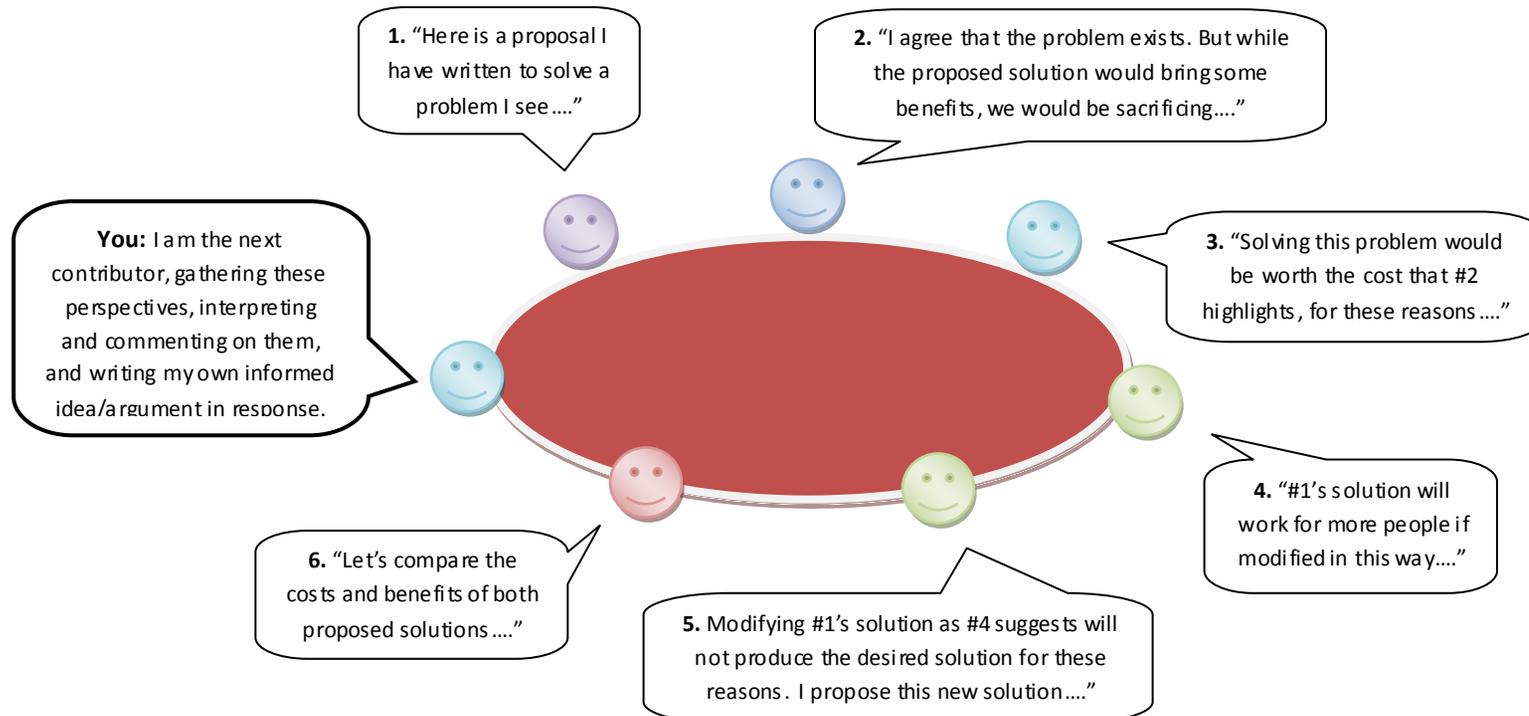


Research Writing

Who Is Around Your Table?

Think of a research paper as a conversation about your topic. As you do your research, you are “listening” for what has been said and done about an issue, uncovering as many pertinent perspectives (sources) as you can. Then you are writing your paper in response. Picture a roundtable discussion, for instance, with people discussing an issue.



Thinking of your research project as your entrance into a scholarly conversation can help you navigate your research, gain the trust of your readers, provide a context for your work, and effectively communicate your point of view.

When you are ready, examine the sources you are consulting for your own project, and see how they work in conversation with one another. If it helps, make a table listing each source, its message, and why it is important for your project.

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Reviewing the Literature

Reviewing the literature on a research topic involves analyzing each contribution you find—major players, articles, events, etc.—to see how they have impacted the conversation as a whole. This kind of analysis lets you deepen your knowledge, shows you how the sources relate to one another, and helps you develop a sense of what questions remain to be answered that you can hopefully answer with your own project.

1. What events, authors, and articles have contributed to the conversation thus far? And what does each of these sources contribute?

Who/what is the source (name, qualifications)?	What does the source say?	How did/does the source's contribution change the conversation?

2. Has the conversation on this topic developed one event or article at a time (if so, make a timeline), or has it split into subtopics (if so, make a web)? This will help you organize your information by chronology or by subtopic if you are writing a literature review.

3. What compelling question remains unanswered that you would like to explore further?

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