Lesson Aims:

1. Introduce the components of philosophical arguments
2. Introduce the concept of formal validity
3. Introduce the concept of formal soundness
Philosophical Arguments

2 fundamental components: Premises
Conclusion

* These components must be sentences that can be true or false.

  SENTENCE: Pittsburgh is a U.S. city.
  SENTENCE: My cat has only four teeth.
  Not a sentence: What is the sound of one hand clapping?
  Not a sentence: Hot damn holy hell yee haw!!!

* The premises of an argument support its conclusion.
“I don’t think I’ll be going out this weekend if there’s a chance of snow. And this morning the weather forecast called for snow. So it looks like I’ll be staying in this weekend.”

FORMAL RESTATEMENT

P1 If there is a chance of snow this weekend, then I will not go out.
P2 There is a chance of snow this weekend.
C I will not go out.
How do we identify the conclusion of an argument?

“Clue” words in English:

Thus
So
Therefore
Hence
Ergo (not really English, but you get the idea)
“I believe that every batter on the Giants roster this year will have a batting average better than .250. And I believe that Sandoval will be a batter on the Giants roster this year, so I believe that Sandoval will have a batting average better than .250.”

C: Sandoval will have a batting average better than .250.
Validity

A **valid** argument is an argument that preserves truth from its premises to its conclusion.

This means that *if the premises of the argument are true, then the conclusion must also be true.*

**VALID:**

P1 George will say hello to every person who will come into the store today.
P2 Bill will come into the store today.
C George will say hello to Bill.

**INVALID:**

P1 Every U.S. President lives in the White House.
P2 Michelle Obama lives in the White House.
C Michelle Obama is a U.S. President.
Valid or Invalid?

P1 All men are mortal.
P2 Socrates is mortal.
C Socrates is a man.

_Invalid_: The truth of the premises isn't enough to guarantee the truth of the conclusion.
Valid or Invalid?

P1 Every good ballerina is an elegant dancer.
P2 Arnold Schwarzenegger is a good ballerina.
C Arnold Schwarzenegger is an elegant dancer.

Valid: If the premises of this argument are true, then the conclusion must be true.

But so what??? The premises of this argument aren't true!
A **sound** argument is a valid argument with true premises.

P1 Every major league baseball team has at least nine players.
P2 The Milwaukee Brewers are a major league baseball team.
C The Milwaukee Brewers have at least nine players.

*When considering whether an argument is persuasive, we ultimately want to determine whether or not the argument is sound.*
Sound or Not Sound?

P1 All good cars are reliable  
P2 All Yugos are reliable  
C  All good cars are Yugos

Not sound: This argument is not formally valid.
Sound or Not Sound?

P1 All reliable cars are good cars.
P2 All Yugos are reliable cars.
C All Yugos are good cars.

Not sound: This argument is valid, but P2 is (presumably) false.
Sound or Not Sound?

P1 It is pious to prosecute one's murderous father.
P2 It is right to do what is pious.
C It is right to prosecute one's murderous father.

_Uncertain:_ To determine the soundness of this argument, we'd need to hear further arguments in favor of the individual premises. That's why arguments end up being so important in philosophy!
Review

1. The two fundamental components of a philosophical argument are the *premises* and the *conclusion*.

2. An argument is valid if and only if it is the case that IF all its premises are assumed to be true THEN its conclusion must also be true.

3. An argument is sound if it is valid and its premises are all true.