**The positive argument approach**

1. Give clear, compelling examples.
   1. If your examples are implausible or unclear, your argument will be weak.
   2. Be careful: the fewer examples you use, the harder it is to generalize, and the more objections there will be.
2. Show that your thesis is the **best** fit to these examples.
   1. This will require showing that the examples agree with your thesis.
   2. And it typically requires showing that no alternative view fits all the examples. So pick examples that allow you to rule out alternative views.

*For example (from our discussion of Alston):*

Thesis: [Assuming A is not aware of any defeaters] If A has an experience that represents *p* as true, then A is justified in believing that *p* is true*.*

Evidence:

1. Alston is justified in believing his dog is there when he sees the dog, even if no one else is present to see the dog.
2. Alston would be justified in believing that his dog is there when his vision says the dog is there, even if the dog is not actually there (assuming he has no reason to think his vision is mistaken).
3. Alston would not be justified in believing that his dog is in the room before he had any experience that said the dog was in the room.
4. You are justified in believing that your classmate has blue eyes when their eyes look blue.
5. You would be justified in believing that your classmate has blue eyes even in in fact they were wearing colored contacts (assuming you have no reason to suspect they are wearing colored contacts).

How does the thesis fit the evidence:

* In each case, the person has an experience which says “such and such is true” and is justified in believing that “such and such” is true.

Why the evidence does not fit alternative claims:

* Someone might think that we are justified in believing that p because p is true, or only when p is true.
  + Cases (ii) and (v) are counterexamples.
* Someone might think that we are justified in believing that p is true only when we have both experience and corroborating evidence that says that p.
  + Case (i) is a counterexample.
* Someone might think that every belief is justified.
  + Case (iii) is a counterexample.

**Making a negative argument**

1. Start by discussing a very intuitive/plausible/common-sensical view.
2. Show why it can’t be true, using strong counterexamples.
3. Show how the counterexamples mean we have to adopt a new view.
4. Give a counterexample to the new view.
5. Do this over and over until you end up with your thesis. Summarize how it fits all the evidence given.

*For example:*

Thesis: [Assuming A is not aware of any defeaters] If A has an experience that represents *p* as true, then A is justified in believing that *p* is true*.*

* Initially, we might think that all true beliefs are justified.
  + But if we all saw that our classmate had blue eyes, we would be justified in believing that she has true eyes even though she’s really wearing colored contact lenses (assuming we aren’t aware of the deception).
* This example might suggest that we are justified in believing things whenever we experience them and have corroborating evidence from other people’s experience.
  + But if Alston would be justified in believing that his dog is in the room even if no one else was there to see the dog.
* These examples might suggest that all beliefs are justified.
  + But, if Alston just assumed that his dog was in the room prior to having any evidence that the dog is – before looking for the dog or hearing the dog or smelling the dog, etc – this belief would not be justified.
* What do all of these examples have in common? In each the person forming the belief that *p* is true has an experience that tells *them* that *p* is true. This experience by itself is enough to make the belief justified, as my thesis says

**Arguing for a claim by arguing for something else first**

1. Find a principle or general idea that, if true, would show that your thesis is true.
   1. You might do this because your thesis is surprising, or does not clearly or obviously fit examples that others are inclined to accept.
2. Argue for that principle (e.g. by giving evidence that supports it; see above).
3. Then show how the principle leads to your claim.
   1. This won’t always be obvious to your reader, so be sure to explain.

*For example:*

* Zagzebski wants to argue that we can have justified religious beliefs even when we know that other, reasonable people do not share our beliefs.
  + This is controversial in philosophy, so she doesn’t try to give examples that directly support it (she knows that others will be unconvinced by these).
* Instead, she first argues that we have to trust admiration.
  + We can give compelling examples of beliefs that are clearly justified, and which can only be justified if we trust admiration and our traditions.
* Then she explains how trusting admiration means we can sometimes prefer our own religious views.
  + This is not obvious, so she spends some time talking about how these ideas connect.