“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 __________.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause and Effect</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Contrast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accordingly</td>
<td>As a result</td>
<td>Along the same lines</td>
<td>By contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result</td>
<td>Consequently</td>
<td>In the same way</td>
<td>Conversely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequently</td>
<td>Hence</td>
<td>Likewise</td>
<td>Despite the fact that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore</td>
<td>In conclusion, then</td>
<td>Similarly</td>
<td>Nevertheless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thus</td>
<td>Therefore</td>
<td></td>
<td>On the contrary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addition</th>
<th>Concession</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Elaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also</td>
<td>Admittedly</td>
<td>After all</td>
<td>Actually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthermore</td>
<td>Of course</td>
<td>Consider</td>
<td>By extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In addition</td>
<td>Naturally</td>
<td>For example</td>
<td>In other words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In fact</td>
<td>To be sure</td>
<td>For instance Specifically</td>
<td>To put it in another way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreover</td>
<td></td>
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