

Exercise Set 12.1: Mapping simple arguments

Objective: To give you practice drawing argument maps.

Instructions: Copy each argument below. Bracket and number the conclusion and all of the premises of each argument. Then, work out an argument map for the argument.

Tips for success: Drawing argument maps will take some time to learn—but it *is* a skill that you can learn with a bit of practice, and it is extremely useful for any kind of argument analysis.

The first step in mapping an argument is identifying and numbering all of the premises and the conclusion of the argument. Remember that, as in Exercise Sets 1.1 and 1.2, not every sentence in a passage is a premise or conclusion of an argument. Bracket the claims that are premises or conclusions and assign a number to each.

All of the arguments in this exercise set are relatively simple in structure. Some exercises will require you to distinguish between linked and independent premises. Others will ask you to identify a series of subarguments that have one premise each—just like the three-step argument above about oil and alternative energy sources.

In distinguishing linked from independent premises, try pretending that one of the two premises is false and then ask yourself whether the other one still provides a reason for the conclusion. If not, then the premises are linked, and you should put a plus sign between them in your argument map. If each premise would be a good reason for the conclusion on its own, then the premises are independent, and you should draw a separate arrow from each premise to the conclusion.

Sample

The meat company Bell & Evans has introduced a more humane method of slaughtering chickens. Bell & Evans is a financially successful company. Therefore, humane handling of animals is compatible with financial success. I wonder if fast-food companies will get the memo?

Adapted from: Tracy Reiman, letter to the editor, New York Times, Oct 30, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/31/opinion/lweb31chicken.html>

¹[The meat company Bell & Evans has introduced a more humane method of slaughtering chickens.] ²[Bell & Evans is a financially successful company.] Therefore, ³[humane handling of animals is compatible with financial success.] I wonder if fast-food companies will get the memo?

(1) + (2)
↓
(3)

The first part of this response involves bracketing and numbering the claims in the original argument. (Notice that the last sentence of the passage is not bracketed because it is neither a premise nor a conclusion in the argument.) Numbering the claims is necessary so that we know what the numbers in the argument map represent.

The second part of this response involves actually drawing a map of the argument. Once you've identified all of the claims in the argument, all you need to do to map the argument is figure out which claim is the main conclusion and whether the premises are linked or independent.

In this case, the main conclusion is (3), so the response puts (3) at the bottom of the argument map. This argument map shows that the premises—(1) and (2)—are linked. This is because (1) doesn't show that humane practices are compatible with financial success unless (2) is true (and vice versa). (Why not? Suppose that Bell & Evans had switched to a more humane method of slaughtering chickens and gone bankrupt as a result. In that case, Bell & Evans' new practice would not be a reason to think that humane handling of animals is compatible with financial success.)

1. American swimmer Michael Phelps has more Olympic medals than any other athlete. At his peak in the 2008 games in Beijing, Phelps dominated his sport in a way that no one else has. That's why Michael Phelps is the greatest Olympian ever.

Adapted from: Michael Wilbon, "Phelps Greatest Olympian Ever?" ESPN, Aug 2, 2012, http://espn.go.com/olympics/summer/2012/swimming/story/_/id/8222710/2012-olympics-michael-phelps-greatest-ever-debate

2. Liberals seem to think that government spending is good for the economy. Economic growth, however, comes from private investment. Taxing citizens and spending their money is not a form of private investment. Thus, taxing citizens and spending their money does not promote economic growth.

Adapted from: Rich Case, letter to the editor, Los Angeles Times, Feb 28, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/feb/28/opinion/la-le-0228-monday-20110228>

3. Most Americans live too far from their place of work for it to be practical to ride a bicycle to work. This makes bike paths largely a waste of money—as a solution to traffic problems, at least. The government should find other ways to reduce traffic besides building expensive bike paths.

Adapted from: Lily Gray, letter to the editor, Los Angeles Times, Mar 7, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/mar/07/opinion/la-le-0307-monday-20110307/3>

4. The state needs to ensure that DNA tests are available to all defendants in capital murder trials. The state has an obligation to ensure that justice is done in criminal courts—especially when the death penalty is at stake. The only way to do justice is to ensure that all available evidence, including DNA tests, is available in capital murder trials.

Adapted from: Sam Millsap, letter to the editor, New York Times, Oct 23, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/24/opinion/l24dna.html>

5. By reducing student debt, eliminating tuition at medical schools would enable more new doctors to become primary care physicians. We have a shortage of primary care physicians in this country. Therefore, medical schools ought to be free.

Adapted from: Peter B. Bach and Robert Kocher, "Why Medical School Should Be Free," New York Times, May 28, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/29/opinion/29bach.html>

6. "Recommerce" companies buy used electronics or other goods and resell them elsewhere. For instance, recommerce companies enable people to sell their old cell phones for cash. Selling old cell phones to recommerce companies also avoids adding more electronics to

landfills. Clearly, selling old cell phones to recommerce companies is the smart thing to do.

Adapted from: Israel Ganot, letter to the editor, New York Times, Jun 27, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/28/opinion/lweb28phone.html>

7. Some Western European countries are banning Muslim women from wearing the burqa on the grounds that it is an insult to women's dignity. If Europeans are truly concerned with Muslim women's dignity, then they should be addressing not only the burqa but also highly sexualized images of (non-Muslim) women in the European media. After all, if they're so worried about Muslim women's dignity, they ought to be concerned with *all* women's dignity. And if they are concerned with all women's dignity, then they ought to be just as concerned about highly sexualized portrayals of women in, say, European advertising as they are about the burqa.

Adapted from: Gabriele vom Bruck, letter to the editor, The Economist, Jun 3, 2010, <http://www.economist.com/node/16270944>

8. It's ridiculous that people are blaming the celebrities whose nude photos were stolen by hackers and splashed all over the internet. If someone at the Post Office had opened a sealed envelope containing a celebrity's nude Polaroid photos, everyone would blame the Post Office worker, not the celebrity who mailed the photos. But having your photos stolen from a password-protected online system is just like having them stolen from a sealed envelope that you sent through the mail.

Adapted from: Jimmy Kimmel Live, "Jimmy Kimmel's Leaked iCloud Photo," YouTube, Sep 3, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HU32jCGk8bQ>

9. Happiness in life is reserved for those who care more about being happy than about being "successful." The signs of so-called success in modern life—a big house, a fancy car, designer clothes, etc.—are expensive. Having enough money to buy expensive things requires working so hard that you don't have time to enjoy all the expensive things you've bought. Besides, true happiness doesn't

come from owning the kinds of things that are considered signs of success, anyway.

Adapted from: Daniel Dickinson, letter to the editor, New York Times, Jul 5, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/06/opinion/106sex.html>

10. People often think that because of their notorious practice of human sacrifice, the Aztecs were much more barbaric than the Europeans of the time. This isn't true. The Aztecs were sacrificing about 3,500 people a year in the 1500s. If England's population at the time had been as large as that of the Aztec empire, the English would have executed about twice that many people each year. And English executions of the time were every bit as barbaric as Aztec sacrifices.

Adapted from: Charles C. Mann, 1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 136–37