

Reading and Writing Exercises: Thinking With and Against Other Writers

In college writing assignments, you will often be asked to work with the ideas of other writers. Sometimes you will agree with these ideas, sometimes you will disagree with them, and often you will both agree and disagree. This exercise asks you to think with and/or against another writer by choosing from among the templates below to start discussing the other writer's ideas and to take a stance in relationship to them.

Consider your own thoughts about the issues raised in the assigned course reading, and then choose one of the following templates. Write 3-4 sentences after the fill-in-the-blank portion to explain the stance you have taken.

Templates for Agreeing:

1. X's ideas about _____ are useful because they call attention to the important issue of _____.
2. I agree with X that _____. This point needs emphasizing because so many people believe _____.
3. X is right to argue _____ because _____.

Templates for Disagreeing:

1. By focusing on _____, X does not consider or think about _____.
2. I disagree with X that _____ because _____.
3. X's claim _____ is questionable because her/his evidence is weak. Specifically, X's point that _____ is weak because _____.

Templates for Agreeing and Disagreeing Simultaneously:

1. Although I agree with X about _____, I disagree with his/her overall conclusion that _____.
2. Although I disagree with X about _____, However, I agree with her/his overall conclusion that _____.
3. X is right when s/he argues _____, but s/he makes a less reasonable argument when s/he states _____.

Categories and some templates are taken and adapted from chapter 4 of *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).