

**Toulmin Argument**

The Toulmin argument structure came about thanks to Stephen Toulmin who wanted to make a science out of the way ordinary people make reasonable arguments. Many schools, ours included, have adopted a simplified version of Toulmin’s argument structure: ever hear of claim, evidence, warrant?

However, Toulmin’s version is a little more complicated and far more fluid than the version usually taught at GJHS and other places. Here are the six major parts of a Toulmin argument:

* **Claim** the argument you wish to prove
* **Qualifiers** any limits placed on your claim (words like sometimes, often,

presumably, unless, etc.)

* **Evidence** support for your claim
* **Warrants** underlying assumptions that support your claim
* **Backing** evidence for warrant
* **Rebuttal** considering potential objections to an argument

There is no set order to these parts of an argument. However, Toulmin proposed this structure as a starting place:

So (qualifier) Claim

Evidence

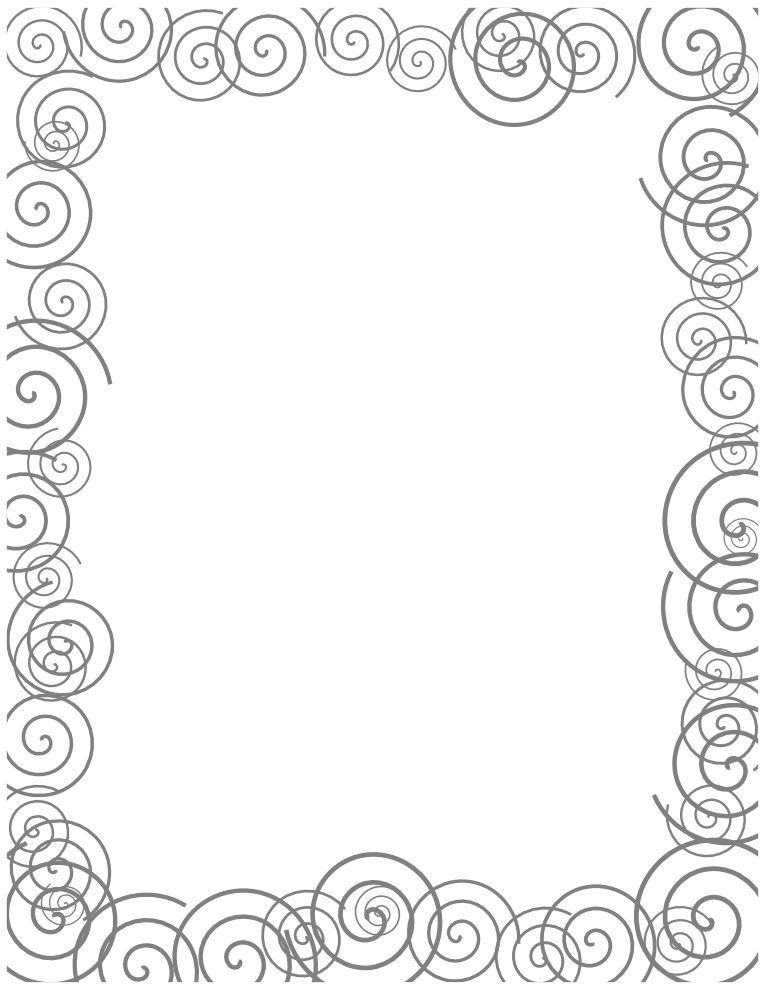
Since

Warrant

So (it is probable) you will get into a selective college

Your SAT score is a perfect 1600

Since SAT scores are an important factor in college admissions



**An Outline of a Toulmin Argument:**

* Claim The Federal Government should ban smoking.
* Qualifier The ban would be limited to public spaces only.
* Evidence Smoking causes serious disease in smokers.

Nonsmokers are endangered by secondhand smoke.

* Warrants The Constitution promises to “promote the general welfare”

Citizens are entitled to protection from armful actions of others.

* Backing The United States is based on a political system that is supposed to

serve the basic needs of its people, including its health.

* Evidence Numbers of death attributed to secondhand smoke.

Lawsuits recently won against tobacco companies, citing the need for reparation for smoking-related health care costs.

Examples of bans already imposed in many public places.

* Rebuttal Smokers have rights, too.

Smoking laws should be left to the states.

Such a ban could not be enforced.

* Response The ban applies to public places; smokers can smoke in private.

The power of the federal government to impose other restrictions on smoking (such as warning labels on cigarettes and bans on cigarette advertisements on television) has survived legal challenges.

The experience of New York City, which has imposed such a ban, suggests that enforcement would not be a significant problem.