



## Developing an Argument Map

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### Other related Study Hub guides in the critical thinking series include:

- Evaluating a source
- A guide to critical reading
- Themed notes method
- Showing analysis and evaluation in your writing
- Constructing an argument
- A guide to developing an argument map
- A guide to synthesis
- A guide to critical writing

### Introduction

An argument map is a tool for structuring an academic argument in pictorial form and can be hand drawn or created using the software. The map can be used in the research and planning phase of writing an assignment when preparing for a seminar topic or a class presentation. This guide explains how you can use the tool to organise your ideas into a balanced academic argument that considers a range of views. Developing an argument map develops critical thinking, reasoning, analysis and evaluation skills.

This tool will help you produce a strong, well-organised and original argument. It is designed to follow on from the self-help guide **Constructing an Argument** and will provide you with details of a mind mapping technique designed to explore and critique themes identified within academic literature. The argument map enables you to compare and contrast authors' views on a specific theme in more detail, look for similarities and differences. It can be used for students who prefer a visual way of organising their thoughts. Alternatively, it can be used in conjunction with the resource **Themed Notes Method** once the themes are coded and recorded, to critically explore differing authors' views on a theme. This tool will help you develop the skills of evaluation and inference more deeply.

## Language to use when developing an argument map

- **A claim** or position is the point of view put forward by the writer
- **A reason** refers to evidence that supports a claim
- **An objection** or **counter-argument** refers to evidence against the claim
- **A rebuttal** refers to the rejection of a counter argument
- **A rejoinder** refers to the points in your argument where you weigh up the evidence and draw your conclusion
- **A simple argument** includes a single reason to support the point of view being presented with supporting evidence, which is expected at level 4.
- **Multi-reasoned argument** refers to an argument that has more than one reason to support a single claim with supporting evidence from a range of different sources (synthesis), which is expected at level 5 and level 6.

Source: Berg, T. *et al.* (no date)

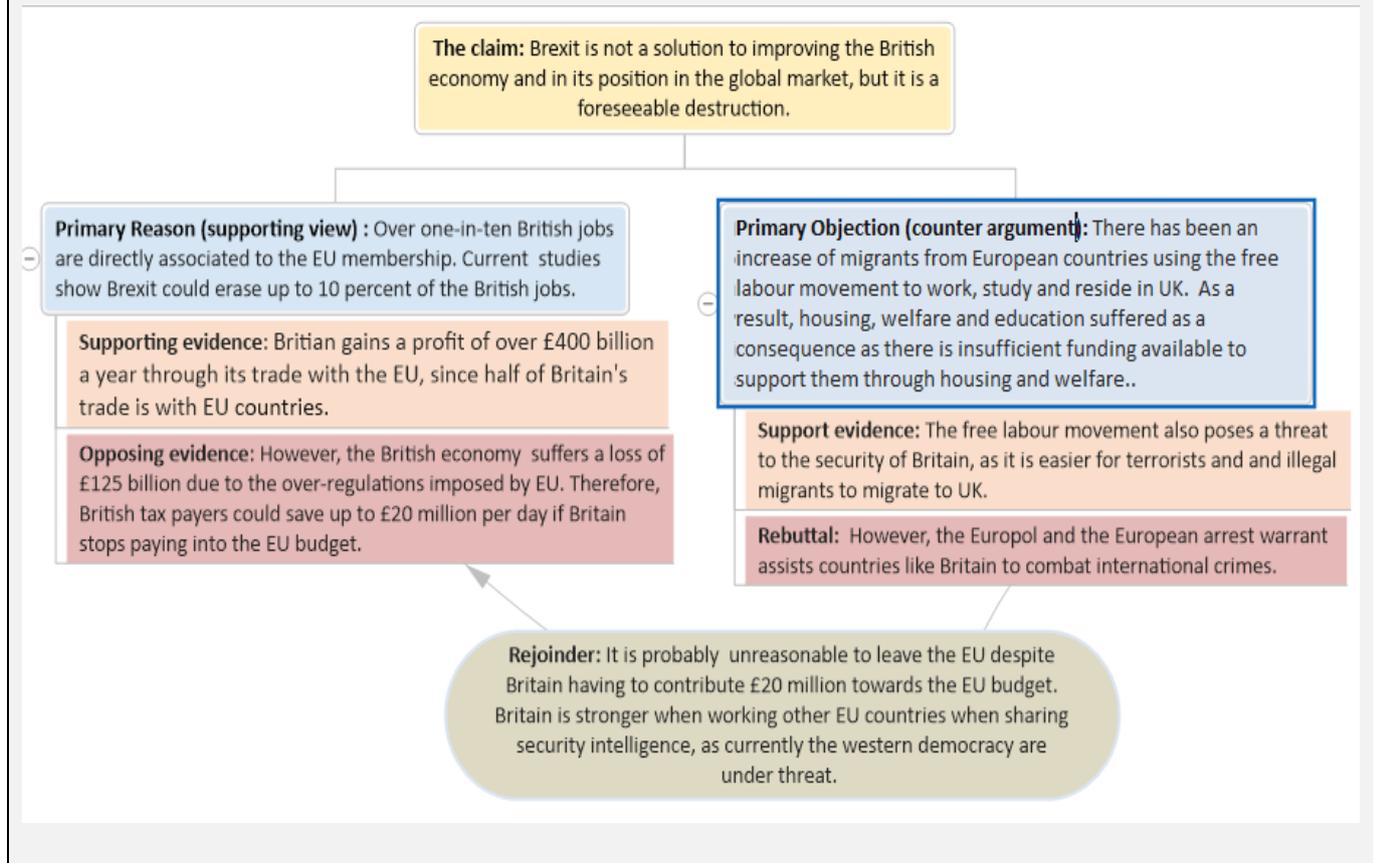
## The Argument Map Framework

There are five steps involved in creating an argument map framework (Wason and Southall, 2016 p. 32).

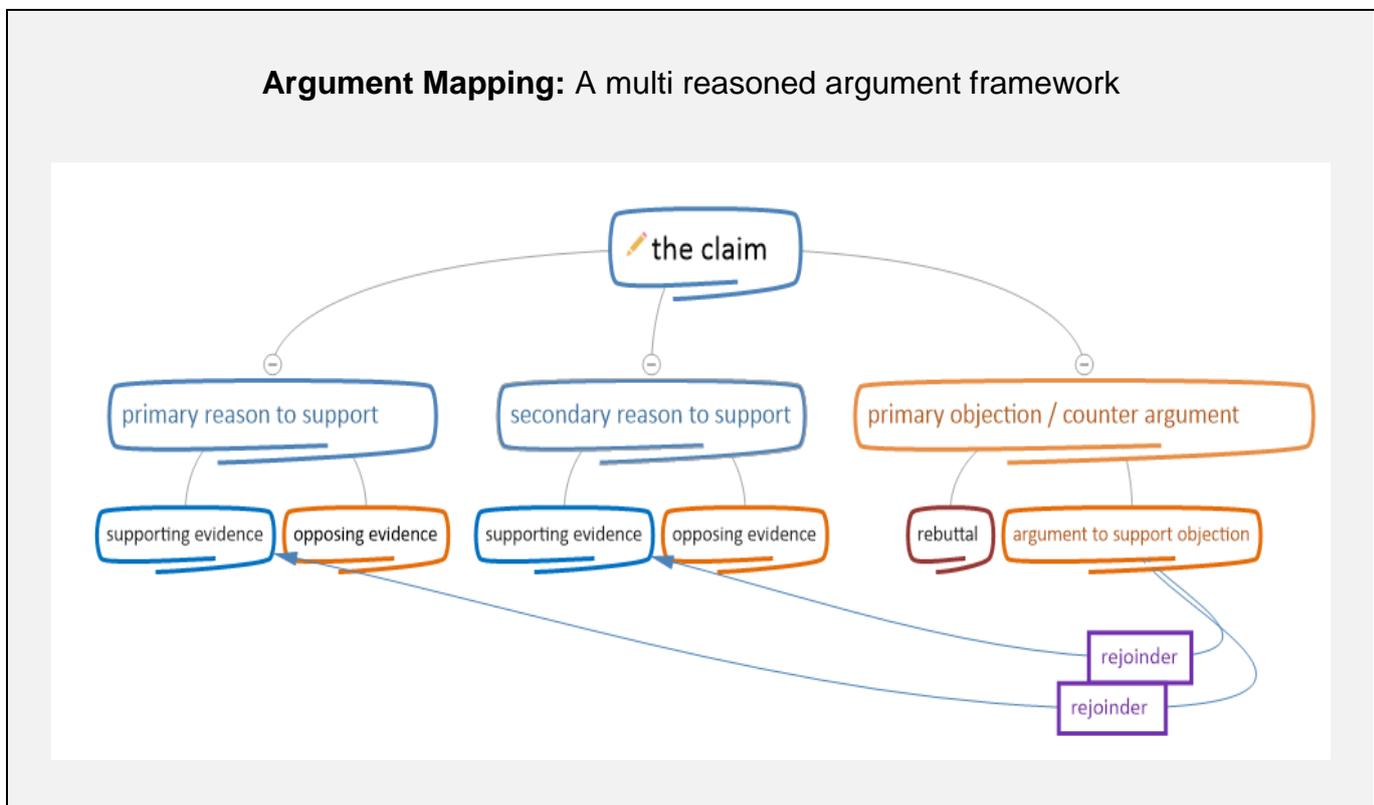
<b>Step 1:</b>	Find research articles and read them in detail highlighting the key themes identified (the Study Hub guides on <b>Creating a Search term grid</b> ; <b>Identifying keywords to research an assignment</b> ; <b>Evaluating a Source</b> and <b>Critiquing a Journal Article</b> can help with this).
<b>Step 2:</b>	Involves sourcing a mapping package. Within the university, <b>MindGenius 6</b> is available. Alternatively, Microsoft PowerPoint can be used as the page is naturally landscape and it is easy to fill out information in the “bubbles”.

<b>Step 3:</b>	Involves constructing the map using colour coding for each different author, and inputting the key themes, as a sentence, from your reading within the “bubbles”. Using Microsoft PowerPoint, it is easy to draw lines to connect the themes and then to look for similarities and differences between different views on these themes. See the examples below on pages 4 and 5.
<b>Step 4:</b>	<p>Builds on from Step three in that you may have discovered that there are some themes which have a number of conflicting views. To help you map out the differing arguments consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The main point of the argument</li> <li>b) Main Reasons for and sources of supporting evidence that would convince someone of the argument</li> <li>c) Main reasons against and sources of supporting evidence that contradicts the argument</li> <li>d) Facts or Examples: Write three facts or examples to support each of your main reasons and validate your goal or thesis.</li> <li>e) Conclusion: Conclude your argument by summarising the most important details of the argument and stating once again what your position is by use of your writer’s voice.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 5:</b>	You can use these arguments to help you take part in a critical discussion in class, when preparing for a seminar topic, as preparation for a class presentation or to help you construct an assignment where a critical review of literature is needed.

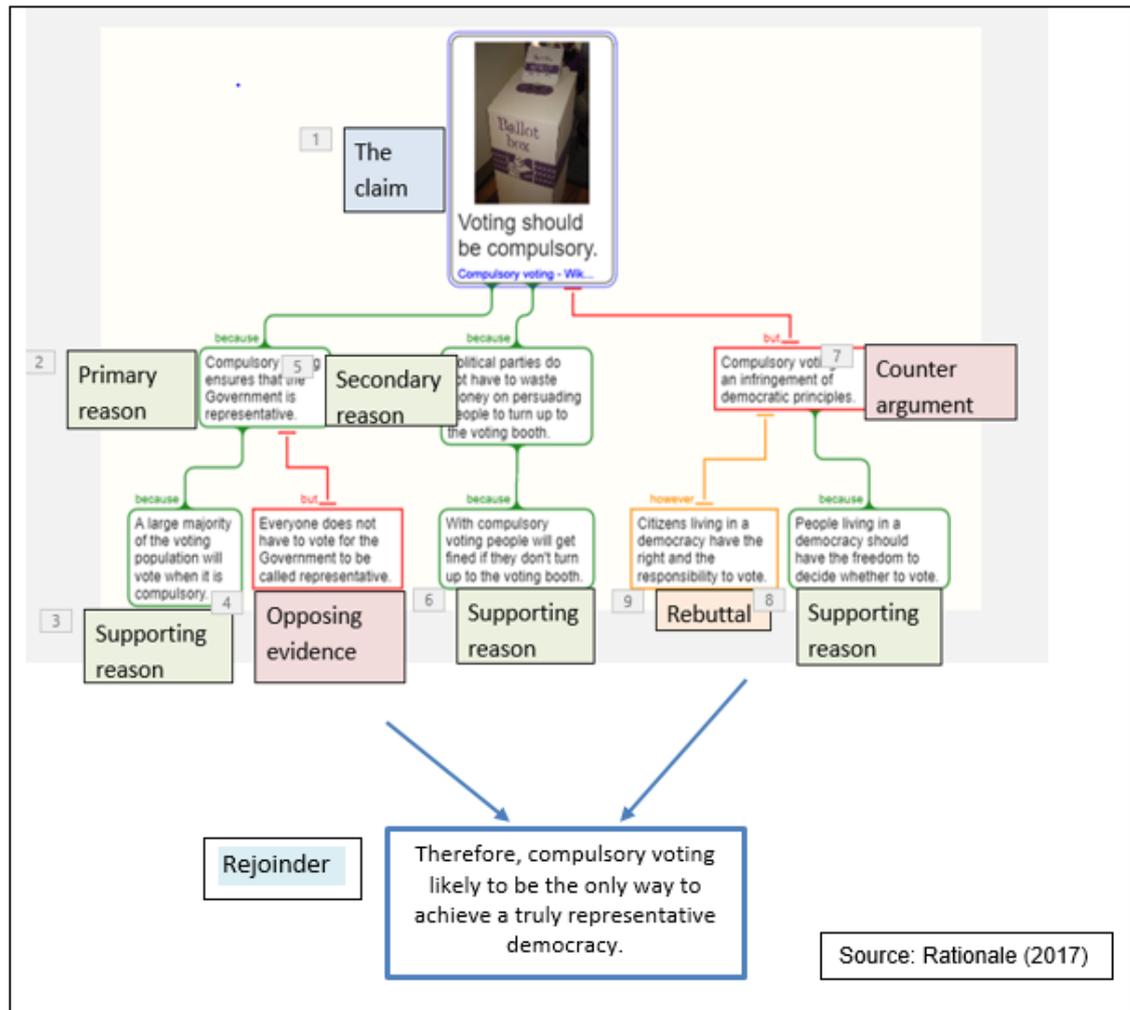
## Argument Mapping: An example of a simple argument



## Argument Mapping: A multi reasoned argument framework



## A multi-reasoned argument framework – an example



### Further information

Also, check out the Workbooks section of Study Hub self-help resources for MindGenius 6 guide on how to create a mind map.



### Reference list

Berg, T. et al. (no date) *Critical thinking reasoning and communicating with rationale*

Available at: <https://www.rationaleonline.com/docs/en/tutorials#wmrvcy>

(Downloaded: 5 September 2017)

Rationale (2017) *Argument mapping* Available at: <https://www.rationaleonline.com/>

(Accessed: 2 October 2017)

Wason, H. and Southall, J. (2016) 'The Argument Map' *Critical Thinking Skills Toolkit Student Guide* p. 32-33 [unpublished] (Available from: Kingston University)