

Refining Qualified Arguments

AP English Language ■ Unit 9

AP English Language



What we will cover

1 How Claims Are Qualified

2 Qualifying a Claim

How Claims Are Qualified

Three different moves - and the evidence you have decides which one you may make

CONCEDE	REBUT	REFUTE
accept all or part of the competing claim as correct	offer a contrasting perspective, or an alternative interpretation	demonstrate, using evidence, that the claim is incorrect
needs: honesty	needs: another reading of the same facts	needs: evidence of error

*and the CED says it
RAISES your credibility*

*almost always available -
this is the workhorse move*

*without that evidence,
refuting is bluffing*

Then come back to your own position. An unreturned concession reads as agreement.

the distinction this unit turns on

How Claims Are Qualified

Unit 9 is short and it is the course's final move: **how to handle the arguments that oppose yours**. Everything here is directly rewarded on the exam, and the three key verbs are constantly confused.

- **Effectively entering an ongoing conversation** about a subject means **engaging the positions that have already been taken**. An argument that ignores them is not participating in the discussion, only announcing into it.
- Evidence and sources will either **support, complement, or contradict** 支持、补充或反驳 a writer's thesis. All three are usable – contradicting evidence is not a problem to be hidden but material to be handled.
- **Writers enhance their credibility when they refute, rebut, or concede** opposing arguments and contradictory evidence.
- **Concede** 让步: writers **accept all or a portion of a competing position or claim as correct**, and agree that the opposing point has merit.

How Claims Are Qualified, continued

The distinction is what your evidence lets you do. **Refuting requires evidence of error**; if you do not have it, refuting is bluffing and a reader will see it. **Rebutting requires only an alternative reading** of the same facts, which is far more often available.

Conceding requires honesty, and it costs nothing – the CED says explicitly that it *enhances* credibility.

Qualifying a Claim

For your own writing, the strongest and most reliable shape on Question 3 is:

- State your position, **qualified** to the ground your evidence covers.
- **Concede** the part of the opposing position that is genuinely correct.
- **Rebut or refute** the rest – rebut if you have an alternative reading, refute only if you have evidence of error.
- Show why your position **survives** the concession.

Qualifying a Claim, continued

Step 4 is the one most students omit, and it is where the sophistication point lives.

Conceding and then not returning to your own argument reads as having changed your mind.

Exam tips

- **Concede, rebut, refute** are three different claims. Do not use the words interchangeably.
- **Refute only with evidence of error.** Without it, rebut instead – an alternative interpretation is almost always available.
- **Conceding raises credibility**, by the CED's own statement. It is not a weakness.
- After conceding, **come back**. An unreturned concession reads as agreement with the other side.
- Use a transition that **ranks** the counterargument: *the strongest objection to this is beats some people say*.
- When analysing a text, notice when it addresses **no** counterargument. That absence tells you who it was written for.