

"THEY SAY / I SAY"

*The Moves That Matter
in Academic Writing*

Second Edition



GERALD GRAFF

CATHY BIRKENSTEIN

both of the University of Illinois at Chicago



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In the realm of teaching, Don McCormick and Michael Kahn, in a 1982 article in *Exchange: The Organizational Behavior Teaching Journal*, suggest that critical thinking can be taught better if we use the metaphor of a barn raising, instead of that of a boxing match. We should think of “a group of builders constructing a building, or a group of artists fabricating a creation together.”

McCormick and Kahn make another point that, as I wrote in *The Argument Culture*, I came to believe is the most crucial and damaging aspect of the culture of agonism. Living, working, and thinking in ways shaped by the battle metaphor produces an atmosphere of animosity that poisons our relations with each other at the same time that it corrupts the integrity of our research. Not only is the agonistic culture of academe not the best path to truth and knowledge, but it also is corrosive to the human spirit.

After my reading group had discussed the academic memoir, I expressed my frustration to a group member. She commented, “It turns out that book wasn’t the best example of the genre.”

“But we didn’t read an example of a genre,” I protested. “We read a book by a person.”

Refocusing our attention in that way is the greatest gain in store if we can move beyond critique in its narrow sense. We would learn more from each other, be heard more clearly by others, attract more varied talents to the scholarly life, and restore a measure of humanity to ourselves, our endeavor, and the academic world we inhabit.

INDEX OF TEMPLATES



INTRODUCING WHAT “THEY SAY” (p. 23)

- ▶ A number of _____ have recently suggested that _____.
- ▶ It has become common today to dismiss _____.
- ▶ In their recent work, Y and Z have offered harsh critiques of _____ for _____.

INTRODUCING “STANDARD VIEWS”

(pp. 23–24, 162–63, 181–82)

- ▶ Americans today tend to believe that _____.
- ▶ Conventional wisdom has it that _____.
- ▶ Common sense seems to dictate that _____.
- ▶ The standard way of thinking about topic X has it that _____.
- ▶ It is often said that _____.
- ▶ My whole life I have heard it said that _____.
- ▶ You would think that _____.
- ▶ Many people assume that _____.

**MAKING WHAT "THEY SAY"
SOMETHING YOU SAY** (pp. 24–25)

- ▶ I've always believed that _____.
- ▶ When I was a child, I used to think that _____.
- ▶ Although I should know better by now, I cannot help thinking that _____.
- ▶ At the same time that I believe _____, I also believe _____.

**INTRODUCING SOMETHING
IMPLIED OR ASSUMED** (p. 25)

- ▶ Although none of them have ever said so directly, my teachers have often given me the impression that _____.
- ▶ One implication of X's treatment of _____ is that _____.
- ▶ 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
(pp. 25–26, 182–83, 188)

- ▶ 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 _____.

- ▶ 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 _____.
- ▶ In conclusion, then, as I suggested earlier, defenders of _____ can't have it both ways. Their assertion that _____ is contradicted by their claim that _____.

CAPTURING AUTHORIAL ACTION (pp. 38–40)

- ▶ X acknowledges that _____.
- ▶ X agrees that _____.
- ▶ X argues that _____.
- ▶ X believes that _____.
- ▶ X denies/does not deny that _____.
- ▶ X claims that _____.
- ▶ X complains that _____.
- ▶ X concedes that _____.
- ▶ X demonstrates that _____.
- ▶ X deplores the tendency to _____.
- ▶ X celebrates the fact that _____.
- ▶ X emphasizes that _____.

- ▶ X insists that _____.
- ▶ X observes that _____.
- ▶ X questions whether _____.
- ▶ X refutes the claim that _____.
- ▶ X reminds us that _____.
- ▶ X reports that _____.
- ▶ X suggests that _____.
- ▶ X urges us to _____.

INTRODUCING QUOTATIONS (p. 46)

- ▶ X states, "_____."
- ▶ As the prominent philosopher X puts it, "_____."
- ▶ According to X, "_____."
- ▶ X himself writes, "_____."
- ▶ In her book, _____, X maintains that "_____."
- ▶ Writing in the journal *Commentary*, X complains that "_____."
- ▶ In X's view, "_____."
- ▶ X agrees when she writes, "_____."
- ▶ X disagrees when he writes, "_____."
- ▶ X complicates matters further when he writes, "_____."

EXPLAINING QUOTATIONS (pp. 46–47)

- ▶ Basically, X is saying _____.
- ▶ 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 _____.

DISAGREEING, WITH REASONS (pp. 60, 172–73)

- ▶ I think 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 _____ .
- ▶ By focusing on _____, X overlooks the deeper problem of _____.

AGREEING—WITH A DIFFERENCE (pp. 62–64, 170)

- ▶ I agree that _____ because my experience _____ confirms it.
- ▶ X surely is right about _____ because, as 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 _____.
- ▶ 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 believe _____.
- ▶ If group X is right that _____, as I think they are, then we need to reassess the popular assumption that _____.

**AGREEING AND DISAGREEING
SIMULTANEOUSLY** (pp. 64–66, 173–74, 183)

- ▶ Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that _____.
- ▶ Although I disagree with much that X says, I fully endorse his final conclusion that _____.
- ▶ Though I concede that _____, I still insist that _____.
- ▶ Whereas X provides ample evidence that _____, Y and Z's research on _____ and _____ convinces me that _____ instead.

- ▶ 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 _____.
- ▶ I'm of two minds about X's claim that _____. On the one hand, I agree that _____. On the other hand, I'm not sure if _____.
- ▶ 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 on _____ to be equally persuasive.

SIGNALING WHO IS SAYING WHAT (pp. 71–73)

- ▶ X argues _____.
- ▶ According to both X and Y, _____.
- ▶ Politicians _____, X argues, should _____.
- ▶ Most athletes will tell you that _____.
- ▶ My own view, however, is that _____.
- ▶ I agree, as X may not realize, that _____.
- ▶ But _____ are real and, arguably, the most significant factor in _____.
- ▶ But X is wrong that _____.
- ▶ However, it is simply not true that _____.
- ▶ Indeed, it is highly likely that _____.

- ▶ X's assertion that _____ does not fit the facts.
- ▶ X is right that _____.
- ▶ X is wrong that _____.
- ▶ X is both right and wrong that _____.
- ▶ Yet a sober analysis of the matter reveals _____.
- ▶ Nevertheless, new research shows _____.
- ▶ Anyone familiar with _____ should agree that _____.

EMBEDDING VOICE MARKERS (pp. 74–75)

- ▶ X overlooks what I consider an important point about _____.
- ▶ My own view is that what X insists is a _____ is in fact a _____.
- ▶ I wholeheartedly endorse what X calls _____.
- ▶ These conclusions, which X discusses in _____, add weight to the argument that _____.

ENTERTAINING OBJECTIONS (pp. 82, 174–75, 193–94)

- ▶ At this point I would like to raise some objections that have been inspired by the skeptic in me. She feels that I have been ignoring _____ . “_____,” she says to me, “_____.”
- ▶ Yet some readers may challenge the view that _____.
- ▶ Of course, many will probably disagree with this assertion that _____.

NAMING YOUR NAYSAYERS (pp. 83–84)

- ▶ Here many *feminists* would probably object that _____.
- ▶ But *social Darwinists* would certainly take issue with the argument that _____.
- ▶ *Biologists*, of course, may want to question whether _____.
- ▶ Nevertheless, both *followers and critics of Malcom X* will probably argue that _____.
- ▶ Although not all *Christians* think alike, some of them will probably dispute my claim that _____.
- ▶ *Non-native English speakers* are so diverse in their views that it's hard to generalize about them, but some are likely to object on the grounds that _____.

INTRODUCING OBJECTIONS INFORMALLY (pp. 84–85)

- ▶ But is my proposal realistic? What are the chances of its actually being adopted?
- ▶ Yet is it always true that _____? Is it always the case, as I have been suggesting, that _____?
- ▶ However, does the evidence I've cited prove conclusively that _____?
- ▶ “Impossible,” some will say. “You must be reading the research selectively.”

MAKING CONCESSIONS WHILE STILL STANDING YOUR GROUND (pp. 89)

- ▶ 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 _____.
- ▶ On the one hand, I agree with X that _____. But on the other hand, I still insist that _____.

INDICATING WHO CARES (pp. 95–96)

- ▶ _____ used to think _____. But recently [or within the past few decades] _____ suggests 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.
- ▶ Researchers have long assumed that _____. For instance, one eminent scholar of cell biology, _____, assumed in _____, her seminal work on cell structures and functions, that fat cells _____. As _____ herself put it, "_____" (2007). Another leading scientist, _____, argued that fat cells "_____" (2006). Ultimately, when it came to the nature of fat, the basic assumption was that _____.

But a new body of research shows that fat cells are far more complex and that _____.

- ▶ If sports enthusiasts stopped to think about it, many of them might simply assume that the most successful athletes _____. However, new research shows _____.
- ▶ These findings challenge neoliberals' common assumptions that _____.
- ▶ At first glance, teenagers appear to _____. But on closer inspection _____.

ESTABLISHING WHY YOUR CLAIMS MATTER

(pp. 98–99, 175–76, 194–96)

- ▶ X matters/is important because _____.
- ▶ Although X may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of today's concern over _____.
- ▶ Ultimately, what is at stake here is _____.
- ▶ These findings have important consequences for the broader domain of _____.
- ▶ My discussion of X is in fact addressing the larger matter of _____.
- ▶ These conclusions/This discovery will have significant applications in _____ as well as in _____.
- ▶ Although X may seem of concern to only a small group of _____, it should in fact concern anyone who cares about _____.

COMMONLY USED TRANSITIONS

CAUSE AND EFFECT

accordingly	since
as a result	so
consequently	then
hence	therefore
it follows, then	thus

CONCLUSION

as a result	so
consequently	the upshot of all this is that
hence	therefore
in conclusion, then	thus
in short	to sum up
in sum, then	to summarize
it follows, then	

COMPARISON

along the same lines	likewise
in the same way	similarly

CONTRAST

although	nevertheless
but	nonetheless
by contrast	on the contrary
conversely	on the other hand
despite	regardless
even though	whereas

however	while
in contrast	yet

ADDITION

also	in fact
and	indeed
besides	moreover
furthermore	so too
in addition	

CONCESSION

admittedly	of course
although it is true that	naturally
granted	to be sure
I concede that	

EXAMPLE

after all	for instance
as an illustration	specifically
consider	to take a case in point
for example	

ELABORATION

actually	to put it another way
by extension	to put it bluntly
in short	to put it succinctly
that is	ultimately
in other words	

ADDING METACOMMENTARY (pp. 135–37)

- ▶ In other words, _____.
- ▶ What _____ really means by this is _____.
- ▶ Ultimately, my goal is to demonstrate that _____.
- ▶ My point is not _____, but _____.
- ▶ To put it another way, _____.
- ▶ In sum, then, _____.
- ▶ My conclusion, then, is that, _____.
- ▶ In short, _____.
- ▶ What is more important, _____.
- ▶ Incidentally, _____.
- ▶ By the way, _____.
- ▶ Chapter 2 explores _____, while Chapter 3 examines _____.
- ▶ Having just argued that _____, let us now turn our attention to _____.
- ▶ Although some readers may object that _____, I would answer that _____.

COMPARING TWO OR MORE STUDIES' FINDINGS

(p. 168)

- ▶ Our data *support/confirm/verify* the work of X by showing that _____.

- ▶ By demonstrating _____, X's work *extends* the findings of Y.
- ▶ The results of X *contradict/refute* Y's conclusion that _____.
- ▶ X's findings *call into question* the widely accepted theory that _____.
- ▶ Our data *are consistent with* X's hypothesis that _____.

EXPLAINING AN EXPERIMENTAL RESULT

(pp. 171, 193)

- ▶ One explanation for X's finding of _____ is that _____. An alternative explanation is _____.
- ▶ The difference between _____ and _____ is probably due to _____.

INTRODUCING GAPS IN THE EXISTING RESEARCH

(p. 184)

- ▶ Studies of X have indicated _____. It is not clear, however, that this conclusion applies to _____.
- ▶ _____ often take for granted that _____. Few have investigated this assumption, however.
- ▶ X's work tells us a great deal about _____. Can this work be generalized to _____?