. In general, journal readers will have less knowledge about your specific approach or topic than your instructor or advisor. Journals have different types of readers, some of whom may not be familiar with the particular problem, text, or object you address. Make sure to introduce your topic as if the reader was intelligent but hasn't read anything on the topic lately.

Aim at a smart audience. To avoid having your article dismissed as too broad, however, don't give pages and pages of information about the country, conflict, or culture. A little bit of topical information goes a long way. Be efficient. With easy internet access to encyclopedias, journal editors are cutting more and more background information.

Give pertinent examples. To avoid having your article dismissed as too broad, don't devote too much of your article to the big picture or the theoretical frame. Make sure you give specific examples to support your argument. In the social sciences, if you don't have many findings or have few findings that support your argument, your research may be too preliminary to be published. See Week 6 (about evidence) for more advice.

Relate examples to the argument. If you spend too much of your article at the micro level, presenting strings of data without analyzing it or failing to describe how your close reading supports your argument, your article can be rejected for being "too technical" or "too narrow."

Watch length. If the journal prefers short articles, and you send a long one, editors can easily dismiss it as too broad. Likewise, if the journal prefers forty-page articles and you send a thirteen-page article, editors can dismiss it as too narrow. Study the page requirements of the journal to which you intend to send your work. See Week 4 (about journals) for more advice.

Select an appropriate journal. What may be "too technical" or "too narrow" for one journal may be just right for another. Study journals before submitting your work to them—they can vary quite a bit in what they publish. See Week 4 (journals) for advice.

Does my article have problems with focus? If so, how am I going to revise it?	

Off Topic

Editors will reject articles without even sending them to peer reviewers if the articles don't seem relevant to the mandate of the journal. They may declare that the article has "inappropriate subject matter," is on "an unsuitable subject," or falls "outside of the scope of this journal." Rejection in this case has nothing to do with the quality of the article, just its aptness. Those who work outside the journal's discipline are more likely to receive this judgment since they will be less knowledgeable about its conventions.

It is not always possible to tell what an editor will think is appropriate. If you write about Koreans in Japan, it is possible that the editor of a journal on Japan will consider your article off topic. That's why you must spend time studying journals to which you want to submit your work. It is also a good idea to contact the editor.

Is my article appropriate for the journal I have selected?	

Not Scholarly

Editors and reviewers rejecting an article for not being scholarly enough may say that the article is "sloppy," "rudimentary," "basic," "colloquial," or "obvious." Among the leading causes for this kind of rejection are the absence of references to literature in your field, many dated citations, errors in documentation, or simplistic language. Although these seem like very serious errors, there are some solutions. Indeed, editors generally see such problems as correctable (Weller 2001, 52).

Be meticulous about documentation. When editors and reviewers see problems with documentation—much missing information in the bibliography, numerous misspelled author names, mismatching publication dates, and many typos or grammatical errors in quoted material—it raises a red flag. If you are not a careful documenter, they suspect your scholarship may be shoddy in other ways as well. Perhaps you are unintentionally plagiarizing or mixing up references. Or maybe your research itself is suspect.

It is easy to fall into bad habits about documentation. You assume that you will go back later to fill in citations' sources, so you fail to write down the full source when taking notes or you just list an author's name after a quote in text. Later you have no idea where the quote came from or in which of the author's texts the quote appeared. It can be very hard to unlearn these bad habits, but learning to document your sources properly is one of the most important things you can do to make your route to publication smoother and your sanity more secure. I recommend that you never quote or paraphrase anything in a text without immediately inserting a footnote and listing the full reference, even if you listed it just a sentence before. This is easy to do with electronic footnoting, copying, and pasting. That way, if you shift sections around and a citation is separated from the rest, you will still know where the quote came from. Always try to type exact quotations from the source itself, rather than from your notes or someone else's article. If you simply do not have a reference at hand and can't get it immediately, still put in a footnote (e.g., such as "read this at library in book by big author on Alzheimer's, appeared on top of a left page"). Fortunately, with the advent of Google Books and Google Scholar, it is much easier than it used to be to find the source or page number of quotes.

Cite recent literature. If you are writing in the social sciences and many of your citations are more than three to five years old, the reviewers may state that the article is not up-to-date. In the humanities, you can cite older material, but most editors and reviewers will still expect to see some citations from material published in the last three years. If the only relevant citations are old, you will probably need to explain this. Primary sources can be from any period.

Cite multiple sources. Editors and reviewers grow concerned if your article seems to rely too heavily on one article or book. Make sure to cite a variety of sources, at least ten to twenty.

Cite relevant literature. As mentioned earlier, it is vital to link the new to the old. This means acknowledging those who wrote before you. You can write a poem or novel without doing so, but a journal article is not scholarly until you discuss the ideas of those who have written about your topic. An article is like the Academy Awards; no artist leaves the stage until each thanks those who helped realize the work. You don't have to mention everyone—in most cases this would be impossible—but you must cite and discuss at least some of them, preferably those who had the most influence on your thought and those who strongly agree or disagree with your argument. Paraphrase, don't quote them; group and summarize authors in the introduction; concentrate on those authors with theoretical contributions. If you don't cite everyone relevant, that should not be a reason for rejection. Many editors and reviewers see literature reviews with some shortcomings as a reason that an article should be revised, not rejected (Weller 2001, 52).

Reference debates in the field. As a corollary of the previous point, be sure to reference not just particular authors, but particular discussions. That is, instead of analyzing each author individually,

you can group authors by which side of a debate they appear on. For instance, to borrow from the work of Fong and Yung (1996), discuss the differences between those who see interracial marriage as a simple product of assimilation and those who see it as a complex product of raced and gendered power relations. By doing such encapsulating, you advance the field, not only acknowledging the shoulders you stand on but also interpreting those predecessors for others. Just be sure that the debates you are citing are recent (unless your argument is that returning to an old debate helps us better understand a new debate).

Use discipline-related expertise. Each discipline has practices that editors and reviewers of disciplinary journals may expect to see alluded to in articles. Thus, a history article that does not mention "archival research" may appear insubstantial to a history editor or reviewer. Likewise, an anthropology article that doesn't mention the author's field research, an education article that doesn't mention the author's classroom observation, a psychology article that doesn't mention the author's clinical or laboratory experience, or a geography article without maps may seem odd to an editor or reviewer. If you are submitting your article to an interdisciplinary journal, they will not expect to see discipline-related expertise. If you are submitting your article to the large association journals of a discipline, they might.

Provide a critical framework. You must also present your ideas within a critical framework. You do not necessarily need to name this framework, but editors and reviewers want to have some sense for your approach to your topic—new historicist, Marxist, structuralist, behaviorist, econometric, Foucauldian, post-feminist, rational choice, and so on. If your work is critically eclectic, you may have to address this question in the editors' or reviewers' minds.

Provide evidence. You cannot simply assert that some argument is true; you must prove it with evidence. A journal article is not a political speech, it is more like a court case.

Does my article have problems with scholarliness? If so, how am I going to revise it?	

Too Defensive

The mark that most distinguishes the classroom paper from a journal article is defensiveness. Students seldom have the experience to be confident as writers, and so they tend to overemphasize their apparatus (e.g., the materials for critical study) and underemphasize their content. Editors and reviewers notice this almost intuitively and will sometimes even say that the article "reads like a classroom paper." This problem of confidence naturally resolves itself the more you write and publish. Learn to write for the field, not to prove that you have done your homework, are intelligent, or read widely. Some solutions are the following:

Avoid extensive quotations. Reduce the number of quotations and abridge most of those remaining. You can tell a classroom paper almost by flipping through. It is the one with lots of block quotations set apart from the text, a remnant of trying to get the page count up or trying to signal to the professor that you did all the reading. Of course, if you are doing a textual analysis, you must quote from it; but even then, you should avoid long quotations that you leave the reader to interpret. Reading research shows that readers tend to skip quotes.[10]

Avoid the famous for fame's sake. Do not quote famous authors just for the sake of having their names appear in your article. Nothing marks an article as written for the classroom more than a not-very-apt quote from Aristotle or Habermas or Marx. It's okay to quote the heavy hitters, but only if the quote is eloquent and completely related to your research. Likewise, don't state the banal and attribute it to someone famous (e.g., "power is important, says Foucault").

Avoid excessive documenting. Cite only relevant studies. Do not prove that you have neglected no source. Again, classroom papers are the ones with long bibliographies designed to impress rather than document.

Avoid monotonous synopses of others' work. Keep reviews of previous scholarship brief. Some student papers devote half of their length to simply reprising the ideas of others. But editors do not publish articles to teach readers about what has already been written. Articles are not instructional tools. Editors publish articles to advance the field and to forward new ways of thinking among professors, not to teach newcomers.

Avoid jargon. In the 1990s, academia favored the creation of unique terms to communicate new ideas in cultural studies. Now the trend is away from this, so be especially careful about jargon. Run a spelling check and consider replacing correctly spelled but unrecognized words that pop up (except for proper nouns).

Avoid provenance labels. Some students seem to think that leaving the name of the class and professor or conference on the title page of their article will lend it stature. The exact opposite is true. No editor likes to receive an unrevised classroom or conference paper. Many may actually feel insulted by clear indications that you have not massaged the article for his or her journal. Delete all references to former incarnations on the title page. If need be, you can mention in the notes that the articles is "a revised version" of an article presented at such and such a conference but I wouldn't say it was "started" in such and such a helpful class.

Avoid dogmatism. Always include some evidence that seems to contradict your thesis. You do not need to have an airtight case to convince your reader. Indeed, a willingness to acknowledge arguments against your position shows confidence and scholarly rigor.

Not Sufficiently Original

One of the most common reasons that editors give for rejecting an article, according to their own report, is that it adds "no new knowledge" (Weller 2001, 50). They describe an article's novelty as a big part of its appeal, especially if it is on a hot or timely topic (Weller 2001, 92–94). Several problems can cause editors or reviewers to dismiss your article as unoriginal. These include duplicating already published articles, rehashing others' ideas, addressing a topic or text that holds little interest to their readers, constructing an opposing position that doesn't really exist, and failing to announce originality. Again, there are some straightforward solutions.

Read in your field. It's difficult to know if you are replicating others' work if you are not reading peer-reviewed journals in your field. At a minimum, receive journal tables of contents by e-mail or RSS feed, so that you can know what topics your colleagues are covering.

Focus on the new. After addressing others' ideas in the introduction or a background/history section, move on firmly to your ideas and data. You must introduce your topic properly, giving background and context, but do not, after the article is underway, spend much time defining common terms, describing the theories of famous authors, or rehashing disciplinary knowledge.

Argue the real. Do not attack straw men; that is, do not cobble together an opposing argument without real advocates and then deconstruct that argument. Be sure you are debating a real force in the world.

Articulate originality. Tell the reader what is new about your evidence, methodology, analysis, or theories. Underline what's different about your work. What will scholars find out that they did not already know? Students often fail to announce such matters. They tell me that by the time they are completing their articles, their "new" argument seems entirely obvious. That's just because you have been working on it for a long time. Ask colleagues what they think is new about your article if you can't remember.

Claim your ideas. I have often found that students will unwittingly present their own ideas as if they were common knowledge or even the work of other people. Women are especially prone to this error. Make sure you make statements such as, "I argue that" or "The thesis of this paper is" or "My term for this is." Otherwise, you may present your best work as ownerless observations randomly picked up.

Develop a voice. The most difficult task of any writer is to develop a voice that can be heard above the babble of cited authors. Although there are many components to having a writing voice, the

easiest move you can make is to embrace the personal pronoun. When you work to excise yourself from your research, your writing loses its flavor. In some fields, such as law, it simply isn't done to refer to "I" or "my," but you can still work toward a more personal, direct tone. Avoid passive voice when you can and eschew false attempts to appear objective. Never moralize, but find ways to express your passion for the topic and sometimes allow humor, enthusiasm, loathing, or sadness to color what you write. The key is to remember that a little personalizing goes a long way, especially in the social sciences.

Does my article have problems with originality? If so, how am I going to revise it?	

Poor Structure

Editors and reviewers perceive an article as poorly structured if it lacks organization or has a very muddled one. They may not mention "structure" as a problem, but remarks about "poor writing," "poor presentation," or "poor organization" often have to do with structure. Signs of structural faults are many unlinked insights, irrelevant or redundant sections, no introduction, no conclusion, or withheld findings. In the U.S. classroom and in non-U.S. academic cultures, you can get away with writing an article that meanders through various colorful observations without any clear destination. You can start right in on your observations without introducing them, and you can conclude without summarizing them. You can digress at length and only announce your findings in the final paragraph. Indeed, one hundred years ago, you could have published such an article. Now you cannot. Your article must have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Each section must proceed with a firm sense of purpose and a clear relationship to the other sections. If your article has structural problems, your article will have a tough time surviving the peer review process. Be sure to complete Week 6 of this workbook, where you will learn how to improve the structure of your article. One of the most helpful techniques is the post-outline, in which you outline your article after you've written a draft.

Surface your structure. Sometimes your article has a structure but it is submerged. Just because you know where the article is going doesn't necessarily mean we, the readers, do. So, help us out. The old saw that you should "tell them what you are going to say, tell them, and then tell them what you just said" is still right. Use summary paragraphs, subheads, and transition sentences to announce the direction of your article. Do not assume that because something is clear to you that it will be clear to the reader. Visible cues to structure are particularly helpful in getting reviewers to look on your article favorably. That is, even if you haven't succeeded in doing what you set out to do, your general project comes across more clearly, and they can push you to do what you promised rather than rejecting you. Some stylebooks advise against obvious "signposting" (or, in a memorable phrase, "outside plumbing") but I think the benefits at the peer review stage outweigh the costs. You can always delete such material in copyediting, after it has served its purpose.

Stick to your point. Remember what your article is not. It is not a book, which has 300 pages to explore many ideas. Instead, an article is only twenty to forty pages. Your article is also not a chapter of a book, which depends on the chapters before and after it. Instead, an article must stand alone. Your article must be carefully organized around a single significant idea. Align your insights around your main point.

Delete the redundant or irrelevant. Review your article with an eye for material said once, twice, or twenty times and for material not directly related to your single significant idea. A friend can often do this more effectively and quickly than you can, since you are overly familiar with all the points. If you or your reader find such material, get rid of it, no matter how fascinating. You don't have to delete this material from the world forever, just from this article. Indeed, such excised sections are often the germ of your next article and should be saved as the valuable material they are.

Subordinate the concrete. Many problems with structure arise from the author's failure to relate the particular, usually evidence or proofs, to the general, usually the theory or argument. The reader should learn no fact without knowing why that fact is important to your single significant idea. If you carefully make such links, your article will automatically begin to gain a structure.

Relinquish your findings. Many students love the mystery format. For some reason, students believe that readers will stop reading if they get the goods too early. So students withhold their article's purpose, import, significance, or argument until the end of the article. I have one word for you: don't. The sooner you can tell readers your single significant idea, the better. Indeed, scholars are far more likely to read your article if they get this information early.

Does my article have problems with structure? If so, how am I going to revise it?	

Not Significant

Editors and reviewers reject an article as "insignificant," "unimportant," "of little merit," or "not applicable" if the author does not answer the eternal question "So what?" What difference does your research make, and why should we the readers care about it? Of course, if your article really has no functional value, you cannot avoid rejection. Weak findings, statistically insignificant results, or little supporting data are not truly salvageable problems. Most of the time, however, a real lack of significance is not the problem. The problem lies in the author assuming that the significance will be clear to the reader.

Articulate significance. Articulate your work's significance or impact. For some reason, many students frequently do not state the significance of their work. They fail to say that no one else has written on this topic or that the last research done on the topic is twenty years old. They fail to say

that their analysis may provide a solution to some problem or open up a new path for the field. They fail to say that another prominent scholar called for the research to be done or that the research fills a gap in that scholar's work. Of course, you do want to be careful in your claim for significance (avoid coming across as if you think your research is the equivalent of discovering the wheel) but you must state it clearly. If you are not sure what the significance of your work is, ask someone in the field. They can be helpful in identifying to which field concern your work relates. See Week 8 (about openings) for more advice.

Select the right journal. What is old news to one field may be exciting news to another. The absence of certain kinds of data or case histories may matter to one journal and not to another.

Does my article have problems with significance? If so, how am I going to revise it?	

Theoretically or Methodologically Flawed

The most damning comment to get back from an editor or reviewer is that he or she found your article's approach or evidence problematic. In the social sciences, they may say that the article has a poor conceptual design, an argument not supported by the data, insufficient data, inaccurately calculated statistics, faulty laboratory procedures, improperly taken samples or case histories, undocumented results, methodological problems, poorly interpreted results, or an inadequate research base. In fact, "inadequate theory" and "methodological problems" are among the most frequent reasons given for rejection in the social sciences (Weller 2001, 50, 52). In the humanities, the editor or reviewer may say that the article is ==undertheorized==, ==not adequately conceptualized==, or ==poorly analyzed.== They may disagree with the thrust of the close reading. They may say that the article is racist, classist, sexist, imperialist, etc. Such an article has little chance of surviving a resubmission, even with a heavy rewrite. Once an editor has decided any of these are true of your article, you have little recourse but to send the article to another journal. Editors don't generally see such problems as being correctable (Weller 2001, 52–53). It's best, then, to work hard not to get a judgment of "hopelessly flawed" from an editor or reviewer.

Let me just note, however, that they may not be right. Two graduate students did fascinating interviews with leading economists asking them "to describe instances in which journals rejected their papers" (Gans and Shepherd 1994). The students' survey revealed that "many papers that have become classics were rejected initially by at least one journal—and often by more than one." Rejections of articles that went on to be cited in thousands of other articles were often rejected for theoretical reasons, that is, "too general" a hypothesis, "preposterous" predictions, "uninteresting" conclusions, "inappropriate" models, and "trivial" substance. Editors can fail to recognize an advance in the field and mislabel it erroneous.

Peer review before submission. It is always a good idea to ask professors in the field to review and comment on your article. They can help you strengthen your theoretical base or point out ways of convincing readers that your new method is sound.

Detail your methodology. Again, it is not always that your method is wrong, but that you haven't done enough to convince reviewers of its applicability. One easy way of doing this is to recognize potential problems and pitfalls. Acknowledge alternative approaches to the material and explain why you did not choose them. Be careful not to appear enamored of a particular method at the expense of your hypothesis. Cite studies defending the methodology.

Avoid imbalance. Be careful to balance your article between the theoretical and the concrete. Theory comes alive through concrete particulars just as the concrete becomes significant through explanatory theory.

Cite opposing views. Use your endnotes to indicate that you are aware of and have considered scholars who differ in opinion from you.

Review your analysis. If you have not carefully analyzed your data or interpreted your findings, be sure to revise your paper to do so. This is a correctable problem, although editors may not say so when rejecting you for this reason. It's best to correct this before it gets to editors and reviewers, since "poor analysis" or "inadequate interpretation" are frequent reasons for rejection (Weller 2001, 53).

Does my article have problems with theory? If so, how am I going to revise it?	

Too Many Misspellings and Grammatical Errors

Errors in spelling and grammar are rarely the sole reason for rejection, but if they are numerous they can provide the coup de grace. Editors or reviewers may reject your article as "sloppy," "badly written," "hastily written," "nonnative," or "poorly presented" if your article has frequent typing errors, misspellings of ordinary words, numerous problems with verb tense and agreement, twisted sentence structures, common words used incorrectly, pronouns with unclear referents, and excessive use of adjectives. Students usually know if they have such writing problems, perhaps because some professor told them so or because they lack writing experience, are a nonnative speaker of English, or have dyslexia. Whatever the cause, if you know that you need to improve your writing skills, there are some solutions. The following are the easiest.

Complete Week 10. Be sure to do the exercises in Week 10 of this workbook, where you will have a chance to work on improving your grammar and clarity. Besides this workbook, other texts can instruct you in improving your writing. See Recommended Reading at the end of this book.

Run a spelling check. Always run an electronic spelling check as your last task before submitting an article. Make sure you spell-check the footnotes, as programs often do not do this automatically. Make sure you spellcheck the bibliography even though it has many proper names. Many spelling errors creep into bibliographies because authors never bother to spell-check them.

If your article has many proper nouns, especially author names, it can be a good idea to spell-check in a particular way. Create a custom dictionary for the article (in Word this is under Tools, Options, and Spelling & Grammar). When you spell-check, add all proper nouns to the dictionary. Then review the words in the dictionary (Tools, Options, Spelling & Grammar, Dictionaries, Edit). You will often find that you have spelled an author's name differently in different places (e.g., Richardson in the text and Richardsen in the bibliography). It is unlikely that an editor or reviewer will notice such errors in proper nouns (unless they are famous authors), but such sloppiness can begin to register at a subconscious level, adding to the reader's sense that your article is not careful.

Run a grammar check. Run an electronic grammar check before sending an article out. Many students find the Microsoft Word grammar check frustrating because a writer's grasp of grammar must be strong to use it. Certainly, many of the program's suggestions will be wrong so you must carefully evaluate all suggested corrections. If you are not sure whether the suggestion is correct, the program's Help feature can aid you in making the correct choice. Nevertheless, although it takes a little effort, a grammar check can help anyone identify misused words, sentence fragments, punctuation errors (especially commas and semicolons), passive voice, overuse of prepositional phrases, capitalization problems, and subject-verb agreement. If you run a grammar check for passive voice and subject-verb agreement alone, it will prove useful.

Hire an editor. Everyone can benefit from someone reviewing his or her writing right before submission to a journal. Even excellent writers make mistakes. Some universities have writing labs, where you can work one-on-one with an editor or writing instructor. If your university does not have this, consider hiring a copyeditor. Although a professional copyeditor can be expensive (charging anywhere from $5 to $25 per page), it can be well worth the expense. If you get an article published and then get an academic appointment with an annual salary because you published that article, spending even $1,000, if you have it, will have been an excellent investment in your future earnings.

Follow the submission guidelines. Editors are used to seeing articles in the standard format of their journal, so if you don't follow the submission guidelines, editors may instinctively feel that the article doesn't belong in the journal.

Does my article have problems with spelling or grammar? If so, how am I going to revise it?	

This long list is somewhat overwhelming. Fortunately, many of these problems are connected to the

same root, the main reason why editors and reviewers reject articles, which is the focus of much of this workbook and the following section.

MAIN REASON JOURNAL ARTICLES ARE REJECTED: NO ARGUMENT

I believe that the main reason why editors and reviewers reject articles is because authors do not have an argument or do not state it early and clearly. You will dramatically increase your chances of publication if you craft the argument of your article. When you center your article on a single persuasive idea, you are a giant leap closer to publication.

> Editors... agree that one of the most common and frustrating problems with submitted articles is a failure on the part of authors to express their thesis clearly and early in the article. . . . Perhaps the single most important thing you can do to increase the receptivity of your scholarly article is to ensure that . . . your thesis is clearly stated. (Olson 1997, 59, 61)

Editors or reviewers may not mention the lack of an argument as a reason for rejection. They may instead state that the article is not original or significant, that it is disorganized, that it suffers from poor analysis, or that it "reads like a student paper." But the solution for all these problems lies in having an argument, stating it early and clearly, and then structuring your article around that argument.

MAKING A GOOD ARGUMENT

But what exactly is an argument? Is it the same as a thesis or hypothesis or conclusion or findings? How is it different from a topic? And how do you go about making one? Part of the reason that unclear arguments are so common in academia is because of the failure to teach what an argument is. Freshman composition courses address it and then students rarely come across the concept again. There is a reason for this: Argument is notoriously difficult to teach. One book, jammed with various techniques for teaching students how to write an argument, carefully acknowledges that post-course surveys revealed that each technique for teaching argument made little or no difference in student papers (Fulkerson 1996). So, if you feel confused about what an argument is or how to make it, you are in excellent company. Let's dare to figure it out anyway.

What Is an Argument?

Succinctly, an argument is a discourse intended to persuade. You persuade someone by engaging their doubts and providing evidence to overcome those doubts. A journal article, then, is a piece of writing that attempts to persuade a reader to believe in something. It expresses a point of view intended to influence.

Although this subjective language may scare social scientists, in fact, a hypothesis is part of an argument. A social science article sets out to persuade the reader that the hypothesis is true or false. In such articles, what I am calling an argument is often described as the conclusion. The method and manner of persuasion may be different from that in the humanities, but it is a persuasion nonetheless.

If the hypothesis is "does x affect y?" the argument is "x affects y when z is present."

More technically, an argument is a coherent series of statements in which the author leads the reader from certain premises to a particular conclusion. Thus, an argument always has at least two parts: a claim and evidence for that claim. A statement that is being supported is called the conclusion, hypothesis, or claim. A statement being offered as a support to another is called a premise, proof, or evidence. Whatever your argument (or thesis or conclusion) you must provide proof (or premises).

How to test if you have an argument. One of the easiest ways to distinguish whether a statement is an argument is if it consists of statements to which you can coherently respond "I agree" or "I disagree" (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz 2003). For instance, the statement that "Charlotte Gilman was a great writer" is one with which you can agree or disagree. The statement that "Charlotte Gilman was a writer" is not. It is a fact. The evaluation of "great writer" requires proofs in order to persuade the reader, the actuality "writer" does not. Likewise, the statement that "many California school children are bilingual" is not an argument. It is a fact. The statement that "bilingual children do better in school than monolingual children" is an argument. Many would disagree with this argument or making such a conclusion from the data.

Students interested in critical theory will have already begun to question this. Isn't all discourse an argument? Aren't all texts meant to persuade? Can we know for sure that Charlotte Gilman was a writer? Indeed, this is part of what makes argument so difficult to teach. Definitions begin to blur; meaning begins to slip.

Since my interest here is pedagogical not theoretical—I merely want to provide some useful ways of thinking about writing that enable you to get your work published—I won't go further into the thorny thickets of argument theory. I will just say that in this workbook, I use the term "argument" as shorthand for your article's single significant idea, an idea you must support with proofs to persuade the reader that your point of view has validity. If you are interested in the topic of argument more broadly, I recommend that you consider the books I've listed in the Recommended Reading section at the end of this book. I won't spend more time here explaining what an argument is since I have found through teaching argument that it isn't that useful. The most useful way to learn to construct a journal article argument is to study examples.

How to avoid being dogmatic. When some people hear the word "argument," they think of two people yelling, neither person listening to the other or conceding legitimate points. This is exactly the kind of argument you do not want in your article. To have a successful argument, you do not need to annihilate scholarly opponents or bulletproof your position. An argument is a dialectic between opposing positions that results in a decision. It is about the search for answers through exchange. This means that you do not need to have an unassailable argument, just an interesting one. A difficult truth

is that those issues most worth arguing over almost never have all the evidence on one side or the other. Both sides have compelling proofs. If you have taken up an argument that has no compelling evidence against it, you have probably not chosen a publishable argument. To persuade readers, they must first have doubts, or believe that others have doubts that your argument is right. So, to construct a sound argument, build in a consideration of opposing voices. This is a mark of the best academic writers.

For instance, one of the articles published in the academic journal I managed, *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies,* is an excellent example of a confident article with a clear argument that does not silence all opposition. Eric Avila's article analyzes Chicana/o literature for what it reveals about the Chicana/o community's view of the Los Angeles freeway. His argument is that, in contrast to the typical Anglo perspective, Chicana/os view the freeways as destructive rather than constructive, for entire Chicana/o neighborhoods were destroyed to construct them. To demonstrate the positive Anglo perspective, he cites city documents and newspapers. To demonstrate the negative Chicana/o perspective, he cites literary texts about Los Angeles written by Chicana/os. He makes a compelling argument for the two groups' widely differing views. In the final section, however, he openly admits that one group of Chicana/os did not view the freeway as negative: gay Chicano writers. Their literature about Los Angeles reveals a view of the freeway as libratory, a way out of the perceived patriarchy of the barrio. This final section is what makes his article great, he shows where his argument breaks down in an interesting way, thus making this article even stronger.

I always cite this example when students ask me, "Why would I want to include arguments that weaken my own position?" First, if you ignore research that conflicts with your claims, you must assume that the reader will not know of that research, a risky assumption at best. Second, your argument is less persuasive if you don't address possible rebuttals. Addressing likely opposing arguments shows you have thought about the alternatives. The point of argumentation and research is not simply to look for material that supports conclusions you already believe in, but to explore for answers. It is a good writer's job to show that opposing arguments are understood and credited, but need not vitiate the claim. Good reasons exist on both sides of any important argument; your purpose is to present them and reach the best conclusion possible.

In the social sciences, such openness often shows in the authors' description of the limitations of the study. The authors analyze their data as supporting their hypotheses, but admit that variations in sample or variables might have delivered a different conclusion.

How to avoid making topics rather than arguments. An argument is not a topic. Confusing the two is a major problem in student papers. In other words, many student papers range around a topic rather than having a clear argument. Indeed, when I ask students to tell me their argument, they frequently present topics to me. For this reason, let's go through some statements and identify if they

are working as arguments.

- I want to tell you about a new book I'm reading. (This is not yet a topic or an argument about a topic.)
- The purpose of this paper is to analyze Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Annie John*. (This is a statement of a project, but it is not a topic or an argument about a topic.)
- This paper uncovers what we can learn about the postcolonial experience from Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Annie John*. (This is a statement of a topic, but it is not an argument about a topic.)
- Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Annie John* is helpful to our understanding of the postcolonial experience. (This is an argument but an extremely vague one.)
- Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Annie John* aids our understanding of the postcolonial experience by detailing how Annie John's British education increasingly alienates her from her mother. (This is a strong argument with a pair of proofs [Annie is British educated, she is alienated from her mother] and a pair of claims [British education causes familial alienation, this alienation is postcolonial] supporting the argument that the book aids our understanding of the postcolonial experience.)

As you can see from these examples, an argument is about establishing a position through rational support. It is about saying something that someone else could argue with, often a scary proposition for writers starting out. That's why they so often stick with topics; it is easier to declare the arena your article moves in. But you must have an argument to be successful.

Let's look at some more statements to continue to get a better idea of what an argument is. Which one of the following statements is an argument? I have taken the pair from the original and revised abstract of the same student article by Haeng-ja Chung.

- In this article, I give an overview of the issues of Koreans in Japan from the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945) to the present.
- This article asserts that the lower social position of Koreans in Japan from the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945) to the present was shaped by the decolonization process, the division of South and North Korea, and the contradictory policies of the Japanese government toward Koreans in Japan.

The first statement is not an argument. You can tell because you can't really agree or disagree with it. It has no specific claim. The second statement is an argument. You can tell because you immediately wonder if the statement is true or not. It also gives real detail rather than vaguely claiming that some factors shaped Korean assimilation.

Let's look at another pair from a published article.

- This article reviews factors that facilitate or hinder successful coping with HIV, including preexisting psychological functioning, medical health status, quality and adequacy of social support, stress and coping style, and perceived expected benefits of treatment.
- This article contends that group psychotherapy aimed at developing a positive self-identity is valuable for those individuals coping with the challenges posed by their HIV-positive serostatus.[11]

At first, it may seem like the first statement is an argument. It isn't vague and it lists variables. Nevertheless, it doesn't pass the "agree or disagree" test. Which aspect of these factors facilitates, which hinders? The author has not presented the readers with a real idea, just a list of categories to be examined. The second statement really is an argument, identifying a variable and arguing that it has an effect in the world.

A frequent mistake that students make is setting out a project instead of presenting an argument. Another mistake is believing that an argument is only a statement that your subject is important, overlooked, or worth more study. Such statements are claims for significance, not article-sustaining arguments.

- The development of democracy in Malawi over the 1990s illuminates the struggles that states face in democratizing when a significant proportion of the population is illiterate.
- This study of 1990s Malawian elections reveals that lack of literacy is a major obstacle to democratization.

Both statements are arguments, but the first is only an argument of significance. The second could sustain an article, but could be improved by addressing what exact obstacles illiteracy poses to democracy.

How to Write an Argument-Driven Article

Once you have an argument, you are not done. A problem that many unpublished articles have is that they are driven by the data and not the argument. The article has an argument, but it is unconnected to what is actually going on in the article. The article has data and evidence, but they are unconnected to the argument. Don't fall into the trap of letting your data organize your article rather than your argument.

Tim Stowell of the UCLA Linguistics Department tells his doctoral students that when writing a journal article they should not write like a detective collecting data but like a lawyer arguing a case. A detective's report states that several items were found at the crime scene, that dozens of persons

were interviewed and made various statements, and that John Doe was arrested. A lawyer's brief states that John Doe committed the murder because item x was found at the crime scene and eyewitness y saw him do it. The report is data-driven, the brief is argument-driven. If your article presents all the data you went through to get to your conclusion, you have written a report, not a publishable article. Think like a lawyer and present evidence that supports your case, cross-examine the evidence that doesn't support your case, ignore evidence that neither contradicts nor supports your case, and make sure that the jury always knows whom you are accusing of what and why. Then you will have an argument-driven article.

Let's look at an example of an argumentative problem. The following abstract drafts describing the same article appear in the excellent Swales and Feak textbook on academic writing (1994). Which abstract is better?

Abstract Version A

A count of sentence connectors in 12 academic papers produced 70 different connectors. These varied in frequency from 62 tokens (*however*) to single occurrences. Seventy-five percent of the 467 examples appeared in sentence-initial position. However, individual connectors varied considerably in position reference. Some (e.g., *in addition*) always occurred initially; in other cases (e.g., *for example, therefore*), they were placed after the subject more than 50% of the time. These findings suggest that a search for general rules for connector position may not be fruitful.

Abstract Version B

Although sentence connectors are a well-recognized feature of academic writing, little research has been undertaken on their positioning. In this study, we analyze the position of 467 connectors found in a sample of 12 research papers. Seventy-five percent of the connectors occurred at the beginning of sentences. However, individual connectors varied greatly in positional preference. Some, such as *in addition*, only occurred initially; others, such as *therefore*, occurred initially in only 40% of the cases. These preliminary findings suggest that general rules for connector position may prove elusive.

It was probably easy for you to identify version B as stronger. It is well organized, announcing its topic and significance in the first sentence, its method in the second sentence, its findings in the three following sentences, and concludes with the argument that sentence connectors likely do not have general rules. The first abstract is not well organized—providing no context, unexplained data, and an unconnected argument. It is a data-driven abstract. Unorganized data overwhelms the argument. Both have arguments, but only one is argument-driven.

How to Avoid a Data-Driven Article

People doing textual analysis and field studies are particularly likely to fall prey to the problem of

writing data-driven articles. Usually this is because the data is more real to you than your analysis of it. If you admire a canonical author, you may spend much of your article just summarizing the text and its beauties. If you spent a year in a village with four hundred people, it seems incredibly reductive to pick some argument and force your data to fit that tiny glass slipper. You have dozens of hours of tape, two thousand hours of observation, and more insights than it would take a lifetime to communicate. There is a desire to represent this richness. In fact, I often hear students say, "But you have to understand. I have to represent so-an-so or such-and-such. I want the reader to appreciate all the extraordinary things that are happening in this novel, this village, this case study." My advice: Don't represent. If you find yourself starting to represent your subject, resist. Publishable articles are argumentative, not representative. Don't just present all the information you have collected and let the reader make the links. If you catch yourself thinking, "Well, this section has a lot of detail and I'm not sure how it specifically relates to my argument but . . ." stop and revise. A thirty-page journal article is not the place to represent. That's what books are for. An article is for using data to make an argument. Data must be subordinated.

People who work for government agencies or nonprofit organizations have a similar problem. They are used to writing reports. The aim of a report is to present a huge swath of data about a particular problem or concern in a specific place. For example, a report may lay out all the problems facing an underfunded local teaching hospital. But the author of the report has not organized the data with any one argument; rather he or she usually states that the causes of the problem are more complex than previously imagined and that any solution will have to take dozens of variables into account. The author often concludes with pages of advice to the agency funding the report. The aim of a journal article is quite different from that of a report. An article's purpose is to argue not advise. You are not telling the reader what to *do* about the problem, you are telling the reader what to *think* about the problem.

When I make this point about not writing data-driven articles, students sometimes counter with the anthropologist Clifford Geertz's insistence on "thick description." The student will say, "I'm in anthropology/education/ sociology and in our field it is okay to give a lot of description in an academic paper." I always counter by saying, fine, bring me one published in the last year. It's difficult to find such articles. I also tell a story about hearing Geertz speak at UCLA in the early 1990s. Many of us are great admirers of his work, and there were at least 500 people in the audience to witness Geertz launch into an hour-long thick description of recent Indonesian politics. It was the most painful lecture I have ever been to and if the fidgeting around me was any indication, I was not alone in my opinion. It's excruciating to listen to, or read, a continuous stream of names and dates without any generalizations. Few can absorb it. Fortunately, for those of us who continue to admire him, Geertz actually warns against this very problem in his article on thick description.

The claim to attention of an ethnographic account does not rest on its authors' ability to capture primitive facts in faraway places and carry them home like a mask or a carving, but on the degree to which he is able to clarify what goes on in such places, to reduce the puzzlement—what manner of men are these? . . . It is not worth it, as Thoreau said, to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar. (Geertz 1973)

So, don't count the cats in Zanzibar. Don't have streams of data without any argument. Make sure that your ideas about the data are organizing the article, not the organization of the data itself. If you have divided your article into sections that mirror the chapters of your literary subject, or the chronology of related events, or the order in which you came across the information, stop and revise. You should arrange and group the data according to what you want to argue about it.

One Argument Formula

If you still aren't sure you know what an argument is or how to make one, take some advice from Steven Posusta. After teaching in a UCLA composition tutoring lab as an English major, Posusta wrote a hilarious sixty-two-page book for undergraduates titled *Don't Panic: The Procrastinator's Guide to Writing an Effective Term Paper (You Know Who You Are)* (1996). The aim of the book is to provide the "cool tricks" and "fast fixes" that can enable a student to read Posusta's book tonight "and still hand in your paper tomorrow." As you can imagine, this book has inspired horror in some corners (Davis and Shadle 2000), and admiration in others (I know some teaching assistants who have used it in composition classes after learning about it from me). One tool Posusta provides is something I find helpful in teaching students about argument. This tool is his Instant Thesis Maker (1996, 12). It goes like this:

The Instant Thesis
#1. Although _____(general statement, opposite opinion)
#2. nevertheless _____(thesis, your idea)
#3. because _____ (examples, evidence, #1, #2, #3, etc.)

To put the tool to immediate use: Although Posusta's Instant Thesis Maker is reductive and pedagogically problematic, nevertheless it distills the requirements of academic discourse to an easily understood essence that can be useful to students struggling with their articles because it forces the students to engage in a debate and to provide proofs in one sentence. If you are unsure what your argument is, or are having trouble articulating it, try using the Instant Thesis Maker above to get yourself started.

One caveat. Posusta's thesis maker works better when you are contesting current theories, rather than confirming theories. If you are confirming, you can try using "Many scholars argue that [argument] and I agree because [evidence]." Or, "Through my study of [topic] I found that [evidence] which suggests that [your idea]."

Since thesis makers can limit thought, some find that mapping their article is more helpful. That is,

draw your article by using arrows and circled words to indicate what the relationships are between various theories, topics, and texts.

Arguments Against Argument

Sometimes students will tell me that authors in their field do not need to have an argument. Rather, they can explore a series of questions without favoring any particular answers.

It is true that in the social sciences some articles do not state an argument in the introduction. Such articles usually are borrowing from the scientific practice of posing one or two questions (hypotheses) in the introduction, and then withholding the answers until the discussion or conclusion. This does not mean that the articles have no argument. First, almost all social science articles now state the hypothesis and findings in the abstract. Since abstracts are now de facto introductions, accompanying all published social science articles, in fact, the authors are providing their argument extremely early and clearly. Second, just because an argument is stated as a hypothesis doesn't mean it isn't an argument. Often, the phrasing of the question is argumentative, and it is clear from the outset what the answer is likely to be. For instance, let's say the question posed in an article's introduction is "Do U.S. students who retain their immigrant culture have lower school leaving rates?" The positive words "retain" and "lower" do some signaling of the argument. That a variable has an affect is the argument. Third, just because an argument has not been stated doesn't mean it isn't driving the article. In the last case, if the literature review describes a series of recent articles attacking pro-assimilation theory, if the findings include a series of statistics demonstrating that such students do have lower school leaving rates, and if the conclusion argues that immigrant status is beneficial, then the argument is organizing the article. Finally, imagine a poor article on this topic: one that mentions various unlinked theories of immigration, proceeds to some random statistics about immigrant students and their self-esteem, grades, and sports interests, and concludes by noting that the impact of immigration on education is so complex as to be unmeasurable. Such an article is not argumentative and is probably not going to be published. It represents a detective's notes, not a lawyer's case.

For the humanities, it can get a bit trickier. In heavily theoretical fields, a premium is placed on asking questions and opening up possibilities rather than tying them off neatly with definitive answers. This openness doesn't mean that such articles do not have an argument. Many questions are simply masked arguments. Second, insisting that some particular text or moment cannot be reduced is often the argument. Third, the most wellknown articles in the humanities, whether theoretical or not, have vigorous arguments. In her most famous article, Gayatri Spivak may have framed her argument as a question, "Can the subaltern speak?" and left it unanswered through the article, but in the conclusion she definitely answers it: "no." Although she is famous for imagining the question, she is more famous for her answer. Even if you prefer a synaptic style (see Week 6), providing a summary of your larger argument in the introduction can improve your chances of surviving peer review.

Fourth, a few journals do not require an argument. They also don't require citations, a description of the study, or even data. Yes, you can get published in these journals with a descriptive article that adds nothing new and has no argument, but these are reports not articles. The rule doesn't change.

If an article is published without a clear statement of the argument in the abstract or introduction, or if it even withholds the actual statement of the argument to the end, then it is usually because that unstated argument is still driving the article throughout. No research article, even if it *is* published, succeeds without an argument. Published articles without arguments tend not to get cited.

Some Typical Arguments by Discipline

Space does not allow a full detailing of how each discipline proceeds argumentatively, but the examples below will give you a sense for a few types of arguments.

Literature. Most articles in such disciplines as English make arguments about what a literary text "means or how it should be read" (Stevens and Stewart 1987, 102). Most such arguments are along the lines of "No one has noticed that text x is really about y" or "Everyone thinks that text x is about y but it is actually about z." That is, they challenge common assumptions about the text, insisting that a different interpretation is better.

Since the rise of cultural studies and new historicism, another common argument is that a text reveals the mores, concerns, trends, identities, or prejudices of its time. The scholar Eaglestone has a useful chart in his book *Doing English* (2000) that summarizes the differences between analyzing a text as a text (intrinsic or formalist analysis) and analyzing a text as a window onto its context (extrinsic or historical analysis). Other common arguments rise from comparing and contrasting texts (or their characters, plots, or themes) to reveal that they are more similar than previously thought, less similar, or that one influenced the other. Finally, there are meta-arguments, in which the author argues that certain types of texts can be interpreted in certain types of ways or that certain types of interpretations are problematic.

Some literature arguments that used to be popular are now frowned upon as old-fashioned, including arguing that a text has a particular "message or moral," that an entire text represents one idea (rather than being contradictory and complex), or that a text reveals its author's conscious intentions.[12]

Education. Many articles in this discipline make arguments about which factors improve learning or teaching and which don't. Do low rates of unemployment increase the chances that students will drop out of high school? Do faculty benefit from mentoring graduate students? Does mainstreaming students with disabilities hinder their education? Debates focus on which practices stigmatize students, how public policies shape the educational system, and what enables schools to be better learning environments—safer, more inclusive, more stimulating.

Cultural Anthropology. Many articles in this discipline have arguments about how human social behavior is to be interpreted. Some argue that an exploration of a particular culture, system, or group reveals that human beings are challenging certain social structures, constructing relationships for some purpose, or reinventing their cultures in order to resist or preserve them. A classic article form in anthropology avoids conclusive argumentation: it announces a human puzzle, provides a narrative of that puzzle, and then states that resolution is not really possible.

Political Science. Many articles in the discipline of political science argue that statistical analysis of data collected on human behavior reveals that people tend to behave in certain ways politically. Some articles argue that research shows that a region or nation has certain political characteristics, that a policy has certain impacts, that a conflict has certain causes, that an institution has a certain purpose, or that a political system has a certain process. Other articles argue that a political issue is at stake in a certain academic field, political process, or place; that some variable is causing the rise of a certain political tendency; that some policy would mitigate some social problem; that a body of political science research changes our understanding of politics; or that the field of political science is shifting in its understanding of power, politics, or theories. Quite a few make arguments about how human rights, gender, and globalization vary across nations, parties, disciplines, or philosophies.

ORGANIZING YOUR ARTICLE AROUND YOUR ARGUMENT

Having an argument and stating it early and clearly is essential. So, how do you ensure that you have one?

Day 1: Reading the Workbook

On the first day of your writing week, you should read the workbook up to this page and answer all the questions posed in the workbook up to this point.

Day 2: Drafting Your Argument

Draft. Write a statement of the argument of your article, as you currently understand it. Feel free to do so below. Make sure it passes the agree or disagree test. If you are having trouble, try out Posusta's Instant Thesis Maker (page 89) to get you started.

My Argument
In this article, I argue that

Now, thinking like a lawyer not a detective, write a short list of your evidence. It doesn't have to be detailed, just list what you are bringing to bear to prove your argument.

My Evidence

Revise. Revisit your abstract. Does it state your argument? If not, rewrite your abstract with your argument in mind.

Share. Your next step is to share your argument with three other people to get suggestions for revision. Some should be people in your field; some should be outside of it. You can do this by e-mail or in person, in writing or orally. It can help to share your entire abstract with your reviewers, so that they have a sense for the whole. Ask your reviewers to underline the argument as they see it. If they don't find it clearly, ask them to write the argument as they understand it at the bottom of the page.

Don't be worried if your reviewers write back to you stating all the evidence against your argument. That's a good sign! If people immediately begin debating you, it means you have an argument. Congratulations! If your reviewers say that someone else has already made your argument, ask them for a specific citation. It is not all that common to make the exact same argument as someone else. Professors in particular can be dismissive, stating that something has "been done to death" or "nobody wants to hear about that anymore." If you get such a response, be sure to get a second opinion. It is often only that professor's opinion, not the vetting policy of journals.

Reviewer's Comments on My Abstract

Day 3: Reviewing Your Article for Argument

The biggest problem for authors is not having an argument-driven article. You need to make sure that your article is more like a legal brief than a detective's report. Print out a hard copy of your article. Then go through it and answer the following questions:

Early and clearly. Do I state my argument and early? It should appear within the first three to five pages. If not, how am I going to revise my article so that I can state my argument early and clearly? Will I have to add a paragraph? Will I have to move up my argument from where it appears later in the article? Use the box below to list these revision tasks.

Revision Tasks	

Introduction. Have I organized my introduction around my argument or does my introduction deal at unnecessary length with the text or the context? If so, how am I going to organize my introduction around my argument? Am I going to have to cut parts of the introduction as irrelevant to my argument?

Revision Tasks	

Body. Have I organized the body of my article around my argument? If not, as is often the case, how am I going to organize it around my argument? Am I going to have change sections? Move sections? Drop sections? Rewrite sections? Carefully evaluate every paragraph for relevance to your argument. Don't invent far-fetched links. It must be clear to your reader, not just you, how it connects.

Revision Tasks	

Evidence. Have I presented evidence related to my argument? If not, am I going to have to find new evidence or a new argument?

Revision Tasks	

Conclusion. Do I restate my argument in the conclusion or does it disappear?

Revision Tasks	

Sometimes it can be difficult to see the answers to these questions on your own. Feel free to share your article with another writer and ask her or him to identify where the argument appears or fades.

Days 4 and 5: Revising Your Article Around Your Argument

Once you've identified the problem areas, revise your article around your argument. This can take some real time but don't grow discouraged. It's vital work. You can work on this a bit every week if necessary.

DOCUMENTING YOUR WRITING TIME AND TASKS

On the following weekly plan, please graph when you expect to write and what tasks you hope to accomplish this week. Then keep track of what you actually did. Remember, you are to allot fifteen minutes to one hour every day to writing. At the end of the week, take pride in your accomplishments and evaluate whether any patterns need changing.

Week 3 Calendar							
Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5:00 a.m.							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00 p.m.							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							

10:00							
11:00							
12:00 a.m.							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
Total Minutes Actually Worked							
Tasks Completed							

10 For instance, see the research on legal writing, which found that judges and attorneys tend to skip block quotations (Robbins 2004).

11 Kelly 1998.

12 See Patrick Scott's work on problems with the "right way" to analyze texts for the British A-Level exams, and Eagleston's thoughts on "theme-hunting" based on Scott's work, in Eaglestone 2000, 31.