Learning Development

University of Northampton

Arguments: the essentials

An argument is an attempt to persuade a listener or reader to accept a conclusion by offering reasons and evidence which support an idea. In assignments, this is in response to the question or topic you have been given.

Idea: We should use public transport more.

The **reasoning** that supports this idea might be:

- It would cut air pollution
- It would save non-renewable resources
- It would cut down on travel stress

A good argument will develop these reasons using **evidence** from reliable sources, considering **multiple perspectives** based on literature, before deciding if the original idea is confirmed or denied.

Evidence: e.g. Curitaba introduced a bus system in 1996, which cut traffic by over 50% and consequently, the air quality has improved significantly over the last decade (Bentley, 2008).

Note that one example like this is not enough - you will need several examples, paraphrases from sources and/or pieces of data to provide good evidence. See Using information from sources for more detail.

Alternative perspective: Public transport is costly to introduce as it requires infrastructure and equipment.

Each reason will likely be developed in a separate section of your assignment e.g. in one part of your presentation, or a paragraph of an essay.

Public transport systems contribute to improving the air quality by reducing traffic and pollution. For example, Curitaba introduced a bus system in 1996, which cut traffic by over 50% and consequently, the air quality has improved significantly over the last decade (Bentley, 2008). Similarly, New York's air quality improved considerably after the improvement of its subway network in the 1980s (NYCTA, 2010). However, as Bennett and Seeley (2012) highlight, such initiatives are costly to implement. The Curitaba project cost the equivalent of USD $2.2 billion (Bentley, 2008), for instance. So while there may be ecological and health benefits, finding the financial capital to invest may prove challenging for some cities.