You will be required to know about and use the Toulmin style of argument in many of your Composition and Speech courses. Many of you may ask, “What in the world does that mean???” Well, the super-tutors are fully prepared to tell you!

First and foremost, let’s get acquainted with the man himself: Stephen Toulmin. He was a British author, philosopher, and educator who passed away in December of 2009.

While his major studies focused on ethics and philosophy, his most influential contribution to academics was his Toulmin Model of Argumentation.

**THREE MAIN PARTS OF THE TOULMIN MODEL**

**Claim:** This is the point you are arguing.

**Data:** This is the support you provide for your claim.

**Warrant:** The assumption upon which your claim and your evidence is based.

For example, let’s imagine that you are arguing the point that everyone should own an iPhone 5. If this is your topic, then a Toulmin analysis would go a little something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim</th>
<th>The iPhone 5 is the best smartphone available on the market.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>This would come in the form of statistics, technical specs, and features unique to the iPhone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrant</td>
<td>You believe that the consumer wants to buy a smartphone, but that he or she isn’t sure which one to buy. (This probably isn’t actually spoken, but we know that the advertiser is thinking this when he or she is suggesting that we buy an iPhone.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THREE OTHER PARTS OF THE TOULMIN MODEL

We have just covered the three main elements of the Toulmin model – the three things that you most likely will encounter within any argument. There are three more, though, that often arise:

Qualifier – A qualifier shows the strength of your claim in spite of other facts. It is a statement that pulls your argument away from absolutes and toward reasonable statements. In our iPhone example, a qualifier might go like this:

“While there are many highly capable smartphones on the market today, none match the innovation and reliability of the iPhone.”

The writer backed away from saying that nothing compares to the iPhone, but said that the iPhone still beats every competitor.

Rebuttal – The rebuttal offers insight into the opposition’s point of view. A rebuttal:

“A lot of people believe that Android phones’ operating systems are less restrictive than the iPhone’s. They also think that Androids are less expensive.”

Their claim, in effect, would have to be refashioned into something like this:

“The iPhone’s operating system is so user friendly that it doesn’t need to be modified, and the iPhone’s prices – while substantial – never fluctuate.”

When you use a rebuttal in your argument, you are doing so in order to show that you have considered multiple angles of the argument, yet you still feel the same.

Backing – Backing provides your warrant with more support (if necessary). For example, backing for our previous warrant may be necessary for the many people who don’t know why smartphones are necessary in the first place. Backing would be offered in the form of a statement like this:

“We live in the Information Age, where in order to keep up with society you must be connected in one way or another. Smartphones provide everyone with the ability to stay connected both professionally and personally. In a world in which you are expected to have access to emails and data instantaneously, you need the best smartphone on the market. The iPhone fits that bill.”
Mastery of these elements will not only help you become a better arguer, but also a better citizen. When you know what people (advertisers, politicians, significant others) are using to convince you of something, then you can make informed decisions rather than simply be manipulated into doing something. Remember – knowledge is power!