

Objections and Counterarguments

- An *objection* to an argument finds a way in which the reasoning involved in the argument is mistaken or problematic. Common ways to object to arguments include (i) saying that one of its premises is false and (ii) saying that the conclusion doesn't follow from the premises. Here are two examples:

– ARGUMENT 1:

1. Everything that swims is a fish.
2. Whales swim.
-
3. Whales are fish.

An objection to ARGUMENT 1 is that the first premise is false.

– ARGUMENT 2:

1. Most animals that swim are fish.
2. Whales swim.
-
3. Whales are fish.

An objection to ARGUMENT 2 is that the conclusion doesn't follow. Even if most animals that swim are fish and whales swim, it doesn't follow that whales are fish.

- If you have one argument, a *counter-argument* is an argument for the opposite conclusion.

For example, consider ARGUMENT 2 above. Here is a counter-argument:

1. Animals that breathe air with lungs and have hair are not fish.
2. Whales breathe air with lungs and have hair.
-
3. Whales are not fish.

Here are some examples of arguments. For each one, find an objection and a counterargument:

- Argument 3:

1. Notre Dame is in California.
2. California is in the Pacific time zone.
-
3. Notre Dame is in the Pacific time zone.

- Argument 4:

1. The US constitution guarantees a right to basic freedoms.
2. Some people want to drive on the left side of the road.
-
3. Americans have a right to drive on the left side of the road.