



Strategies for Successful Academic Writing: Tips

(They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing)

Graff and Birkenstein contend that academic writing never happens in a vacuum but is instead constructed as a dialogue or response to the ideas, writings, and research of others. As a result, it centers around the “they say, I say” model, where your thesis statement functions as the primary, critical “I say” moment in your text, built around and in response to what others “say” about your topic (4).

Here are some model templates which can be used to express agreement, disagreement, or a combination of both:

- She argues _____, and I agree because _____.
- His argument that _____ is supported by new research showing that _____.
- In recent discussions of _____, a controversial issue has been whether _____ or _____. 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 _____.
- In their recent work, Y and Z have offered harsh critiques of _____. However, their analysis fails to consider _____.
- Adding to X’s argument, I would point out that _____.
- Although some readers may object that _____, I would answer that _____.

Templates for Introducing Something Implied or Assumed

- One implication of X’s treatment of _____ is _____.
- X apparently assumes that _____. However, _____.
- While they rarely admit as much, _____ often take for granted _____.

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 _____.

Templates for Quoting and Explaining Quotations

- X complicates matters further when she writes, “_____.”
- X convincingly argues, “_____.”
- X further contends, “_____.”
- In making this comments, X urges us to “_____.”
- The essence of X’s argument is that “_____.”

Thanks to Dr. Hiner for compiling this information from *They Say, I say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein