

They Say, I Say: TEMPLATES FOR WRITING ABOUT RESEARCH

They Say, I Say (Graff, Birkenstein, and Durst, 2012) shows students that “writing well means entering a conversation, summarizing others (they say) to set up one’s own argument (I say)” (xx). To help students accomplish this goal, they offer the following templates:

INTRODUCING WHAT “THEY SAY”

- In discussions of _____, a controversial issue is whether _____. While some argue that _____, others contend that _____. This is not to say that _____.
- As a result of my study, _____.
- 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 _____, but this is not to say that _____.
- Her argument that _____ is supported by new research showing that _____.
- A number of scholars have recently suggested that _____.
- It has become common today to dismiss _____.
- In their recent work, X and Y have offered harsh critiques of _____ for _____.

INTRODUCING STANDARD VIEWS

- Americans have always believed that _____.
- Many Americans assume that _____.
- Most scholars in the field believe _____.
- Conventional wisdom has it that _____.
- Common sense seems to dictate that _____.
- The standard way of thinking about _____ has it that _____.
- You would think that _____.
- I have always believed that _____.
- I used to think that _____.
- Anyone familiar with _____ should agree that _____.

INTRODUCING ASSUMPTIONS

- Although I should know better by now, I cannot help thinking that _____.
- X has often given me the impression that _____.
- One implication of X's treatment of _____ is that _____.
- X apparently assumes that _____.
- While they rarely admit as such, _____ often take for granted that _____.
- In conclusion, then, as I suggested earlier, defenders of _____ can't have it both ways. Their assertion that _____ is contradicted by their claim that _____.
- X tells us a great deal about _____. But can this work be generalized to _____?

INTRODUCING ONGOING DEBATE

- In discussions of _____, one controversial issue has been _____. On the one hand, _____ argues _____. On the other hand, _____ contends _____. Others even maintain _____. My own view is _____.
- In addressing the issue of _____, experts have considered several explanations for _____. X argues that _____. According to Y and Z, another plausible explanation 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 _____.

INTRODUCING SUMMARIES AND QUOTATIONS

- She advocates _____.
- They celebrate the fact that _____.
- He admits _____.
- As the prominent _____ X puts it, "_____."
- According to X, "_____."
- In her book _____, X maintains that "_____."
- Writing in the journal _____, X complains that _____.

- In X's view, "_____."
- X disagrees when he writes, "_____."
- X complicates matters further when she writes, "_____."
- Basically, X is warning that _____.
- In other words, X believes _____.
- In making this comment, X urges us to _____.
- X is corroborating the age-old adage that _____.
- X's point is that _____.
- The essence of X's argument is that _____.
- What is the effect of _____ on _____? Previous work on _____ by X, Y, and Z supports _____.

WAYS OF RESPONDING: AGREEMENT

- She argues _____, and I agree because _____.
- I sympathize with _____, because _____.
- X tells a story about _____ to make the point that _____. My own experience with _____ yields a point that is similar. What I take away from my experience with _____ is _____. As a result, I conclude _____.
- I agree that _____ because my experience at _____ confirms it.
- I wholeheartedly endorse what X calls _____.
- These conclusions, which X discusses in _____, add weight to the argument that _____.
- X is right about _____ because, as she may not be aware, recent studies have shown that _____.
- X's theory of _____ is useful because it sheds light on the difficult problem of _____.
- 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 still believe _____.
- If group X is right that _____, as I think they are, then we need to reassess the popular assumption that _____.

WAYS OF RESPONDING: DISAGREEMENT

- He says _____, and I disagree because _____.
- X is mistaken because she overlooks _____.
- X's claim 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 _____. On the other hand, she also says _____.
- X's assertion that _____ doesn't fit the facts.
- X overlooks what I consider an important point about _____.
- My own view is that what X insists is a _____ is in fact a _____.
- By focusing on _____, X overlooks the deeper problem of _____.
- I agree that _____, but that's precisely why I oppose _____.
- Of course some might object that _____. Although I concede that _____, I still maintain that _____.
- X tells a story about _____ to make the point that _____. My own experience with _____ yields a point that is different. What I take away from my experience with _____ is _____. As a result, I conclude _____.
- Although some readers might think that this text is about _____, it is in fact about _____.
- My view, however, contrary to what X has argued, is that _____.

WAYS OF RESPONDING: QUALIFIED AGREEMENT WITH A DIFFERENCE

- 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 _____.
- Adding to X's argument, I would point out 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 would reply that _____. The issue is important because _____.

- X tells a story about _____ to make the point that _____. My own experience with _____ yields a point that is both similar and different. What I take away from my experience with _____ is _____. As a result, I conclude _____.
- Although I agree with X that _____, I cannot accept his conclusion that _____.
- Although I agree with X that _____, I cannot accept his overriding assumption that _____.
- Although I disagree with X's claim that _____, 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 _____.
- While X is probably wrong when she claims that _____, she is right that _____.
- Whereas X provides ample evidence that _____, Y and Z's research on _____ and _____ convinces me that _____ instead.
- 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 about _____ to be equally persuasive.
- Experts studying _____ have argued that it is caused by _____. While _____ contributes to the problem, _____ is also an important factor.
- Studies of _____ have indicated _____. It is not clear, however, that this conclusion applies to _____.

ENTERTAINING OBJECTIONS

- At this point I would like to raise some possible objections; first, I could be accused of ignoring _____.
- Some readers may challenge my views by insisting that _____.
- Of course, many will probably disagree on the grounds that _____.
- Here many _____ would probably object that _____.
- Supporters of _____ would certainly take issue with the argument that _____.
- Experts in _____ may want to question whether _____.
- Followers/critics will probably suggest otherwise and argue that _____.
- Although not all _____ think alike, some of them will probably dispute my claim that _____.
- Participants in _____ are so diverse in their views that it's hard to generalize about them, but some are likely to object on the grounds that _____.
- Yet is it necessarily true that _____? Is it always the case, as I have been suggesting, that _____?

- However, does the evidence I've cited prove conclusively that _____?
- Some might say that I am reading the research selectively in concluding that _____.
- 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 _____.
- _____ might object that _____.
- Is my claim realistic? I have argued that _____, but readers may question _____.
- My explanation accounts for _____ but does not explain _____. This is because _____.

“SO WHAT” ARGUMENT: WHY IT MATTERS

- _____ used to think _____. But recently, experts suggest that _____.
- This distinction is important because _____.
- 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.
- These findings challenge the assumption that _____.
- At first glance, you might assume _____. But on closer inspection, _____.
- _____ is important because _____.
- Although X may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of the concern over _____.
- Ultimately, what is at stake here is _____.
- These findings have important implications for the broader domain of _____.
- The finding that _____ should be of interest to _____ because _____.
- If we are right about _____, then major consequences follow for _____.
- These conclusions will have significant applications in _____ as well as _____.
- Although _____ may seem of concern to only a small group of _____, it should in fact concern anyone who cares about _____.

METACOMMENTARY: THE BIG PICTURE

- What _____ really means is _____.
- My point is not _____ but _____.
- Ultimately, then, my goal is to demonstrate that _____.
- Essentially, I am arguing not that _____ but that _____.
- This is not to say _____, but rather _____.
- X is concerned less with _____ than with _____.
- Having just argued that _____, I now want to complicate the point by _____.
- In sum, then, _____.
- My conclusion, then, is that _____.
- I believe _____. But let me back up and explain how I arrived at that conclusion: _____. In this way, I came to believe that _____.
- So far we have been talking about _____. But the real issue is _____.

Other tips...

Say more than “Say”: vary your verbs!

- ❖ **Verbs for making a claim:** argue, assert, believe, claim, emphasize, insist, observe, remind us, report, suggest.
- ❖ **Verbs for expressing agreement:** acknowledge, admire, agree, celebrate the fact that, corroborate, do not deny, endorse, extol, praise, reaffirm, support, verify
- ❖ **Verbs for questioning or disagreeing:** complain, complicate, contend, contradict, deny, deplore the tendency to, qualify, question, refute, reject, renounce, repudiate
- ❖ **Verbs for making recommendations:** advocate, call for, demand, encourage, exhort, implore, plead, recommend, urge, warn

Connect the dots: use transitions effectively!

- ❖ **Addition:** also, and, besides, furthermore, in addition, indeed, in fact, moreover, so too
- ❖ **Example:** after all, as an illustration, for example, for instance, specifically, to take a case in point, consider
- ❖ **Elaboration:** actually, by extension, in short, that is, in other words, to put it another way, to put it bluntly, to put it succinctly, ultimately
- ❖ **Comparison:** along the same lines, in the same way, likewise, similarly
- ❖ **Contrast:** although, but, by contrast, conversely, despite, even though, however, in contrast, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, regardless, whereas, while, yet
- ❖ **Cause and Effect:** accordingly, as a result, consequently, hence, since, so, then, therefore, thus
- ❖ **Concession:** admittedly, although it's true, granted, naturally, of course, to be sure
- ❖ **Conclusion:** as a result, consequently, hence, in conclusion, in short, in sum, therefore, thus, to sum up, to summarize