Incorporating Opposing Arguments

Structure

Part I: “Anticipate Objections”
- Play the critic/skeptic - read it from another’s point of view
- Address the points that objectively may seem close-minded, weakly backed up, or try it if you just need more to say
- You can insert these opinions in many different ways - formally; with a nameless “naysayer,” by naming an opposing view (even quoting it), or informally through questions or more casual dialogue.

Part II: “Represent Objections Fairly”
- Don’t exaggerate or rush past - give the opposing view time and consideration too.

Part III: “Answer Objections”
- Fully answer the objections you’ve brought up - don’t just dismiss them.
- Easiest way: answer one part but refute the other.

Examples & Counterexamples:

1. **Counterexample:** “Some hold that Phillis Wheatley was educated by whites, but this does not mean that her poetry is not highly critical of slavery.”
   
   a. It’s not clear how these two statements are at odds with each other. It’s a fact vs. an argument, rather than an argument vs. another argument.
   
   b. It’s not clear where “some” ends and the writer begins.

2. **Counterexample:** “In her article ‘Phillis Wheatley: A Black Perspective,’ Eleanor Smith argues that Wheatley never showed any solidarity with her fellow African-Americans. However, her reference to Blacks as ‘our noble race’ clearly disproves this.”
   
   a. The counterargument isn’t being fairly represented. Smith’s argument is much more complex than the writer assumes it to be, and the writer’s use of the words “never” and “any” exaggerate Smith’s claim.

3. **Example:** “Eleanor Smith, argues in her article ‘Phillis Wheatley: A Black Perspective’ that Wheatley was ‘a Black woman who was taught by Whites to think white,’ and resultantly ‘was not sensitive enough to the needs of her own people to demonstrate a kinship to Blacks in her life or writings’ (403). On the surface, Smith’s critique seems accurate; Wheatley’s claims that slavers gave ‘mercy’ and ‘redemption’ are paternalistic. However, her references to Blacks as ‘our noble people’ and slavery as an ‘abomination’ imply Wheatley’s relationship with race is more complicated than Smith acknowledges.”
Practice Exercises & Templates:

1. You are writing a paper arguing that stem cell research using adult and embryonic stem cells should be actively pursued by the United States. Create a naysayer for your paper using a template for, “naming your naysayer.” Possible templates include:

   • Here many ___ would probably object that ___.
   • But ___ would certainly take issue with the argument that ___
   • ___, of course, may want to question whether ___
   • Nevertheless, both ___ and ___ will probably suggest otherwise and argue that ______

2. You are writing a paper advocating for the legalization of marijuana. Create a naysayer for your paper using a template for, making concessions while still standing your ground. Possible templates include:

   • Although I grant that ___, I still maintain that ___
   • Proponents of X are right to argue that ___. But they exaggerate when they claim ___
   • While it is true that ___, it does not necessarily follow that ___
   • On the one hand, I agree with X that ___. But on the other hand, I still insist that ___

3. You are writing a paper arguing that the death penalty should be illegal under federal law. Create a naysayer for your paper by letting your naysayer speak directly. Possible examples may include:

   • “Impossible,” some will say. “You must be reading the research selectively.”
   • “Get over it,” say the anti-smokers. “You’re the minority.”