



Syllogism Tip Sheet

A syllogism is a three-step method of framing an argument. First is the **Major Premise**, an assumption or argument meant to be taken as fact. Next is the **Minor Premise**, another assumption/argument that serves to substantiate the Major Premise. Finally, a **Conclusion** is drawn from both the Major and Minor Premises.

Here are some examples of syllogisms:

1. **Major Premise:** Humans are mortal.
2. **Minor Premise:** Socrates is human.
3. **Conclusion:** Socrates is mortal.

1. **Major Premise:** The meeting is either in the conference room or in the manager's office.
2. **Minor Premise:** The meeting is not in the manager's office.
3. **Conclusion:** Therefore, the meeting is in the conference room.

1. **Major Premise:** The new plan will increase revenues.
2. **Minor Premise:** Increasing revenues will make my boss happy.
3. **Conclusion:** Therefore, the new plan will make my boss happy.

As you can see, syllogisms present a relatively clear and straightforward means of presenting an argument. In order to function properly, however, they must be precise in their execution.

A good way to check if your syllogism is formatted properly is to consider the elements that are unique to your Major Premise, and then the elements unique to your Minor Premise. The Conclusion should be a combination of those unique elements. Look at this syllogism, for example:

1. **Major Premise:** All mammals are warm-blooded.
2. **Minor Premise:** All dogs are mammals.
3. **Conclusion:** All dogs are warm-blooded.

As you can see, the shared element between the Major and Minor Premises is "mammals." The italicized/underlined elements are unique to either the Major or Minor Premise. The conclusion, therefore, is found by combining these two unique elements -- having been mentioned in both Premises, the shared, non-unique element has already been established and can thus be taken as a given in the syllogism's conclusion.