The Rogerian Argument

**When should you use the Rogerian Argument?**

The Rogerian argument is less concerned with winning than with establishing a solution that will accommodate more than one position. It was named for the twentieth century American psychologist Carl Rogers, who emphasized the need for arguments to be based on common ground that the writer shares with his or her audience. In this type of argument the writer states his position, but only after fairly stating the alternative.

**Other Defining Features:**

The Rogerian argument typically underplays the emotional aspect of the argument in favor of the rational.

Even more so than other types of arguments, a successful Rogerian argument is impossible without a thorough understanding of the audience.

**How to Organize a Rogerian Argument**

Introduction

* Writer presents a detailed depiction of the problem, pointing out how both the writer and the reader are affected by the problem. The Rogerian argument **does not** begin with the writer’s position.

Opponent’s Position

* Writer describes as fairly as possible the reader’s perceived view of the problem.
  + This section of the argument is crucial to the writer’s credibility. If the opponent’s point of view is not presented accurately and fairly, compromise will not be possible, therefore defeating the purpose of the essay.
* In the process, writer acknowledges the circumstances and contexts in which the reader’s position or perspective is valid.
* Language is generally as neutral as possible

Writer’s Position

* The writer presents fairly and accurately his own perspective or position (this is the first time we see the writer’s thesis!)
* Includes a description of the contexts or circumstances in which the writer’s position is valid
* Language is still generally as neutral as possible. Argument is supported through careful use of evidence instead of through inflammatory language.

Conclusion

* The Rogerian essay always closes by showing how the reader would benefit from moving towards the writer’s position.
* Often, this involves laying out the possible ways to compromise or alternative solutions to the problem that would benefit both the reader and the writer