

They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein

ENTERING THE CONVERSATION

- Many Americans assume that _____

Others more complicated:

- On the one hand, _____. On the other hand, _____.
- Author X contradicts herself. At the same time that she argues _____, she also implies _____.
- I agree that _____.
- This is not to say that _____.

WAYS OF RESPONDING

- She argues that _____, and I agree because _____.
- Her argument that _____ is supported by new research showing that _____.
- He claims that _____, and I have mixed feelings about it. On the one hand, I agree that _____. On the other hand, I still insist that _____.
- In recent discussions of _____, a controversial issue has been whether _____. On the one hand, some argue that _____. From this perspective, _____. On the other hand, however, others argue that _____. In the words of one of this view's main proponents, "_____". According to this view, _____. In sum, then, the issue is whether _____ or _____.
- My own view is that _____. Though I concede that _____, I still maintain that _____. For example, _____. Although some might object that _____, I reply that _____. The issue is important because _____.

PUTTING IN YOUR OAR

- In the introduction to *"They say/ I say": The moves that matter in academic writing*, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein provide templates designed to _____. Specifically, Graff and Birkenstein argue that the types of writing templates they offer _____. As the authors themselves put it, "_____". Although some people believe _____, Graff and Birkenstein insist that _____. In sum, then, their view is that _____.

I agree / disagree/ have mixed feelings. In my view, the types of templates that the authors recommend _____. For instance, _____. In addition, _____. Some might object, of course, on the grounds that _____. Yet, I would argue that _____. Overall, then, I believe _____ -- an important to make given _____.

1 – THEY SAY

TAMPLATES FOR INTRODUCING WHAT "THEY SAY"

- A number o sociologists have recently suggested that X's work has several fundamental problems.
- It has become common today to dismiss X's contribution to the field of Sociology.
- In their recent work, Y and Z have offered harsh critiques of Dr. X for _____.

TAMPLATES FOR INTRODUCING "STANDARD VIEWS"

- Americans today tend to believe that _____.
- Conventional wisdom has is that _____.
- Common sense seems to dictate that _____.
- The standard way of thinking about topic X has it that _____.
- It is often said that _____.
- You would think that _____.
- Many people assume that _____.

TAMPLATES FOR MAKING WHAT "THEY SAY" SOMETHING YOU SAY

- I've always believed that _____.
- When I was a child, I used to think that _____.
- Although I should know better by now, I cannot help thinking that _____.
- At the same time that I believe _____, I also believe _____.

TAMPLATES FOR INTRODUCING SOMETHING IMPLIED OR ASSUMED

- Although none of them have ever said so directly, my teachers have often given me the impression that _____.
- One implication of X's treatment of _____ is that _____.
- Although X does not say so directly, she apparently assumes that _____.
- While they rarely admit as much, _____, often take for granted that _____.

TEMPLATES FOR INTRODUCING AN ONGOING DEBATE

- In discussions of X, one controversial issue has been _____. On the one hand, _____ argues _____. On the other hand, _____ contends _____. Others even maintain _____. My own view is _____.
- When it comes to the topic of _____, most of us will readily agree that _____. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of _____. Whereas some are convinced that _____, others maintain that _____.

KEEP WHAT "THEY SAY" IN VIEW.

- In conclusion, then, as I suggested earlier, defenders of _____ can't have it both ways. Their assertion that _____ is contradicted by their claim that _____.
- If ever there was an idea custom-made for a Jay Leno monologue, this was it: _____. Isn't that like _____? Whatever happened to _____?
I happen to sympathize with _____, though, perhaps because _____.

USE SIGNAL VERBS THAT FIT THE ACTION

- She demonstrates that “_____”.
- In fact they celebrate that _____.
- _____, he admits.

TEMPLATES FOR INTRODUCING QUOTATIONS

- X states “_____”.
- As the prominent philosopher X puts it, “_____”.
- According to X, “_____”.
- X Himself writes, “_____”.
- In her book, “_____”, X maintains that “_____”.
- Writing the journal *Commentary*, X complains that “_____”.
- In X’s view, “_____”.
- X agrees when she writes, “_____”.
- X disagrees when he writes, “_____”.
- X complicates matters further when she writes, “_____”.

TEMPLATES FOR EXPLAINING QUOTATIONS

- Basically, X is saying _____.
- In the others words, X believes _____.
- In making this comment, X argues that _____.
- X is insisting that _____.
- X’s point is that _____.
- The essence of X’s argument is that _____.

2 - I SAY

TEMPLATES FOR DISAGREEING, WITH REASONS

- I think X is mistaken because she overlooks _____.
- X's claims that _____ rests upon the questionable assumption that _____.
- I disagree with X's view that _____ because, as recent research has shown, _____.
- X contradicts herself/ can't have it both ways. On the one hand, she argues _____ . But on the other hand, she also says _____.
- By focusing on _____, X overlooks the deeper problem of _____.
- X claims _____, but we don't need him to tell us of one familiar with _____ has long known that _____.

TEMPLATES FOR AGREEING

- I agree that _____ because my experience _____ confirms it.
- X is surely right about _____ because, as she may not be aware, recent studies have shown that _____.
- X's theory of _____ is extremely useful because it sheds insight on the difficult problem of _____.
- I agree that _____, a point that needs emphasizing since so many people believe _____.
- Those unfamiliar with this school of thought may be interested to know that it basically boils down to _____.
- I agree that _____, a point that needs emphasizing since so many people believe _____.
- If group X is right that _____, as I think they are, then we need to reassess the popular assumption that _____.

TEMPLATES FOR AGREEING AND DISAGREEING SIMULTANEOUSLY

- Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that _____.
- Although I disagree with much that X says, I fully endorse his final conclusion that _____.
- Though I concede that _____, I still insist that _____.
- X is right that _____, but she seems on more dubious ground when she claims that _____.
- Whereas X provides ample evidence that _____, Y and Z's research on _____ and _____ convinces me that _____ instead.
- I'm of two minds about X's claim that _____. On the one hand, I agree that _____. On the other hand, I'm not sure if _____.
- My feelings on the issue are mixed. I do support X's position that _____, but I find Y's argument about _____ and Z's research on _____ to be equally persuasive.

TEMEPLATES FOR SIGNALING WHO IS SAYING WHAT IN YOUR OWN WRITING

- X argues _____.
- According to both X and Y, _____.
- Politicians, X argues, should _____.
- Most athletes will tell you that _____.
- I agree, as X may not realize that _____.
- X is right that _____.
- The evidence shows that _____.
- X's assertion that _____ does not fit the facts.
- Anyone familiar with _____ should agree that _____.
- But _____ are real, and are arguably the most significant factor in _____.

TEMPLATES FOR EMBEDDING VOICE MARKERS

- X overlooks what I consider an important point about _____.
- My own view is that what X insist is a _____ is in fact a _____.
- I wholeheartedly endorse what X calls _____.
- These conclusions, which X discusses in _____, add weight to the argument that _____.

TEMPLATES FOR ENTERTAINING OBJECTIONS

- At this point I would like to raise some objections that have been inspired by the skeptic in me. She feels that I have been ignoring _____. “_____” she says to me, “_____”.
- Yet some readers may challenge my view that _____. After all, many believe that _____. Indeed, my own argument that _____ seems to ignore _____ and _____.
- Of course, many will probably disagree with this assertion that _____.

TEMPLATES FOR NAMING YOUR NAYSAYERS

- Here many *feminists* would probably object that _____.
- But social *Darwinists* would certainly take issue with the argument that _____.
- *Biologists*, of course, may want to dispute my claim that _____.
- Nevertheless, both *followers and critics of Malcolm X* will probably suggest otherwise and argue that _____.
- *Non-native English speakers* are so diverse in their views that it's hard to generalize about them, but some are likely to object on the grounds that _____.

TEMPLATES FOR INTRODUCING OBJECTIONS INFORMALLY

- But is my proposal realistic? What are the chances of its actually being adopted?
- Yet is it always true that _____? Is it always the case, as I have been suggesting, that _____?
- However, does the evidence I've cited prove conclusively that _____?
- “Impossible”, you say. “Your evidence must be skewed.”

TEMPLATES FOR MAKING CONCESSIONS WHILE STILL STANDING YOUR GROUND

- Although I grant that _____, I still maintain that _____.
- Proponents of X are right to argue that _____. But they exaggerate when they claim that _____.
- While it is true that _____, it does not necessarily follow that _____.
- On the one hand, I agree with X that _____. But on the other hand, I still insist that _____.

TEMPLATES FOR INDICATING WHO CARES

- _____ used to think _____. But recently [or within the past few decades] _____ suggest that _____.
- This interpretation challenges the work of those critics who have long assumed that _____.
- These findings challenge the work of earlier researchers, who tended to assume that _____.
- Recent studies like these shed new light on _____, which previous studies had not addressed.
- But who really cares? Who besides me and a handful of recent researchers has a stake in these claims? At the very least, the researchers who assumed that fat _____ should care.
- Researchers have long assumed that _____. For instance, one eminent scholar of cell biology, _____ assumed in _____, her seminal work on cell structures and functions, that fat cells _____. As _____ herself put it, “_____”(200 -).
- Another leading scientist, _____, argued that fat cells “_____” (200-). Ultimately, when it came to the nature of fat, the basic assumption was that _____. But a new body of research shows that fat cells are far more complex and that _____.
- If sports enthusiasts stopped to think about it, many of them might simply assume that the most successful athletes _____. However, new research shows _____.
- These findings challenge dieters` common assumption that _____.
- At first glance, teenagers might say _____. But on closer inspection _____.

TEMPLATES FOR ESTABLISHING WHY YOUR CLAIMS MATTER

- X matters/ is important because _____.
- Although X may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of today's concern over _____.
- Ultimately, what is at stake here is _____.
- These findings have important consequences for the broader domain of _____.
- My discussion of X is in fact addressing the larger matter of _____.
- These conclusions/ This discovery will have significant applications in _____ as well as in _____.
- Although X may seem of concern to only a small group of _____, it should in fact concern anyone who cares about _____.

WHAT ABOUT READERS WHO ALREADY KNOW WHY IT MATTERS?

- My point here-that _____ - should interest those who _____. Beyond this limited audience, however, my point should speak to anyone who cares about the larger issue of _____.

3 – TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

USE METACOMMENTARY TO CLARIFY AND ELABORATE

- In other words _____.
- What _____ really means is _____.
- My point is _____.

TEMPLATES FOR INTRODUCING METTACOMMENTARY

- Essentially, I am arguing that _____.
- My point is not that we should _____, but that we should _____.
- What _____ really means is _____.
- In other words, _____.
- To put it another way, _____.
- Chapter 2 explores _____, while chapter 3 examines _____.
- Having just argued that _____, let us now turn our attention to _____.
- For example, _____.
- _____, for instance, demonstrates _____.

- Consider _____, for example.
- To take a case in point, _____.
- Even more important, _____.
- But above all, _____.
- Incidentally, _____.
- By the way, _____.
- Although some readers may object that _____, I would answer that _____.
- In sum, then, is that _____.
- In short, _____.
- In making case for the medical use of the marijuana, I am not saying that _____.
- But my argument will do more than prove that one particular industrial chemical has certain toxic properties. In this article, I will also _____.
- My point about the national obsessions with sports reinforces the belief held by many _____ that _____.
- I believe, therefore, that the war is completely justified. But let me back up and explain how I arrived at this conclusion. _____. In this way, I came to believe that this war is a big mistake.

FRAME YOUR COMMENTS AS A RESPONSE TO SOMETHING THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN SAID

- I really liked the point Aaron made earlier when he said that _____. I agree because _____.
- I take your point Nadia, that _____. Still...
- Though Sheila and Ryan seem to be at odds about _____, they may actually not to be all that far apart.

TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT, INDICATE EXPLICITLY THAT YOU ARE DOING SO

- So far, we have been talking about _____. But isn't the real issue here _____?
- I'd like to change the subject to one that hasn't yet been addressed.
- In other words, what I'm trying to get at here is _____.
- My point is this: _____.
- My point, though, is not _____, but _____.
- This distinction is important for several reasons: _____.