

Argument Templates¹

These templates are not the only way to introduce an argument, and certainly they are not always the most graceful or sophisticated ways to phrase an argument. They will not always be appropriate, and they will almost always need to be revised to sound more natural. But if you're stuck, or if you're not used to argument-based writing, they can provide a starting point.

In giving you these templates, my intent is not to squelch your creativity or style, only to get you accustomed to some typical academic forms. (Think back to our readings, especially those by Laqueur, Fausto-Sterling, and Crass, which use versions of some of these forms.) Once you get the hang of some of the rhetorical moves in these templates—quoting and summarizing other authors' arguments, analyzing and responding to those arguments—you should feel free to modify or deviate from the templates as you see fit.

As you adapt the templates to your own topics and purposes, remember to consult the list of academic verbs for words that might better match your intentions.

two simple templates

Although [author] argues that _____, a closer reading of the [text, data, situation, etc.] suggests that _____.

[Many scholars/this author] believe(s) that _____. As a result of my research, I [agree/disagree/agree with _____ but not _____] because _____.

rhetorical analysis templates

In [name of article or book], [author] uses several strategies to appeal to his/her audience; the most important of these strategies is _____, because _____.

Although one common stereotype of academic writing is _____, the most challenging aspect of [author]'s [name of article or book] is not _____ but _____.

Although ___ and ___ write about different topics, they share the underlying assumption that _____. We see this assumption in ___ and _____.

Although ___ and ___ both write about gender, their assumptions about _____ are fundamentally different: ___ believes _____ while ___ believes _____.

a more complex template

In [name of article or book], [author] argues that _____. More specifically, [author] claims that _____. [She/he] writes that “_____” (#). In this passage, [author] is suggesting that _____. However, I wish to suggest that [author]'s view [is correct/incorrect/limited; can/can't be applied to other groups/texts/circumstances] because _____. The examination of [other author or data] shows us that _____. For example, _____. Although [author] might object that _____, I maintain that _____. Therefore, we can conclude that _____.

other ways of entering an existing conversation

- Disagree with one of the author's major claims.
- Agree with and offer additional support for one of the author's major claims.

¹ Concept and some examples adapted from models by David Bartholomae, Cathy Birkenstein-Graff, and Paul Fortunato, presented in Gerald Graff's *Clueless in Academe* and treated in more detail in *They Say / I Say*.

- Point out a significant contradiction in the author's text (or between two texts by different authors) and attempt to resolve that contradiction or to explain why it cannot be resolved.
- Point out where an author is leaving out some key aspect of the situation or ignoring an important argument made by other authors.