ENG 101
Arguing a Position
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Quiz #4
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According to our Course Text,
1.List/Cite the key features of an argument?

1. **A clear and arguable position.** At the heart of every argument is a claim with which people may reasonably disagree. Some claims are not arguable because they're completely subjective, matters of taste or opinion ("I hate sauerkraut"), because they are a matter of fact ("The first Star Wars movie came out in 1977"), or because they are based on belief or faith ("There is life after death"). To be arguable, a position must reflect one of at least two points of view, making reasoned argument necessary: Internet file sharing should (or should not) be considered fair use; selling human organs should be legal (or illegal). In college writing, you will often argue not that a position is correct but that it is plausible — that it is reasonable, supportable, and worthy of being taken seriously.
2. **Necessary background information**. Sometimes we need to provide some background on a topic we are arguing so that readers can understand what is being argued. MacKay establishes the need for kidney donors before launching her argument for legalizing the selling of organs; Taubes describes the rise in obesity before he takes a position on its cause.
3. **Good reasons.** By itself, a position does not make an argument; the argument comes when a writer offers reasons to back the position up. There are many kinds of good reasons. Lessig makes his argument by comparing,

showing many examples of so-called piracy in other media. Taubes points out that people didn't evolve to eat refined grains and that data show carbohydrates to be more fattening than fat. MacKay bases her argument in favor of legalizing the sale of human organs on the fact that kidney transplants save lives and that regulation would protect impoverished people who currently sell their organs on the black market.

4. **Convincing evidence.** It's one thing to give reasons for your position. You then need to offer evidence for your reasons: facts, statistics, expert testimony, anecdotal evidence, case studies, textual evidence. All three arguments use a mix of these types of evidence. MacKay cites statistics about Americans who die from renal failure to support her argument for legalizing organ sales; Lessig offers facts from the history of the broadcast media to support his argument for file sharing.
5. **Appeals to readers' values**. Effective arguers try to appeal to readers' values and emotions. Both MacKay and Lessig appeal to basic values — MacKay to the value of compassion, Lessig to the value of fairness. These are deeply held values that we may not think about very much and as a result may see as common ground we share with the writers. And some of MacKay's evidence appeals to emotion — her descriptions of people dying from kidney disease and of poor people selling their organs are likely to evoke an emotional response in many readers.
6. **A trustworthy tone.** Arguments can stand or fall on the way readers perceive the writer. Very simply, readers need to trust the person who's

making the argument. One way of winning this trust is by demonstrating that you know what you're talking about. Lessig offers plenty of facts to show his knowledge of copyright history — and he does so in a self-assured tone. There are many other ways of establishing yourself (and your argument) as trustworthy — by showing that you have some experience with your subject, that you're fair, and of course that you're honest.

7. **Careful consideration of other positions**. No matter how reasonable and careful we are in arguing our positions, others may disagree or offer counterarguments or hold other positions. We need to consider those other views and to acknowledge and, if possible, refute them in our written arguments. MacKay, for example, acknowledges that some believe that selling one's organs is unethical, but she counters that it's usually healthy, affluent people who say this—not people who need the money they could get by selling one.