

Types of Evidence

The goal of an argumentative essay is to persuade readers by providing *evidence* to justify *reasons* supporting a *thesis*. Writers should use different types of evidence containing specific, verifiable details to support each reason. Here are five common types of evidence:

- I. An **anecdote** relates a brief story. It explains what happened, who was involved, and where and when it happened.
 - **Sample reason:** Students commuting to Texas A&M International University should carpool because it makes driving to and from the university safer.
 - **Anecdotal Evidence:** Joe, Carla, Anna, and I live in Zapata. We attend TAMIU and carpool to school three days a week. During the hour-long drive, we discuss our coursework, complain about our jobs, and share opinions on movies we've seen. Our chat sessions help pass the time and keep Joe from falling asleep behind the wheel, especially on the long, dark drive back to Zapata.

- II. **Statistics** support a reason by using specific numerical data such as percentages, fractions, decimals, whole numbers, and/or ratios. The writer must report statistics accurately and objectively.
 - **Sample reason:** Students should carpool to campus because it saves money.
 - **Statistical Evidence:** Last semester I spent approximately \$22.50 on gasoline each week. Since I've started carpooling to class this semester, I spend 40% less on gasoline, a savings of \$9.00 per week and \$135 per semester.

- III. An **authority** or **expert** is a person or an organization with credentials (such as educational degrees, publication credits, work experience, professional presentations, etc.) that demonstrate his or her expertise on the topic discussed.
 - **Sample reason:** Carpooling reduces the risk of traffic accidents.
 - **Authoritative Evidence:** According to Officer Jose Montoya, an eighteen-year police veteran, carpooling reduces the number of cars on the road, which means less traffic congestion and, therefore, fewer accidents.

- IV. An **analogy** is a comparison between two distinctly different things that still have at least one significant, relevant similarity.
 - **Sample reason:** Carpooling reduces air pollution.
 - **Analogy as Evidence:** A room where only two people smoke is significantly less polluted than a room of the same size with more than two people smoking. Similarly, our city will have less air pollution if we carpool because fewer cars produce fewer pollutants.

- V. A **hypothetical situation** is a fictional incident with enough detail to feel real. A writer using a hypothetical situation *creates* details that tell what happened, to whom it happened, and where and when it happened.
 - **Sample reason:** Students who carpool to class have more time to study.
 - **Hypothetical Situation as Evidence:** Driving to and from the university takes up study time. Suppose Alex, biology major, drives to campus three nights a week, spends about thirty minutes driving to class each night for a total of ninety minutes a week. He could carpool with two students and drive to school on one night rather than three. His driving time shrinks to thirty minutes a week, giving him a full study hour on the way to class.