

Rogerian Arguments

When to use them:

— [Controversial & Emotionally charged subjects

— death penalty

— abortion

— immigration

— healthcare

What is it?

— [Rogerian is one of THREE “models” of argument. (The others are Classical and Toulmin, & we will cover them later)

— [Ideas come from Carl Rogers, a psychologist.

— “Real communication occurs when we listen with understanding.” –Carl Rogers

What it does:

— [acknowledges the audience's point of view or opinions before presenting the author's different or opposing viewpoint.

— [supports the central argument with tact & without outright attacking the audience's preconceived notions.

— [puts ethos & pathos first.

— [begins by introducing the nature of the problem addressed & then summarizes the opposing views to reveal the virtues & vices of those views. —→ Builds the ethos of the speaker.

How does it work?

— [Begins with an introduction & summary of discussion.

— [The writer presents his or her view—not in opposition to the others but alongside.

— [The argument discusses the context in which the writer's position "fits" with the other positions & in which the reader and writer will agree.

— [Appeals to pathos to create common ground. —→ "empathic listening"

— [States thesis near the end where it offers not a refutation but a compromise.

Example:

— [An argument about immigration policy might acknowledge some detrimental economic effects of illegal immigration but offer other evidence showing the economic benefits if immigration and end by suggesting amnesty only for hardworking immigrants who are already contributing members of society.

How to use Rogerian Argument

While I am NOT a fan of rigidly structured essays, here is an example of what a Rogerian argument might look like:

[Intro

[Summary of Opposing Views

[Statement of Understanding

[Statement of Your position

[Statement of Contexts

[Statement of Benefits

[Important parts/pose a solution – here is where you “concede” something to the opposing side and acknowledge that others who think differently from you are also intelligent, reasonable people.