

say women's rights are improving, I say women's rights are not improving." Such a response merely contradicts the view it responds to and fails to add anything interesting or new. To make an argument, you need to give reasons why you disagree: because another's argument fails to take relevant factors into account; because it is based on faulty or incomplete evidence; because it rests on questionable assumptions; or because it uses flawed logic, is contradictory, or overlooks what you take to be the real issue. To move the conversation forward (and, indeed, to justify your very act of writing), you need to demonstrate that you yourself have something to contribute.

You can even disagree by making what we call the "duh" move, in which you disagree not with the position itself but with the assumption that it is a new or stunning revelation. Here is an example of such a move, used to open a 2003 essay on the state of American schools.

According to a recent report by some researchers at Stanford University, high school students with college aspirations "often lack crucial information on applying to college and on succeeding academically once they get there."

Well, duh. . . . It shouldn't take a Stanford research team to tell us that when it comes to "succeeding academically," many students don't have a clue.

GERALD GRAFF, "Trickle-Down Obfuscation"

Like all of the other moves discussed in this book, the "duh" move can be tailored to meet the needs of almost any writing situation. If you find the expression "duh" too brash to use with your intended audience, you can always dispense with the term itself and write something like "It is true that . . . ; but we already knew that."

TEMPLATES FOR DISAGREEING, WITH REASONS

- ▶ I think X is mistaken because she overlooks _____
- ▶ X's claim that _____ rests upon the questionable assumption that _____
- ▶ I disagree with X's view that _____ because, as recent research has shown, _____
- ▶ X contradicts herself/can't have it both ways. On the one hand, she argues _____ . But on the other hand, she also says _____
- ▶ By focusing on _____, X overlooks the deeper problem of _____
- ▶ X claims _____, but we don't need him to tell us that. Anyone familiar with _____ has long known that _____

You can also disagree by making what we call the "twist it" move, in which you agree with the evidence that someone else has presented, but show through a twist of logic that this evidence actually supports your own position. For example:

X argues for stricter gun control legislation, saying that the crime rate is on the rise and that we need to restrict the circulation of guns. I agree that the crime rate is on the rise, but that's precisely why I oppose stricter gun control legislation. We need to own guns to protect ourselves against criminals.

In this example of the "twist it" move, the second speaker agrees with the first speaker's claim that the crime rate is on the rise,