**Writing an Argument**

**What is an argument?**

An argument is much less than most people imagine. It is usually not

* An absolute truth.
* A revelation or brand new insight.
* The last word.
* Bad-tempered complaining.
* An exercise in pure logic.
* A chance to prove that you’re smarter than everyone else.

And, most emphatically, it is not necessarily about some grand issue of concern to humankind in general.

An argument is merely an essay that has a thesis, which a substantial part of your audience may disagree with and that seeks to convince them you’re right. That’s all, and that’s not much. To know your essay is an argument, look for three things:

* An opposition
* An implied should
* A call to action

**OVERCOMING ARGUER’S BLOCK**

You must convince yourself that writing an argument is something you can do without becoming someone you’re not. Do that in four steps:

* Notice that you make arguments all the time.
* Shake the fallacy of the absolute and exclusive truth.
* Shake the fallacy of the final word.
* Begin with arguments that are easy to make.

**Avoid three logical fallacies:**

1. Post hoc ergo propter hoc (“after it, therefore because of it”) The fallacy of assuming that just because y follows x, x causes y.

2. Either/Or thinking, also called the fallacy of the false dilemma. This reduces complex situations to two alternatives, one black and one white.

3. False Analogy, fallacy in which x and y are alike, but not in the features that matter to the argument.

**Writing Exercise**

**Directions**: Spot the flawed logic in the following statements:

1. Herbert Hoover single-handedly created the depression.
2. FDR caused World War II.
3. Surveys showed that married men are happier than unmarried men.
4. Many people who go to the dentist have a lot of cavities.
5. Marijuana use should remain illegal because it’s a first step toward the more serious drugs; most heroin addicts started with marijuana.
6. If you’re not for recycling laws, you don’t care about your environment.
7. In the coming election you have a choice between voting for me or voting for fiscal irresponsibility.
8. People trapped in the ghetto have two choices in life: be a menial laborer and starve or take to crime.
9. It’s incredible to me that in a culture that bans cockfights and bear baiting, we permit the same sort of thing with human beings.
10. Gun control is wrong because the Constitution guarantees our right to keep and bear arms.