

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 important**.

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 given:

In his speech to the California Common Wealth Club, Cesar Chavez says ...

Purposes of evidence-based writing vary. In some cases, naming the article and author might be enough to show why your claim is important. In other cases, you might want to give more information:

Cesar Chavez was an outspoken critic of many California growers. In his speech to the California Common Wealth Club, Cesar Chavez says...

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

According to Chavez,... *or* In paragraph 5, Chavez claims...

2. STATE YOUR CLAIM CLEARLY

How you state your claim is important; it must **clearly and fully express your ideas**.

Figuring out how to state claims is a **process**: Writers revise them continually as they write their supporting evidence. Here's a claim about Chavez' speech:

In his speech to the California Common Wealth Club, Cesar Chavez says that terrible environmental damage has been caused in the U.S., and that the growers are to blame.

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

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

An explanation that **TERRIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE HAS OCCURRED**
and
an explanation of how the **GROWERS ARE TO BLAME**.

3. ORGANIZE YOUR SUPPORTING EVIDENCE (CONT'D)

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

An explanation that TERRIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE HAS OCCURRED:

In his speech to the California Common Wealth Club, Cesar Chavez says that terrible environmental damage has been caused in the U.S., and that the growers are to blame. He talks about the destruction at the end of his address, when he says, "Thousands of acres of land in California have already been irrevocably damaged" (190). Chavez states that the land has been poisoned and he is worried about the effects on people (211). He tells his audience that, "Health authorities in many San Joaquin Valley towns already warn young children and pregnant mothers not to drink the water" (193-195).

An explanation of how the GROWERS ARE TO BLAME:

These problems, however, are not the workers' fault. Chavez claims that the growers have caused this environmental damage. He suggests that the growers have poisoned the soil and water with pesticides, herbicides, soil fumigants, and fertilizers (187-189). He also claims that if the growers do not stop poisoning the soil, that thousands more acres of land will be lost (190-192). Chavez blames the growers, not the farm workers he has organized and represents. He tells his audience, "These are the sins of growers, not the farm workers. We didn't poison the land." (210-211).

Notice the phrase, "These problems, however," starting the second paragraph. **Transitional phrases** like this one 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 third line from the first paragraph paraphrases the evidence from Chavez' text. The ideas are his, but the exact way of writing is not.

Chavez states that the land has been poisoned and he is worried about the effects on people (211).

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 last line of the second paragraph quotes Chavez exactly, incorporating his powerful phrases.

He tells his audience, "These are the sins of growers, not the farm workers. We didn't poison the land." (210-211).

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 after the quotes and paraphrases.