Identifying Arguments

One way to improve your ability to recognize arguments is to realize that certain words and phrases indicate conclusions, while others indicate premises (not every premise or conclusion will start with these, and not every use of these will indicate a premise or conclusion!). Here is a small, non-exhaustive, list of each:

**Conclusion Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Therefore</th>
<th>Hence</th>
<th>Whence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wherefore</td>
<td>Thus</td>
<td>So</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accordingly</td>
<td>Consequently</td>
<td>It follows that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We may conclude</td>
<td>We may infer</td>
<td>Implies that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entails that</td>
<td>It must be that</td>
<td>As a result</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Premise Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Since</th>
<th>In that</th>
<th>Seeing that</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As indicated by</td>
<td>May be inferred from</td>
<td>For the reason that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because</td>
<td>As</td>
<td>Inasmuch as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>Given that</td>
<td>Owing to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exercises:**

Using the above indicators, rewrite the following examples by indicating which statements are premises and which are conclusions into the following form:

\[
P_1: \quad \text{__________}
\]
\[
P_2: \quad \text{__________}
\]
\[
\ldots
\]
\[
P_n: \quad \text{__________}
\]

**Conclusion:** _________

1. Titanium combines readily with oxygen, nitrogen, and hydrogen, all of which have an adverse effect on its mechanical properties. As a result, titanium must be processed in their absence.

2. Since the good, according to Plato, is that which furthers a person’s real interests, it follows in any given case when the good is known, men will seek it. (Avrum Stroll and Richard Popkin)

3. As the denial or perversion of justice by the sentences of the courts, as well as in any other manner, is with reason classed among the just causes of war, it will follow that the federal judiciary ought to have cognizance of all causes in which the citizens of other countries are concerned (Alexander Hamilton)
4. Like a flame or the wake of a boat, he form of a plant changes slowly but the components are in continual flux. The motion of the components can therefore be analyzed in terms of fluid flow. (Ralph O. Erikson and Wendy Kuhn Silk)

5. To every existing thing God wills some good. Hence, since to love any thing is nothing else than to will good to that think it is manifest that God loves everything that exists (Thomas Aquinas)

6. Neither a borrower or a lender be
   For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
   And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry (William Shakespeare)

[These next two examples are longer and have more than one argument]

7. Distribution is just if it arises from another just distribution by legitimate means. The legitimate means of moving from one distribution to another are specified by the principle of justice in transfer. The legitimate first moves are specified by the principles of justice in acquisition. Whatever arises from just situation from just steps is itself just. As correct rules of inference are truth-preserving and any conclusion deduced via repeated application of such rules from only true premises is itself true, so the means of transition from one situation to another specified by the principle of justice in transfer are justice preserving, and any situation actually arising from repeated transitions in accordance with principle from a just situation is itself just. (Robert Nozick)

8. The distinction between active and passive euthanasia is thought to be crucial for medical ethics. The idea is that it is permissible in some cases, to withhold treatment and allow a patient to die, but it is never permissible to take any direct action designed to kill the patient. This doctrine seems to be accepted by most doctors … However, a strong case can be made against this doctrine. …

   To begin with a familiar type of situation, a patient who is dying of incurable cancer of the throat is in terrible pain which can no longer be satisfactorily alleviated. He is certain to die within a few days, even if present treatment is continued, but he does not want to go on living for those days since the pain is unbearable. So he asks the doctor for an end to it, and his family joins the request.

   Suppose the doctor agrees to withhold treatment, as the conventional doctrine says he may. The justification for his doing so is that the patient is in terrible agony, and since he is going to die anyway, it would be wrong to prolong his suffering needlessly. If one simply withholds treatment, it may take the patient longer to die, and so he may suffer more than he would if more direct action were taken and a lethal injection given. This fact provides strong reason for thinking that, once the initial decision not to prolong his agony has been made, active euthanasia is actually preferable to passive euthanasia, rather than the reverse. To say otherwise is to endorse the option that leads to more suffering rather than less, and is contrary to the humanitarian impulse that prompts the decision to prolong his life in the first place. (James Rachels)