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**GUIDELINES FOR WRITING PAPERS**

**/SQUIBS/SUMMARIES/CRITIQUES/REVIEWS**

**1. You need to make clear WHY you are writing the things you do.**

**• For every section, think “Why am I writing this section? How**

**will this help my reader understand my main claim?”**

* When you find the answer, WRITE THAT ANSWER down in the introduction to that section.

Eg., “In this section, I discuss \_\_\_\_A\_\_\_\_.

in order to \_\_ B\_\_\_\_”

Or, write it at the end of the previous section.

Eg., “In this section we have discussed \_A\_\_.

In the next section, I will discuss \_\_B\_\_.

in order to \_\_\_ A \_\_\_.”

**•** **For every sentence, think “why am I writing this sentence?**

**How will it help my reader understand?”**

If you can’t find that answer, delete the sentence.

If you find an answer, make sure that answer will be obvious to a

reader.

eg., by adding a sentence like “This is important because

it helps us understand \_\_\_\_\_\_.”

Or by preceding it with the question that your sentence answers.

• **For every example, think “Why am I providing this example?**

**How will it help my reader understand?”**

* Again, when you find the answer, make sure the answer is clear to a reader, by linking it to previous sentences.

eg., have sentences like. “Chomsky claims that \_\_\_\_\_\_.

The example in (4), however, is incompatible with this claim.”

• **Possible answers to the question “Why am I writing this?”:**

-To **PRESENT** **(PART OF) AN ARGUMENT** – eg.,

• to present a **PREMISE/ASSUMPTION** or **CLAIM/CONCLUSION**

• to theoretically **JUSTIFY** a premise/assumption

* to provide **EVIDENCE** (for the claim/conclusion,

premise/assumption)

-To **CLARIFY** – eg.,

* **SPECIFY** – to make something that was vague, more specific
* **DISAMBIGUATE** – to make something that was ambiguous, unambiguous
* **ANALYZE** – to take something complex and break it down into simpler, more easily-understood parts.
* **EXAMPLIFY** – to use an example to illustrate an abstract concept

-To **PROVIDE CONTEXT** – eg.,

to help

the reader understand how a claim relates to

• the general understanding of the field, or

• to a particular subgroup within the discipline, or

• to a layman’s understanding.

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**/SQUIBS/SUMMARIES/CRITIQUES/REVIEWS**

**2. Adopt a simple writing style.**

You can confuse your reader with complex content, or with a complex writing style. It can be hard to avoid the former, but we can do our best to minimize the latter.

**Things to avoid**

* **COMPLEX SENTENCES** – eg., multiple embedded sentences, multiply conjoined sentences. If possible, try to break everything down into simple sentences.
* **AMBIGUOUS OR VAGUE SENTENCES**

**○ AVOID PRONOUNS;** use the full NP to avoid referential ambiguity

(sometimes this will sound awkward, but awkward is better than unclear)

○ **AVOID AMBIGUOUS WORDS** (or clarify which meaning you intend)

○ **AVOID VAGUE WORDS** (or give specific examples of what you mean)

○ **AVOID STRUCTURAL AMBIGUITY** (or clarify which meaning you intend)

○ **USE EVIDENTIAL TAGS** like “X claims…” or “I argue” so it’s clear who is claiming what

○ make sure you **COMPLETE** your sentences!

○ and **COMPLETE** your NPS – null N heads are not clear writing!