WRITING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

Writing evidence-based claims is a little different from writing stories or just writing about something. You need to **follow a few steps** as you write.

1. ESTABLISH THE CONTEXT

Your readers must know **where your claim is coming from** and **why it's relevant.**
Depending on the scope of your piece and the claim, the context differs. If your whole piece is one claim or if you're introducing the first major claim of your piece, the entire context must be established:

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates believes...

Purposes of evidence-based writing vary. In some cases, naming the book and author might be enough to establish the relevance of your claim. In other cases, you might want to supply additional information:

Throughout his work, Plato emphasizes Socrates' special relationship with Athens. In the *Apology*, Socrates believes...

If your claim is part of a larger piece with multiple claims, then the context might be simpler:

According to Socrates,… *or* In paragraph 5, Socrates argues…

2. STATE YOUR CLAIM CLEARLY

How you state your claim is important; it must **precisely and comprehensively express your analysis**. Figuring out how to state claims is a **process**; writers revise them continually as they write their supporting evidence. Here's a claim about Socrates' role in Athenian society from Plato's *Apology*:

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates believes that the annoyance he causes helps Athens and they will suffer if they put him to death.

When writing claims it is often useful to describe parts of the claim before providing the supporting evidence. In this case, the writer might want to connect the "annoyance" to Socrates' social role.

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates believes that the annoyance he causes helps Athens and they will suffer if they put him to death. Socrates thinks he plays a unique role in Athenian society.

The idea in the second sentence is relevant to the claim and begins connecting the claim to ideas that will be used as evidence.

Remember, you should continually return and re-phrase your claim as you write the supporting evidence to make sure you are capturing exactly what you want to say. Writing out the evidence always helps you figure out what you really think.

3. ORGANIZE YOUR SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Many claims contain multiple parts that require different evidence and should be expressed in separate paragraphs. This claim can be **broken down into two parts**:

The **HELPFUL ANNOYANCE** and the **EFFECTS OF SOCRATES' DEATH ON ATHENS**.

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3. ORGANIZE YOUR SUPPORTING EVIDENCE (CONT'D)

Here are two paragraphs that support the claim with evidence organized into these two parts.

A description of the HELPFUL ANNOYANCE:

> Socrates explains that he will argue not for his own sake, but instead for the benefit of the Athenians. He explains that he is "a sort of gadfly, given to the state by God," and that "the state is a great and noble steed who… requires [to be] stirred into life" (106,107-108). Socrates is likening himself to a fly who has been given the purpose of waking up the state from sleep by god. This suggests that it is the god's will to wrest the Athenian citizens from their ignorance, and Socrates is merely doing what he has been called to do (105). Though the Athenian citizens may initially feel "out of temper (like a person who is suddenly awakened from sleep)," Socrates is trying to argue that they should not let this make their decision to put him to death (111-112).

A description of the EFFECTS OF SOCRATES' DEATH ON ATHENS:

> To strengthen his argument even further, Socrates issues several warnings should the Athenians vote to kill Socrates. If they put him to death, Socrates points out that they will "not easily find a successor" like him, and they will "sleep on for the remainder" of their lives (105, 113). Further, he explains that putting him to death will give the Athenians an "evil name" (149). Socrates is sure that once he has been killed that "punishment far heavier" will "surely await" Athens (177, 178).

Notice the phrase, "To strengthen his argument even further," starting the second paragraph. **Transitional phrases** like this aid the organization by showing how the ideas relate to each other.

4. PARAPHRASE AND QUOTE

Written evidence from texts can be paraphrased or quoted. It's up to the writer to decide which works better for each piece of evidence. Paraphrasing is **putting the author's words into your own.** This works well when the author originally expresses the idea you want to include across many sentences. You might write it more briefly. The fourth line from paragraph 1 paraphrases the evidence from Plato's text. The ideas are his, but the exact way of writing them is not.

> This suggests that it is God's will to wrest the Athenian citizens from their ignorance, and Socrates is merely doing what he has been called to do (105).

Some evidence is better quoted than paraphrased. If an author has found the quickest way to phrase the idea or the words are especially strong, you might want to **use the author's words**. The second line from paragraph 1 quotes the text exactly, incorporating important phrases.

> He explains that he is "a sort of gadfly, given to the state by God," and that "the state is a great and noble steed who… requires [to be] stirred into life" (106,107-108).

5. REFERENCE YOUR EVIDENCE

Whether you paraphrase or quote the author's words, you must include **the exact location where the ideas come from**. Direct quotes are written in quotation marks. How writers include the reference can vary depending on the piece and the original text. Here the writer puts the line numbers from the original text in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

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