

## Analyzing and Constructing Arguments

There's a common conception that arguing is when one point goes up against another, and that often, the end result is frustration, not resolution. This conception exists because many people aren't very good at, or aren't actually interested in, staying dedicated to critical thinking when an argument arises.

In the past few years there have been some popular arguments circulating within American society. You're probably heard people arguing, or maybe have argued yourself, whether going to Iraq was a good decision, whether homosexual marriage should be recognized by the government, or what, if any, kind of healthcare reform should take place.

But have you ever seen any of these arguments end with one person changing his mind?

Imagine Sarah Palin and Joe Biden at a debate over foreign policy. What are the chances either one of them would consent to the other and change his or her position? What about in a courtroom? One side is defending the alleged thief, the other is prosecuting. What are the chances the defense would say, "After considering the arguments of the prosecuting attorney, we are choosing to confess. Our client is guilty."

The problem with so many arguments floating around today is that they lack a dedication to critical thinking. Many people use arguments to prove or justify a position they already hold, or a position they must remain dedicated to for whatever reasons (such as a politician). Very few people are willing to follow critical thinking to a conclusion they previously disagreed with.

Good critical thinking requires building sound arguments, not just digging up arguments that help make a position *look* better.

In this lesson you will learn what a sound argument is and how to build a sound argument of your own. You will also learn how to critically analyze other arguments you may be exposed to, whether in the media, in books you read, or in conversations you have.