

“They Say, I Say” Templates

Why Templates?

Successful academic writing involves presenting both your sources’ ideas and your own ideas fairly and effectively to your readers. According to Graff and Birkenstein, to do so, you should engage in “a conversation about ideas” in which you react critically to your sources (ix). Graff and Birkenstein’s templates may help you to have this conversation in a reader-friendly fashion, so that your thesis, supporting evidence, opposing evidence, and conclusion are clear. *They Say / I Say* discusses these templates more fully, and includes useful lists of them, especially in the end of the book. While you don’t want to adopt these templates mindlessly, the templates do provide sensible language for engaging in academic conversations, and we all benefit from adopting good language for our own purposes. Here are a few of the examples that I have adapted from their text. Remember, these forms still require proper citations so readers know who “they” are.

Introducing standard views:

- Americans today tend to believe that _____.
- Conventional wisdom claims that _____.
- My whole life I have heard people say that _____.

Capturing authorial action (e.g., to write a summary):

- X acknowledges that _____.
- X agreed that _____.
- X argues that _____.
- X complains that _____.
- X demonstrates that _____.
- X emphasizes that _____.

Introducing quotations:

- X insists, “_____.”
- As the prominent philosopher X puts it, “_____.”
- According to X, “_____.”
- In her book, *Book Title*, X maintains that “_____.”
- X complicates matters further when he writes that “_____.”

Explaining quotations:

- Basically, X is saying _____.
- In other words, X believes _____.

Making what “they say” into something you say:

- I have always believed that _____.
- When I was a child, I used to think that _____.

Introducing something implied or assumed:

- Although X does not say so directly, she apparently assumes that _____.
- While they rarely admit as much, _____ often take for granted that _____.

Introducing an ongoing debate:

- On the one hand, X argues _____ . On the other hand, Y claims _____ . My own view is _____ .
- In a long-accepted argument, X argues _____ , but Y and others disagree because _____ . In fact, Y’s argument that _____ is now supported by new research showing that _____ .
- In recent discussions of _____ , a controversial issue has been whether _____ . On the one hand, some argue that _____ . On the other hand, however, others argue that _____ . My own view is _____ .
- As I suggested earlier, defenders of _____ can’t have it both ways. Their assertion that _____ is contradicted by their claim that _____ .

Disagreeing, with reasons:

- I think that X is mistaken because she overlooks _____ .
- I disagree with X’s view that _____ because, as recent research has shown, _____ .
- X’s claim that _____ rests upon the questionable assumption that _____ .

Adapted with changes by Chris Hunter from: Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: Norton, 2010.

Agreeing, with a difference:

- X is surely right about _____ because, as he/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 _____.

Agreeing and disagreeing simultaneously:

- Although I agree with X to a point, I cannot accept his/her overall conclusion that _____ because _____.
- Although I disagree with much of what X says, I fully endorse his/her final conclusion that _____.
- Though I concede that _____ I still insist that _____.
- X is right that _____ but she seems to be on more dubious ground when she states _____.

Signaling who is saying what:

- X argues _____.
- My own view, however, is that _____.
- Yet a careful analysis of the data reveals _____.

Embedding voice markers (e.g., introducing your point of view):

- X overlooks what I consider an important point about _____.
- I wholeheartedly endorse what X calls _____.
- My discussion of X is in fact addressing the larger matter of _____.
- These conclusions will have significant applications in _____ as well as in _____.

Making concessions while still standing your ground:

- Although I grant that _____, I still maintain that _____.
- While _____ is _____, it does not necessarily follow that _____.

Indicating who cares:

- Researchers have long assumed that _____. For instance, one eminent sociologist, _____, long argued that _____. However, new research has clearly demonstrated otherwise; in fact, _____.

Establishing why your claims matter:

- X matters because _____.
- These conclusions have significant implications for _____ as well as for _____.

Commonly Used Transitions:

Cause and Effect Accordingly As a result Consequently Therefore Thus	Conclusion As a result Consequently Hence In conclusion, then Therefore	Comparison Along the same lines In the same way Likewise Similarly	Contrast By contrast Conversely Despite the fact that Nevertheless On the contrary
Addition Also Furthermore In addition In fact Moreover	Concession Admittedly Of course Naturally To be sure	Example After all Consider For example For instance Specifically	Elaboration Actually By extension In other words To put it in another way