



## The Proper Structure of an Argument

### RULES:

An argument is composed of two parts: Premise and Conclusion.

Premise can be single or numerous. Conclusion must be single.

Therefore, an argument is focused on validating a single idea, the conclusion.

### PROPER STRUCTURE OF AN ARGUMENT:

Premise #1 ....

Premise #2 ....

Premise #n ....

Conclusion: ....

### Example of a single-premise argument:

She is overweight because she eats a lot.

In this example, which clause is the premise and which clause is the conclusion?

### Example of a multi-premise argument:

When I was in Asia I saw the sun rises in the East

When I was in Europe I saw the sun rises in the East

When I was in Australia I saw the sun rises in the East

That is how I know the sun always rises in the East

This is a well-structured argument with 3 premises and a single conclusion.

Do you accept this argument?

If you doubt the conclusion “the sun always rises in the East” may not be always true, you are a critical thinker, congratulations. You will explore whether the statement is still true standing on the North or South Pole. You may be pondering from the perspectives of an astronaut in space.

## Analysing an Argument

Here is how a critical thinker would analyse the validity of an argument in 3 steps.

- 1) Is the argument properly structured with premise(s) and a single conclusion? If not, reject the argument right out.
- 2) Are there any logical flaws such as fallacies and cognitive biases? If yes, reject the argument already.
- 3) If the argument passes the above two tests, then consider the true or false of each premise. This judgement requires background knowledge on the subject matter mentioned in each premise. You might need to do some searching to substantiate your background knowledge which might be new knowledge to you. Only when all the premises are deemed true to the best of human knowledge should we accept an argument as valid. Otherwise we remain sceptical but not cynical.