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## Questioning as we learn: An introduction to critical thinking

### Material for Higher Education students in Sierra Leone by INASP, UK



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#### *Unit 3 - Snippet 60*

Please read the following example to understand better what an argument is.

**It's 8.55am. It takes us at least 15 minutes to get to school. Class starts at 9.00am. So we will be late for class.**

This is a four-sentence argument. The sentence 'We will be late for class' is said to be true, while the other three (It's 8.55am. It takes us at least 15 minutes to get to school. Class starts at 9.00am.) are being offered as reasons for believing that.

The sentence said to be true is the *conclusion*, while the other sentences are the *premises* or *evidence*. In the above example, the conclusion is 'We will be late for class', while the other three sentences are the premises, or the evidence given in support of the conclusion. Another word for conclusion (in this sense) is *claim*.

Note that not all sets of sentences are arguments. For instance, 'It's 8.55am. Class starts at 9.00am. It takes us at least 15 minutes to get to school.' is a set of three related sentences. However, this is not an argument, because the speaker is not claiming or concluding anything based on the three sentences.

Also note that one simple sentence cannot be an argument on its own. For instance, 'We are going to be late for class' on its own is not an argument, because the speaker is not providing any evidence for this, so this sentence is a simple statement or assertion.

If you still feel the meaning of argument related to critical thinking is not clear, discuss your questions with your fellow students.