

Questioning as we learn: An introduction to critical thinking

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



Provided by the Critical Thinking Taskforce (CTTF) within the project AQHEd-SL

Unit 3 - Snippet 61

Please recall what you read about the premises and conclusion of an argument or read snippet 60 again as the following text will build on that.

How to spot an argument?

There are some words or expressions that indicate a premise, and others that indicate a conclusion.

Premise indicators (examples)	Conclusion indicators (examples)
since as (indicated by) because for given that assuming that owing to we may infer from	consequently so therefore thus hence accordingly for this reason that is why we may conclude/infer that it follows that as a result

Note that the above signal words do not always indicate an argument. For instance, 'because' sometimes simply introduces an explanation. Consider, for instance, the following sentence: *I arrived late because I had been shopping.* Here, the speaker is merely explaining why she arrived late, and not making any claim. However, in the following sentence, 'because' does indicate a premise: *She should win the award, because her work has always been outstanding, and she has worked hard to prepare her application despite being off sick for a long time.*

And not all writers or speakers provide these signal words for their arguments. The reader or listener needs to establish whether the intention is to present an argument and, if so, which sentences are the evidence, and which the conclusion.