

7 Qualifying an argument without weakening it – Part 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary

Write each word three times.

English

Write it 3 times (English)

qualify

concession

rebuttal

Recall

- You have argued with someone who admitted nothing and convinced nobody.
- You know “always” and “never” invite a counter-example.
- You have been more persuaded by someone who conceded a point.

New ideas

Read these first. Each idea has a short worked example. Then do the Practice below.

■ 1 Qualification

To **qualify** a claim is to state the conditions under which it holds. A qualified claim is harder to refute, because the obvious counter-examples have already been placed outside it.

Worked example. “Subsidies work where the service is already frequent” survives the case of an infrequent service; “subsidies work” does not.

■ 2 Concession

A **concession** grants a point to the other side. It costs the argument nothing that was not already true and buys the reader's trust.

Worked example. Granting that the scheme is expensive lets the writer argue about value rather than deny an evident fact.

■ 3 Rebuttal

A **rebuttal** answers the objection after conceding what is true in it. Concession without rebuttal abandons the argument; rebuttal without concession sounds evasive.

Worked example. "It is expensive - and the alternative costs more over ten years" concedes and rebuts in one sentence.

Watch out: Qualification is not hedging. A qualified claim states exactly where it holds; a hedged claim states nothing definite anywhere.

Practice

2.1 Define qualification and state what it achieves. [2]

2.2 Define concession and state what it buys. [2]

2.3 Define rebuttal. [1]

2.4 Explain what happens with concession but no rebuttal. [2]

2.5 Distinguish qualification from hedging. [2]

2.6 Qualify the claim “subsidies work”.

[1]
