WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

Build a Clear Argument

A main point supported by distinct reasons and checked evidence.

20 minutes | Pyramid Principle · Main point / Reasons / Evidence

Use it in three moves

1. Write the answer to the reader's question first.
2. Group distinct supporting reasons beneath it and attach evidence to each.
3. Check the vertical logic and gaps; then choose whether SCQA would help introduce the argument.

Put the main point in one sentence

State a recommendation or conclusion that answers the reader's question. Make its scope clear.

Reason 1 · Claim and evidence

Start with a supporting claim, then add the observation or source that supports it.

Reason 2 · Claim and evidence

Use a distinct reason at the same level. Do not count the same evidence twice under different labels.

Build a Clear Argument

YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

Reason 3 · Claim and evidence, if needed

Leave blank if two reasons are enough. A three-part structure is not an obligation.

Check the logic and the missing case

Do the reasons support the point? Do they overlap? What counterargument or missing evidence could change it?

Finish with the actual next step

Name the decision or action needed, the owner, and when you will review it.

A question for me

Which part of this argument is clear because it is well supported, and which is merely confident?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

Put the main point in one sentence

Keep the weekly customer review, but replace the status round with a written update.

Reason 1 · Claim and evidence

The status round uses time without much discussion. In the last three meetings it took 20 minutes, with one clarification question in total.

Reason 2 · Claim and evidence

The live discussion is useful for resolving exceptions. Two blocked decisions were settled during the last review.

Reason 3 · Claim and evidence, if needed

A short written update can be read by absent colleagues. Check that people can access and understand it before removing the spoken update.

Check the logic and the missing case

We have not asked colleagues who rely on spoken updates. Offer an accessible alternative and test whether written context is sufficient.

Finish with the actual next step

Agree a two-week trial on Friday. The meeting owner gathers feedback and compares decision time and preparation burden before keeping the change.

The thinking behind it

A tidy argument can conceal whose experience was excluded. Make a place for the account that could change your conclusion.

Barbara Minto's Pyramid Principle organizes a main message above supporting ideas and evidence. SCQA can frame the introduction; it is not the whole argument structure. This independent practice builds an argument with original examples and explicit counterevidence, not a reproduction of Minto training materials.

Barbara Minto · The Pyramid Principle

Read The Search For Unapologetic Impracticality In Leadership: Part II - The Seduction of Certainty by Nic Payne