

“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 readerfriendly 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:

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

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

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

Introducing quotations:

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

Explaining quotations:

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

- x X is right that _____ but she seems to be on more dubious ground when she states _____.

Signaling who is saying what:

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

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

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

Making concessions while still standing your ground:

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

Indicating who cares:

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

Commonly Used Transitions:

Cause and Effect	Conclusion	Comparison	Contrast
Accordingly	As a result	Along the same lines	By contrast
As a result	Consequently	In the same way	Conversely
Consequently	Hence	Likewise	Despite the fact that
Therefore	In conclusion, then	Similarly	Nevertheless
Thus	Therefore		On the contrary

Addition	Concession	Example	Elaboration
Also	Admittedly	After all	Actually
Furthermore	Of course	Consider	By extension
In addition	Naturally	For example	In other words