Mentor Sentences

From The Craft of Research

***Supporting a Claim***

**Base Claim on Reasons**

1. The emancipation of Russian peasants was an empty gesture claim because it did not improve the material quality of their daily lives. reason
2. TV violence can have harmful psychological effects on children claim because their constant exposure to violent images makes them think that violence is natural. reason

**Base reasons on evidence**

1. TV violence can have harmful psychological effects on children claim 1 because those exposed to lots of TV tend to adopt the values of what they see. reason 1 supporting claim 1/claim 2 Constant exposure to violent images make them unable to distinguish fantasy from reality. reason 2 supporting reason 1 and claim 2 Smith (1997) found that children ages 5-7 who watched more than three hours of violent television a day were 25 percent more likely to say that what they saw on television was “really happening.” evidence supporting reason 2

CLAIM → {because of} REASON → [based on} EVIDENCE

**Acknowledging and Responding to Anticipated Questions and Objections**

1. TV violence can have harmful psychological effects on children claim 1 because those exposed to lots of it tend to adopt the values of what they see. reason 1 supporting claim 1 and 2 Their constant exposure to violent images makes them unable to distinguish fantasy from reality. reason 2 supporting reason 1 and claim 2 Smith (1997) found that children ages 5-7 who watched more than three hours of violent television on a day were 25 percent more likely to say that most of what they saw on television was “really happening.” evidence supporting reason 2 **Of course, some children who watch more violent entertainment might already be attracted to violence.** acknowledgment **But Jones (1999) found that children with no predisposition to violence were as attracted to violent images as those with a violent history.**response

**CLAIM REASON EVIDENCE**

I claim. . . . .because of these reasons … which I base on this evidence…

*I acknowledge these questions, objections, and alternatives, and*

*I respond to them with these arguments. …*

**ACKNOWLEDGE AND RESPONSE**

**Warranting the the Relevance of Your Reasons**

|  |
| --- |
| This General Circumstance predictably leads to This General Consequence |
| When an area has a few hard freezes, it will pay more to combat diseases  carried by subtropical insects no  longer killed by hard freezes.    *This is a good instance of this*  *This is a good instance of this*  Global warming is moving the line SO We are facing significantly  of extended hard freezes steadily higher health care costs. claim  north. reason |
| This specific circumstance lets us infer This specific consequence |

When an area has fewer hard freezes, it can expect higher medical costs to cope with diseases carried by subtropical insects that do not survive freezes.warrant Europe and North America must thus expect higher health care costs main claim because global warming is moving the line of extended hard freezes steadily north. reason In the last one hundred years, the line of hard freezes lasting more than two weeks has moved north at the rate of roughly… evidence

**Make your Claim Specific**

1. Graphic reports of violence on local TV news lead regular viewers to overestimate by as much as 150 percent both the rate of crime in their neighborhood and the personal danger to themselves and their families.
2. **Although violent crime is actually decreasing**, regular TV viewers overestimate their neighborhood crime rate by 150 percent and therefore misjudge personal danger to themselves and their families, **because local TV evening news regularly opens with graphic reports of mayhem and murder in familiar locations, making many believe that crime happens nightly outside their front door**.
3. Although many believe that school uniforms help lower the incidence of violence in public schools, qualification the evidence is at best weak, claim because researchers have not controlled for other measures that have been instituted at the same time as uniforms reason 1 and because the data reported are statistically suspect. reason 2

**Acknowledge Limiting Conditions**

1. Today Franklin D. Roosevelt is revered as one of our most admired historical figures, but toward the end of the second term, he was quite unpopular, **at least among certain segments of American society**. claim Newspapers, for example, attacked him for promoting socialism, a sign that a modern administration is in trouble. In 1938, 70 percent of Midwest newspapers accused him of wanting the government to manage the banking system. … Some have argued otherwise, including Nicholson (1983, 1992) and Wiggins (1973), both of whom offer anecdotal reports that Roosevelt was always in high regard, acknowledgment but these reports are supported only by the memories of those who had an interest in deifying FDR. response **Unless it can be shown that the newspapers critical of Roosevelt were controlled by special interests**, limitations on claim their attacks demonstrate significant popular dissatisfaction with Roosevelt’s presidency. restatement of claim

The Vocabulary of Acknowledgment and Response

1. Downplay an objection or alternative by introducing it with despite, regardless of, or notwithstanding:

**[Despite/Regardless of/Notwithstanding]** Congress’s claims that it wants to cut taxes, acknowledgement the public believes that … response

**[Although/While/Even though]** there are economic problems in Hong Kong, acknowledgment Southeast Asia remains a strong … response

2. You can signal an acknowledgment indirectly with seem, appear, may, and could, or with an adverb like plausibly, justifiably, reasonably, surprisingly, or even certainly:

In his letters Lincoln expresses what **[seems/appears]** to be depression. acknowledgment But those who observed him… response

This proposal **[may have/plausibly has]** some merit, acknowledgment but we… response

3. Acknowledge alternatives by attributing them to an unnamed source or to no source at all, which gives little weight to the objection:

It is easy to **[think/imagine/say/claim/argue]** that taxes should… But there is **[another/alternative/possible] [explanation/line of argument/account/possibility]**.

Some evidence **[might/may/can/could/does] [suggest/indicate/point to/lead some to think]** that we should…, but…

4. You can attribute an alternative to a more specific source, giving it more weight:

There are **[some/many/a few]** who **[might/may/could/would] [say/think/argue/claim/charge/object]** that Cuba is not… But in fact, …

5. You can acknowledge an alternative in your own voice, with a passive verb or with an adverb such as admittedly, granted, to be sure, and so on, conceding it some validity:

I **[understand/know/realize]** that liberals believe in …, but…

It is [true/possible/likely/certain] that no good evidence proves that coffee causes cancer. However, …

It **[must/should/can]** be **[admitted/acknowledged/noted/conceded]** that no good evidence proves that… Nevertheless, …

**[Granted/Admittedly/True/To be sure/Certainly/Of course]**, Adams has claimed… However, …

We **[could/can/might/may/would] [say/argue/claim/think]** that spending on the arts supports pornographic… But...

Responding to Objections and Alternatives

1. You can regret not that the source is unclear, but that you don’t entirely understand:

But **[I do not quite understand how/I find it difficult to see how/It is not clear to me how]** X can claim that, when...

2. Or you can note that there are unsettled issues:

But there are other issues here.../But there remains the problem of …

3. You can respond more bluntly, claiming the acknowledged position is irrelevant or unreliable:

But as insightful as that may be, it **[ignores/is irrelevant to/does not bear on]** the issue at hand.

But the **[evidence/reasoning]** is **[unreliable/shaky/thin]**.

But the argument is **[untenable/weak/confused/simplistic]**.

But the argument **[overlooks/ignores/misses]** key factors.

Smith’s evidence is important, **but we must look at all available evidence**.

That explains some of the problem, **but it is too complex for a single explanation**.

That principle hold in many cases, **but not in all**.