Stephen Toulmin (The Uses of Argument, 1958), a British philosopher, is credited for developing a system of making practical arguments. His argument system is based on justifying claims, and it involves analyzing your own argument from all sides to make it stronger. A Toulmin argument consists of the following components:

- **The Claim** – the statement or assertion the writer hopes to prove.
  - The claim must be controversial or debatable, or it is not an argument! Obvious facts do NOT work as claims.
  - Example claim: The Electoral College should be abolished.

- **Ground/Evidence** – foundation that proves the claim.
  - Example evidence: The Electoral College gives small states undue influence.

- **Warrant** – logical and persuasive connection between a claim and the evidence.
  - The warrant is often left unstated, it provides the logic of why the evidence proves the claim. A strong warrant is one that is very difficult to disagree with. An argument with a weak warrant is easily disproven.
    - Strong warrant example:
      - Claim/Evidence: The Electoral College should be abolished because it gives small states undue influence.
      - Strong Warrant: No individual state(s) should have undue influence on presidential elections.
    - Weak warrant example:
      - Claim/Evidence: The legal age for drinking should be lowered since I’ve been drinking since age fourteen without problems.
      - Weak Warrant: What works for me should work for everyone else.

- **Backing** – the evidence supporting the warrant.
  - If the warrant is not fully convincing on its own, a strong backing is extra persuasion on your argument’s side.
    - Example backing: Presidential candidates focus their campaigns on states with comparatively large electoral power and neglect many other states.

- **Rebuttal** – addressing potential objections/alternative viewpoints.
  - Acknowledging the opposition to your argument is a good way to show that you fully understand all sides of your claim. You can even then refute an objection to your claim, to make your argument even stronger. A rebuttal can contain two parts:
○ Concession – admitting of a point from the opposition; acknowledgement
  • Example concession: The Electoral College was created to ensure that presidential elections were limited to the main candidates instead of becoming chaotic.

○ Refutation – addressing/countering the concession to prove your own point
  • Example refutation: This was a precaution from before two-party politics and mass media ensured that only the main candidates ever get many votes.

▶ Qualifiers – words and phrases that place limits on claims.
If a claim in absolute terms would be too easy to dismiss, a qualifier shows that you’re aware your claim isn’t always valid. Some qualifiers: in some cases, under these conditions, possibly, routinely, etc.
  ○ Unqualified claim: People who meditate have better mental health.
  ○ Qualified claim: Many people who meditate find that it helps them manage their mental health.