

# How to Write Academically – an Abridged Version of **TWC** They Say, I Say, by Graff & Birkenstein (2010)

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This handout is adapted from *They Say, I Say* (2010) by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein. Please note that “X” refers to the author’s name.

Is it cheating to use templates like this one to learn how to write academically? According to the authors, “it is not plagiarism to recycle conventionally used formulas” (p. 13). Use these formulas to help you write more academically.

## *Describing an article or book you’ve read*

### **Summarizing an author’s thoughts in your writing:**

X argues that \_\_\_\_\_. X observes that \_\_\_\_\_.  
X refutes the claim that \_\_\_\_\_. X suggests that \_\_\_\_\_.  
X questions whether \_\_\_\_\_. X acknowledges that \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Introducing something implied:**

One implication of X’s treatment of \_\_\_\_\_ is that \_\_\_\_\_.  
Although X does not say so directly, she seems to imply that \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Using quotations in your writing*

**Hint:** Don’t drop a quotation into your writing; be sure to introduce it and explain its importance to the reader.

### **Introducing quotations in your writing:**

X states, “\_\_\_\_\_.” As the prominent philosopher X stated, “\_\_\_\_\_.”  
According to X, “\_\_\_\_\_.” In his book, \_\_\_\_\_, X explains that “\_\_\_\_\_.”  
In X’s view, “\_\_\_\_\_.”

### **Explaining quotations in your writing:**

X’s point is that \_\_\_\_\_. In other words, X believes \_\_\_\_\_.  
The essence of X’s argument is that \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Discussing the claims of articles*

### **Describing an article’s claim:**

- X’s claim that \_\_\_\_\_ rests upon the assumption that \_\_\_\_\_.
- X’s theory of \_\_\_\_\_ is useful because it creates insight on the difficult problem of \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Describing multiple articles at once:**

- A number of studies have recently suggested that \_\_\_\_\_.
- In their recent work, X and Y have offered descriptions of \_\_\_\_\_.
- According to both X and Y, \_\_\_\_\_.

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**1** *They Say, I Say*, is by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein. The above templates were either taken from or adapted from the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pages 221-231, published in 2010 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, New York. Abridged by Laurie Waye, TWC, University of Victoria, 2011. This copy is made solely for the use by a student, staff, or faculty member for private study. Any other use may be an infringement of copyright if done without securing the permission of the copyright owner.

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## **Describing an ongoing debate in the literature:**

- In discussions of \_\_\_\_\_, one controversial issue is \_\_\_\_\_. On the one hand, X argues \_\_\_\_\_. On the other hand, Y contends \_\_\_\_\_.
- When it comes to the topic of \_\_\_\_\_, most researchers agree that \_\_\_\_\_. Where this agreement ends, however, is on the question of \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Describing why your research is important**

*Hint: Imagine your audience is asking you “So what?” They’re not asking to be mean; they’re asking so they can clearly know the point of what you’re writing.*

### **Introducing gaps in the existing research:**

- Studies of \_\_\_\_\_ have indicated \_\_\_\_\_. It is not clear, however, that this conclusion applies to \_\_\_\_\_.
- While X’s work informs us about \_\_\_\_\_, it is unknown if the same findings can be expected in the local environment.

### **Establishing why your claims or arguments are important:**

- This topic matters because \_\_\_\_\_.
- These findings have important consequences for the broader domain of \_\_\_\_\_.
- These conclusions will have significant applications in \_\_\_\_\_ as well as in \_\_\_\_\_.
- Although \_\_\_\_\_ may appear trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of concerns over \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Predicting readers’ criticism**

*Hint: Your argument will be much stronger if you directly address opposing points of view.*

### **Making concessions while standing your ground**

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

### **Addressing criticisms**

- Some readers may challenge the view that \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_.
- Postmodern feminists would certainly take issue with the argument that \_\_\_\_\_. However, \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Talking about your research findings**

*Hint: Verbs like “may show,” “could demonstrate” and “might mean” give the reader the impression you aren’t sure of your analysis. If you’re sure, show it.*

- Our data are consistent with X’s hypothesis that \_\_\_\_\_.
- These findings challenge the work of earlier researchers, who tended to assume that \_\_\_\_\_.
- One explanation of our finding of \_\_\_\_\_ is that \_\_\_\_\_. An alternative explanation is \_\_\_\_\_.