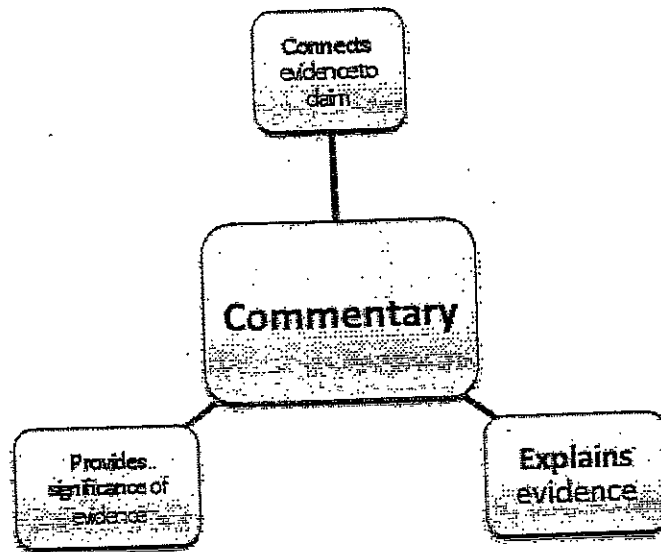


Commentary Anchor Chart



Questions for Writing Commentary – Ask Yourself:

- **What** do I need to make sure the reader understands about this evidence? (Re-explain the evidence.)
- **Why** is this evidence especially important?
- **How** does it prove and support the claim?

The Importance of BECAUSE

“Because” is a word that tells a reader they are about to hear an explanation. It signals **significance** and **relationship**. It’s an effective word to use when writing commentary. Take a look:

- These statistics are important **because** they point to the positive effects school uniforms can have on attendance, behavior, and academic achievement.
- School decision-makers must pay attention to such experiences **because** they prove that school uniforms will decrease the levels of violence and bullying.

Strong Commentary Verbs

from *Rules for Writers* by Diana Hacker

Use these verbs when writing commentary. Note the two verbs underlined in the sentences above.

acknowledges	compares	insists	claims
adds	confirms	notes	underscores
admits	declares	observes	exemplifies
agrees	denies	points out	implies
argues	emphasizes	rejects	proves
asserts	highlights	reports	exhibits
believes	illustrates	responds	suggests

Commentary Examples & Practice

Instruction: Underline the strong commentary verbs and circle instances of the word "because."

Debatable Claim: School uniforms improve academic achievement and attendance.

#1

Factual Evidence: According to a University of Houston study of a large urban school district in the southwest, when schools adopted uniforms, middle and high school students' attendance and academic achievement improved, especially girl students. (Gentile and Imberman)

Commentary: This study is significant because it illustrates how much dress and fashion affects academic achievement for girls. When students have to wear uniforms, and fashion is no longer an issue, girls' school performance improves. The study shows a direct relationship between clothes and grades, proving that uniforms are a positive choice.

#2

Anecdotal Evidence: I have a friend who felt so much social pressure to wear certain kinds of clothes that she couldn't afford, that sometimes she wouldn't come to school at all. The clothes she owned embarrassed her. But now that we all wear uniforms, you can't really tell whose parents have money and whose don't, so there isn't so much pressure around fashion at school. We can focus on our work instead. My friend doesn't skip school nearly as much as she used to.

Commentary: This example highlights how much clothing and social status can affect students' behavior and attendance at school. This is significant because the fact that my friend came to school more regularly once we had to wear uniforms confirms how much uniforms impact student attendance, which directly affects learning.

You Try!

Debatable Claim: School uniforms improve academic achievement and attendance.

Factual Evidence: A study conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals showed that 67% of principals of schools with a uniform policy in place saw an improvement in students' classroom concentration. (NAESP)

Your Commentary: *don't forget to use those strong commentary verbs!*

(re-explain the facts)

(tell what's important about them)

(explain how this evidence proves and supports the claim)

Dissecting the Writing Prompt

The word “dissection” is typically used in relation to biology. We dissect animals to understand the anatomy (bodily structure of an organism).

Argument Prompt:

Develop an argument for why students should or should not have to wear school uniforms. Use evidence from at least two credible outside sources. Be sure to employ a variety of evidence types: anecdote, facts, reasons, experts, etc. To ensure that your reader is persuaded by your argument, explain your evidence through well-written commentary and include logical transitions that help the reader see the connections between ideas and sentences. End the paragraph with a strong statement that summarizes your point.

1. **Highlight** the main verbs in the prompt.
2. **Underline** the components the prompt tells you to include in your paragraph.
3. Re-read the prompt to understand the steps you will need to take to write your paragraph. List each of those steps below.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

Argument Paragraph Pre-Writing

Take Out Your Writer's Notebook...

1. Begin with **evidence**. In your Writer's Notebook, write down everything you know about your chosen topic (facts, statistics, reasons, details, anecdotes, experience, observations).
 - a. Re-read and examine any articles you have read on the topic in class.
 - b. Perform further research on the Internet and in the library as needed.
2. Notice which pieces of your evidence are factual and which are anecdotal. You might need to balance this out later in the drafting process.
3. Examine your evidence.
 - a. What does the evidence tell you?
 - b. What is your **opinion** about this topic based on the evidence you recorded?
 - c. Write a **draft of your debatable claim** in your Writer's Notebook.
4. Now focus on the WHY of your argument. This means you'll be pre-writing for **commentary**. Answer these questions in your Writer's Notebook.
 - a. Why is this topic/claim important?
 - b. What does the evidence tell us?
 - c. Why do you feel this way about this topic? Why does it concern you?
 - d. Why should your readers care about this argument?

Variety of Evidence Checklist

Check the box next to each kind of evidence you currently have for your argument.

<input type="checkbox"/>	FACTUAL EVIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirmed facts
<input type="checkbox"/>	Data and statistics
<input type="checkbox"/>	Research by experts
<input type="checkbox"/>	ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friends' and family's experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	Interviewee's or acquaintance's experience

Do you have **2** pieces of factual evidence and **1** piece of anecdotal evidence?

What **kind** of evidence would most improve the persuasiveness of your argument?

What specific part of your argument should this evidence concern?

Credible Sources on the Internet

What does **CREDIBLE** mean?

convincing, able to be believed

How do you **determine** if an Internet source is **credible**?

Ask WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? WHY?

WHO – Who is the author?

- If there is an “about” page, read it.
 - Is this person or organization an expert in their field?
 - What is their educational background?

WHAT – What kind of information is provided and how high is its quality?

- If the site provides a deep knowledge of your topic with references to studies and statistics, it is probably high quality.
- If the site provides only general facts, you should find better, more detailed information elsewhere.

WHERE – Where is this site on the web? What is the web address?

.com – hosted by a **company**, often a site for profit, advertisements on websites suggest the information will be biased, though online magazines are often .com sites. Be careful and explore further.

.org – hosted by a non-profit **organization**, reliable information depending on the background and mission of the organization. Be careful and explore further.

.edu – hosted by an **educational institution**, typically reliable and expert information.

.gov – hosted by a government institution, typically reliable and expert information.

WHEN – When was it published? Is this the most up to date information?

WHY – What is the author’s, organization’s, or company’s goal in publishing this information?

- Is the goal to
 - Provide excellent information to the public? – Great!
 - Persuade the audience of an argument or opinion? – Be careful!
 - Sell the readers a product? – Move on fast!

Website Credibility Activity

Directions:

- Mark each website below as **C** for *credible* or **NC** for *not credible*, then give your reason for this determination.

C/N C	Website	Reason
	Facts Against School Uniforms http://education.newarchaeology.com/against_school_uniforms.php	
	The First Amendment Center http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/clothing-dress-codes-uniforms	
	"Plaid's Out, Again, As Schools Give Up Requiring Uniforms" – <i>NY Times</i> http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/13/education/13UNIF.html?ex=1146024000&en=2224e72b52502702&ei=5070	
	French Toast.com http://www.frenchtoast.com/category/school+info/more+about+school+uniforms/why+school+uniforms.do	
	School Outfitters Blog http://blog.schooloutfitters.com/2011/11/shool-uniforms-mandatory/	
	United States Department of Education http://www2.ed.gov/offices/OSDFS/actguid/uniforms.html	
	Public Broadcasting System (PBS) http://www.pbs.org/newshour/infocus/fashion/school.html	
	Buzzle.com http://www.buzzle.com/articles/school-uniforms-debate.html	

Explain what difficulties and questions came up as you looked at these sites. What were you unsure about in terms of credibility?

Citing Sources

What does it mean to cite a source?

- An **in-text citation** is a note in an essay that tells the reader where a piece of information or an idea came from.
- In-text citations always appear in (parentheses).
- At the end of an essay, a writer includes a **list of works cited** that gives details about all the in-text citations.

Why do writers cite sources?

- To avoid plagiarism—the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.
- To prove that the evidence is real and credible.
- To inform the reader about where to find more information on the topic.

What gets cited?

- Quoted information from a secondary source.
- Paraphrased information from a secondary source.
- Information obtained in an interview.
- Any idea that is not your own.

How do you cite a source?

- Insert the in-text citation before the period at the end of the sentence in which the quotation or paraphrase appears.
- For any in-text citation, include the first item that appears in the works-cited entry that corresponds to the citation (e.g. author name, article name, website name).
- See the list below for examples concerning different types of sources.

Articles and Essays

Include the following information in the works-cited entry in this order:

- Article's author
- Title of the article in quotations marks
- Magazine or newspaper's title in italics
- Date of publication
- Page number
- Medium

In-Text Citation

A new study shows that requiring students to wear uniforms to school increases the amount of student time on task in the classroom because of a decrease in disruptions and behavior problems (Bashear).

Works-Cited Entry

Bashear, Leslie. "Uniforms Bring Surprising Results." *Time Magazine*. 7 Feb 2011: 28. Print.

Websites & Webpages

Include the following information in the works-cited entry in this order:

- Author and/or editor names (if available)
- Article name in quotation marks (if applicable)
- Title of the website
- Name of institution/organization publishing the site
- Date of resource creation (if available)
- Date you accessed the material.

****For websites and pages, remember to use *n.p.* if no publisher name is available and *n.d.* if no publishing date is given.****

In-Text Citation

Long Beach Unified School District in California was the first large urban school district in the United States to require school uniforms. "A 1995 LBUSD survey of parents showed 91 percent agreed that school uniforms improve the school environment" ("School Uniform Fact Sheet").

Works-cited entry

"School Uniform Fact Sheet." *LB School.net*. Long Beach Unified School District. Accessed 8 July 2012.

Personal Interview

For any information you get in an interview with a family member, friend, acquaintance, or interviewee, include the following information in this order:

- name of the interviewee
- the phrase "Personal interview"
- the date of the interview.

In-Text Citation

My friend Troy says, "Wearing uniforms was awful at first. I wasn't used to someone else dictating what I wore. But then I started to like it because I didn't have to think about what to put on every morning. And I kind of like that all the students look similar. It makes school feel more like a community" (Jenkins).

Works-cited entry

Jenkins, Troy. Personal interview. 20 June 2011.

You Try!

- A. Insert an in-text citation into one of the sentences in your paragraph that has information from a secondary source.
- B. Create a works-cited entry for the in-text citation at the end of the paragraph.