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**Developing Arguments Using Evidence**

**They Say/I Say**

One way to participate in an ongoing discourse is to position your argument according to what has already been said. You might start by stating a common opinion/claim/belief to which you are responding. Some useful introductory phrases are

* Americans today tend to believe that . . .
* Conventional wisdom has it that . . .
* Most people think that . . .
* It is often said that . . .
* Many people assume that . . .
* Much of the research concludes that . . .

After introducing the standard view with one of the phrases above, transition to your own claim.

**The Sheridan Baker Thesis Machine**

Appropriately, the term *thesis* comes from the Greek word for “putting” or “positioning.” This is the place to make your claim alongside the claims of others. A strong thesis can help you focus and develop your argument.

The following components comprise a strong thesis:

* Qualifier: The qualifier places your thesis in conversation with commonly accepted opinions/claims; this can be seen as “they say”:
  + *Although news and educational programming is valuable, . . .*
* Claim: The claim is your subjective position; this can be seen as “I say”:
  + *television is mostly a waste of time . . .*
* Reason: The reason is the rationale or justification for your claim:
  + *because the shows with the highest ratings do not offer such content.*

**Evidence**

Once you are satisfied with your thesis, it is important to strengthen it with evidence. Evidence refers to relevant supporting details, which often take the form of **F.R.I.E.S.**:

* **F**acts: information proven to be true, upon which a writer may found an argument
* **R**easons: justifications that a writer may use to trace cause and effect
* **I**ncidents: resultant effects that may illustrate consequences
* **E**xamples: embodiments of trends that illustrate a writer’s claim
* **S**tatistics: quantitative data that the writer may interpret and analyze to support a point

**Leading into Quotes**

Much of the time, supporting evidence is drawn from sources. When incorporating this material into your writing, consider the way you integrate details with your responses. You might use the following lead-in phrases:

* According to . . .
* In *Title of Book*, Jane Doe states . . .
* As John Smith argues in “Title of Article,” . . .

Once you have introduced evidence from a source, you will often need to respond in some way, which shows your interaction with the material and distinguishes your voice.

* However, this view is incorrect because . . .
* Therefore, we must accept the premise that . . .

**How to Elaborate on an Argument**

* Respond to questions like the following: How? Who? What? Where? When? Why?
* Don’t rely on your evidence to speak for you.
* Engage with your evidence; explain the connection between it and your argument.
* Try to make answers to the above questions flow smoothly.