

In fact, students who say they should get Bs just for attending class aren't claiming that grades should be based exclusively on effort. They're saying that students who put in a *minimum amount* of effort should receive at least a *decent* grade. But this is a bad idea too.

It's a bad idea because it defeats the two main reasons colleges give out grades at all. One is to allow students to assess their own learning—to determine if they are, in fact, learning what their professors are paid to teach them. The other is to let outside evaluators—notably employers and graduate admissions officers—know which graduates are likely to be the top performers.

This second function is absolutely crucial to our nation's health and prosperity. Engineering firms need to know which potential hires will do good work and which might design bridges that fall down. Medical schools need to know which student applicants are likely to become good doctors, and which might amputate the wrong limb.

Performance matters. In engineering. In medicine. In life. And until that changes, professors cannot base their grades on student effort.

7. *Epicurus on why we shouldn't fear death (paraphrased)*: It makes no sense to fear death. Something can harm us only if it can exist at the same time we do. But we and our death never exist at the same time. As long as we are alive, our death does not yet exist, and when we are dead, we no longer exist. We shouldn't fear something if it can't possibly harm us, and death can't possibly harm us, because it cannot exist at the same time that we exist. So, we shouldn't fear death.
8. *Pascal's wager (paraphrased)*: It's impossible to know whether God exists or not, but it's still smart to assume that he does and live a good and religious life. Why? Because if God does exist and we have lived a religious life, then we will be rewarded with eternal happiness. On the other hand, if God does exist and we have not led a religious life, then we will be punished and lose our chance of eternal happiness. Finally, if it turns out that there is no God, then it won't matter a great deal whether we have lived a religious life or not. So even though we can't know whether God exists or not, we should "bet" that he does, because we have so much to gain if God does exist and little or nothing to lose if he does not.

SUMMARY

1. In this chapter, we learned how to analyze arguments. To *analyze* an argument means to break it up into its parts to see clearly what conclusion is being defended and on what grounds.
2. To analyze short arguments, we use a method called *diagramming*, which involves six basic steps:
 - a. Read through the argument carefully, circling any premise or conclusion indicators you see.