

Validity is the concept that's concerned with whether or not the premises give enough support to force us to reach the same conclusion as that given in the argument. Validity is NOT concerned with whether the premises and/or conclusion are true. That's an entirely different and separate issue (involving the kinds of concerns dealt with in Chapter 3).

That's why we can figure out if an argument is valid or invalid, even though we may have never seen the argument stated in English. If we look at arguments that have already been symbolized, we simply ask ourselves: "Is there any way the conclusion could be false when the premises are all true?" when we use the truth table or short truth table methods. If we're able to show that the answer is , "yes" we know the argument is **invalid**, if the answer is, "no" we know the argument is valid. We can't possibly know whether the premises and conclusion are true or not in symbolized arguments because we don't even know what they say--all we know when we see a symbolized argument is that the conclusion is a conditional or conjunction or disjunction, e.g. If the conclusion is  $P \rightarrow Q$ , we don't know if that stands for "If Paul goes to the party, Quincy will want to go" or "If we sell pears in our store then we won't have room to sell quinces" or what. And. . . we don't NEED to know, nor will it help us determine whether the argument is valid or not.

Now, if validity were determined by whether or not the claims in the argument were true or not, we'd have to see the original claims of the argument in English to know what they mean and figure out if they are true (by comparing them with our own experience, or knowledge about the world, expert opinion, etc.--Ch. 3 stuff) But we don't need to know that to determine whether arguments are valid or not. You **don't** ask those types of questions using truth tables and short truth tables, and you don't have to.

What we're concerned about with validity is whether the evidence given in the premises compels us to accept the conclusion. The only way to figure that out is to see if there is any way we can reject the conclusion while still accepting the claims made in the premises. If we can reject the conclusion while accepting the premises, that shows that the reasoning in the argument is faulty, and that the argument is invalid. (I.e., we see if it's **possible** for the conclusion to be false when the premises are true.)

If we know that an argument is valid, that simply tells us that IF the premises HAPPEN to be true, then the conclusion must also be true. Whether or not the premises ARE true or not, we then have to figure out. If you don't have all true premises in a valid argument, you have no way of knowing whether the conclusion is true or false if all you've done is figure out that the argument is valid. A **valid** argument only guarantees you a true conclusion IF you know you have all true premises (using Ch. 3 skills). If you don't know that the premises are all true, there are no guarantees about the conclusion. What validity DOES tell you is that the conclusion is well supported by the premises--that IF you accept those premises, you can't help but accept the conclusion, too. In other words, the reasoning in the argument is good. But good reasoning is not a guarantee of truth. After all, given the information we had about Santa Claus as children, we may well have given well-reasoned arguments to other people that Santa Claus exists. Our reasoning was probably fine, even though our conclusion (and likely, many of are premises) was false. In other words, we may have given perfectly valid arguments supporting the claim that Santa exists.

That's why you can have **VALID ARGUMENTS** that have:

- all the premises false
- some/all false premises and a false conclusion
- some/all false premises and a true conclusion

And that's why you can have **INVALID ARGUMENTS** that have:

- all the premises true
- some/all true premises and a true conclusion
- some/all true premises and a false conclusion

**SOUNDNESS** Validity is only half the story when it comes to arguments. Soundness involves a full evaluation of an argument. An argument is **sound** if:

1) the argument is valid      **AND**    2) the premises and conclusion are all true.

Actually, a better way to say the same thing is to say that an argument is sound if:

1) it's valid      **AND**      2) all the premises are true.

**YOU figure out why this is better.**