5. The Endangered Species Act is too stringent because it severely damages the economy.

Using Toulmin Terminology to Describe an Argument's Structure

Our explanation of argument structure is influenced by the work of philosopher Stephen Toulmin, who viewed argumentation as a dynamic courtroom drama where opposing attorneys exchange arguments and cross-examinations before a judge and jury. The terms used by Toulmin to describe the structure of argument are widely accepted in rhetoric and composition studies and provide a handy vocabulary for discussing arguments. Toulmin called the unstated assumption behind a claim with reason the argument's *warrant,* based on our common word *warranty* for guarantee. If the audience accepts your warrant—that is, if they agree with your unstated assumption—then your argument is sound, or guaranteed. To put it another way, if your audience accepts your warrant, and if you can convince them that your reason is true, then they will accept your claim.

Besides the term *warrant,* Toulmin also uses the terms *grounds, backing, conditions of rebuttal,* and *qualifier.* We will explain these terms to you at the appropriate moments as we proceed.

Using Evidence Effectively

In Chapter 2 we showed you that the majority of words in a closed-form essay are particulars used to support points. If you think of reasons and warrants as the main points of your argument, then think of evidence as the supporting particulars. Each of your reasons needs to be supported by evidence. Toulmin's term for evidence in support of a reason is *grounds,* which we can think of as all the facts, data, testimony, statistics, subarguments, and other details a writer can find to support a reason. Toulmin calls the evidence and arguments used to support a warrant its *backing.* In this section we survey different kinds of evidence and show you how to incorporate that evidence into an argument, either as grounds to support a reason or as backing to support a warrant. Some arguments can be fleshed out with evidence based on your personal experience and observations. But most arguments require more formal evidence—the kind you gather from library or field research.

Part Four, "A Rhetorical Guide to Research," treats research writing in detail.

Kinds of Evidence

The kinds of evidence most often used for the grounds and backing are the following:

Examples. An example from personal experience can often be used to support a reason. Here is how one student writer, arguing that her church building needs to be remodeled, used a personal example to support a reason.

> Finally, Sacred Heart Church must be renovated immediately because the terrazzo floor that covers the entire church is very dangerous. Four Sundays ago, during 11:00 Mass, nine Eucharistic Ministers went up to the altar to prepare for distribut-

decisions leads people to empirical measures that disastrously oversimplify complex matters. Every year, for example, new crops of potential professional athletes are scrutinized minutely for their records in the forty-yard dash, the bench press, the vertical jump, and so forth. Every year, some of the people who max out on these empirical measures flop ingloriously in actual competition because they lack qualities that are difficult if not impossible to measure empirically, whereas other athletes, with more modest scores, achieve great success thanks to these same invisible qualities.

Quantifiable measures can be helpful, of course. But they are so concrete and they make comparisons so easy that they can seduce you into believing that you can make complex judgments by comparing numbers. It's all too easy to fall into the trap of basing college admissions on SAT scores, scholarships on grade point averages, or the success of a government policy on tax dollars saved.

The Problem of Cost

A final problem in establishing criteria is cost. A given X may be far superior to any other Xs in its class, but it may also cost far more. Before you move from evaluating an X to acting on your evaluation (by buying, hiring, or doing X), you must consider cost, whether it is expressed as dollars, time, or lost opportunity. There's little question, for example, that a Lexus is superior to a Nissan Sentra according to most automotive criteria. But are the differences sufficient to justify the additional thirty thousand or so dollars that the Lexus costs?

Using Toulmin's System to Develop Evaluation Arguments

In Chapter 14, we presented a language for talking about argument based on the terminology of philosopher Stephen Toulmin. We explained how you can examine any claim with reason from the perspective of *grounds* (evidence to support the reason), *warrant* (the unstated assumption that links the reason to your claim), *backing* (an argument to support the warrant if needed), *conditions of rebuttal* (ways that a skeptical audience might refute your argument by attacking your reason and grounds or your warrant), and *qualifier* (a limiting phrase to reduce the sweep of your claim). Because the warrants for an evaluation argument are typically statements of your criteria, this system can easily be applied to evaluation arguments.

Let's say that you are the student member of a committee to select a professor for an outstanding teaching award. Several members of the committee want to give the award to Professor M. Mouse, a popular sociology professor at your institution. You are opposed. One of your lines of reasoning is that Professor Mouse's courses aren't rigorous. Here is how you could develop this line of reasoning using the planning schema explained in Chapter 14.

Chapter 14, pp. 404–406, explains how the Toulmin system can help writers map out and structure an argument to connect with their audience.

CLAIM WITH REASON

Professor Mouse does not deserve the teaching award because his courses aren't rigorous.

GROUNDS

I need to provide evidence that his courses aren't rigorous. From the dean's office records, I have discovered that eighty percent of his students get As or high Bs; a review of his syllabi shows that he requires little outside reading and only one short paper; he has a reputation in my dorm of being fun and easy.

WARRANT

Having rigorous academic standards is a necessary criterion for the university teaching award.

BACKING

I need to show why I think rigorous academic standards are necessary. Quality of teaching should be measured by the amount that students learn. Good teaching is more than a popularity contest. Good teachers draw high-level performance from their students and motivate them to put time and energy into learning. High standards lead to the development of skills that are demanded in society.

CONDITIONS OF REBUTTAL

How could someone attack my reason and grounds? Might a person say that Mouse has high standards? Could someone show that students really earned the high grades? Are the students I talked to not representative? Could someone say that Mouse's workload and grading patterns meet or exceed the commonplace behavior of faculty in his department? *How could someone attack my warrant?* Could someone argue that rigorous academic standards aren't as important as other criteria—that this is an accidental not a necessary criterion? Could a person say that Mouse's goal—to inspire interest in sociology—is best achieved by not loading students down with too many papers and too much reading, which can appear like busywork? (I'll need to refute this argument.) Could someone say that the purpose of giving the university teaching award is public relations and it is therefore important to recognize widely popular teachers who will be excellent speakers at banquets and other public forums?

QUALIFIER

Rather than saying that Professor Mouse doesn't deserve the award, perhaps it would be better for me to say that he is a weak candidate or even a generally strong candidate except for one notable weakness.

Conducting an Evaluation Argument: An Extended Example of Evaluating a Museum

For an extended example of how to evaluate Web sites for academic purposes, see Chapter 21, pp. 631–637.

Now that we have explored some potential difficulties in establishing and defending criteria for an evaluation, let's consider in more detail the process of making an evaluation argument.

The student examples in this section focus on the evaluation of a rock and roll museum in Seattle, Washington, called Experience Music Project (EMP). Designed by world-famous architect Frank Gehry (who is known for his creation of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, the Aerospace Hall in Los Angeles, and other famous buildings around the world), EMP was sponsored by Microsoft