

Line of Reasoning and Methods of Development

AP English Language ■ Unit 3

AP English Language



What we will cover

- 1 Identifying Claims and Evidence
- 2 Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence
- 3 Describing the Line of Reasoning
- 4 Developing a Line of Reasoning and Commentary
- 5 Recognizing Methods of Development
- 6 Using Methods of Development



Identifying Claims and Evidence

Unit 3 is where the course stops being about parts and starts being about **structure**. Its subject is the **line of reasoning** – the path an argument takes from where it starts to what it proves.

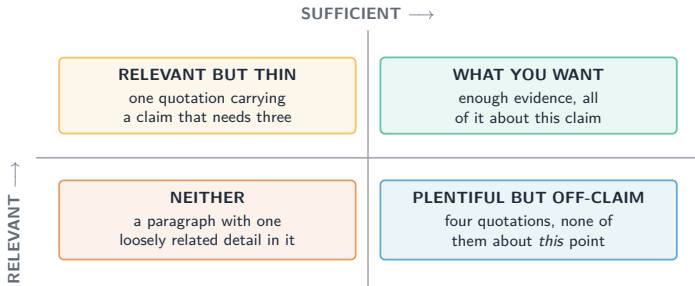
- Effective use of evidence uses **commentary** to establish a **logical relationship between the evidence and the claim**.
- Writers **introduce source material** using commentary to integrate it into their line of reasoning – so commentary comes before as well as after.
- **Synthesis** requires **consideration, explanation, and integration of others' arguments into one's own**. That is the exact skill Question 1 tests, and the word *integration* rules out a paragraph that simply summarises each source in turn.
- Writers must **acknowledge** the words, ideas, images, and texts of others through **attribution and citation**.



Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

Applied to your own writing, the change from Unit 2 is that commentary now has **two jobs, not one**: it introduces the evidence into the reasoning, and it explains the relationship afterwards.

Relevant and sufficient are two failures



- Writers may **lead readers through a line of reasoning and then arrive at a thesis** - the argument builds to its claim.
- Writers may **express a claim and then develop a line of reasoning to justify it** - the argument declares and then defends.



Two legitimate orders, one requirement

Two ways to arrange an argument

Build to the thesis

evidence and reasoning



reader is led along



THESIS arrives last

State, then justify

THESIS stated first



each claim defends it



evidence follows each claim

Either order is legitimate. What is NOT optional:
commentary connecting each piece of evidence to its claim.

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- Writers may **express a claim and then develop a line of reasoning to justify it** - the argument declares and then defends.

Describing the Line of Reasoning

The CED allows two arrangements, and both are valid:

- Writers may **lead readers through a line of reasoning** and then arrive at a thesis – the argument builds to its claim.
- Writers may **express a claim and then develop a line of reasoning to justify it** – the argument declares and then defends.
- Writers explain their reasoning through **commentary that connects chosen evidence to a claim**.
- Commentary explains the **significance and relevance** of evidence in relation to the line of reasoning.
- **The sequence of paragraphs in a text reveals the argument's line of reasoning** – which is the practical tool for reading. To find a writer's reasoning, write one sentence per paragraph and read the list.

The shuffle test

- Writers may **lead readers through a line of reasoning and then arrive at a thesis** - the argument builds to its claim.
- Writers may **express a claim and then develop a line of reasoning to justify it** - the argument declares and then defends.

The shuffle test, in detail

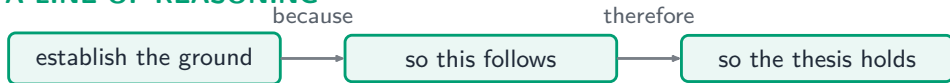
A LIST

a thing I know

another thing

a third thing

A LINE OF REASONING



Writers may **express a claim and then develop a line of reasoning to justify it** - the argument declares and then defends.

What a line of reasoning must do

the requirement

whichever order is used, the **same** requirements hold

each claim supports

the thesis, and each piece of evidence supports its claim

the order is purposeful

the arrangement itself is an argument about what matters and what follows what

the links are visible

the reader can see how each part connects to the next

nothing is missing

no step in the chain is assumed rather than made

the failure

flaws in a line of reasoning may render an argument **specious** or illogical

“Specious” means it *looks* valid. That is the danger a line-of-reasoning question is testing: an argument can be well written and still not follow.



Developing a Line of Reasoning and Commentary

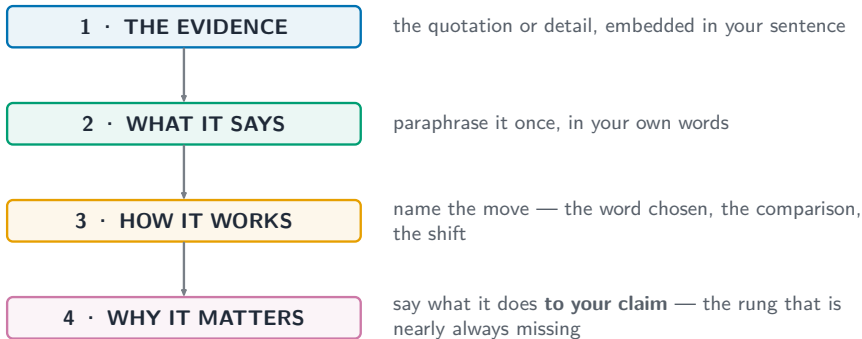
For your own essays, the useful discipline is to decide the **order of your claims before writing any of them**. An essay whose paragraphs could be shuffled without loss has no line of reasoning – it has a list.

Test a draft by asking of each paragraph: *why does this come after the one before it?* If the only answer is "it is another thing I know about the topic", the structure is a list and the reasoning point is at risk.

Commentary, in four rungs

- Developing through **narration** : writers offer details about **real-life experiences** and **reflections** on them.
- Developing through **cause-effect** : writers **present a cause, then assert the effects or consequences** of that cause - or begin from an effect and trace it back.

Commentary, in four rungs, in detail



Developing through **cause-effect** : writers **present a cause, then assert the effects or consequences** of that cause - or begin from an effect and trace it back.



Recognizing Methods of Development

- Developing through **narration** : writers offer details about **real-life experiences** and **reflections** on them. The reflection is what makes narration an argument rather than a story – an anecdote with no reflection has supplied no reasoning.
- Developing through **cause-effect** : writers **present a cause, then assert the effects or consequences** of that cause – or begin from an effect and trace it back.



Using Methods of Development

Choosing a method is a rhetorical decision, not a stylistic one. Narration works when the audience needs to *feel* the situation before they will accept a claim about it.

Cause-effect works when the audience already accepts the facts but not the connection between them.

Worked example – integrating two sources

On a Question 1 synthesis prompt, compare two paragraphs built from the same two sources.

- **Low-scoring:** *“Source A says X. Source C says Y. Both discuss the issue.”*
- **Scoring:** *“The strongest objection to the proposal is not that it fails but that it succeeds too narrowly: Source A’s data show the intended outcome improving, while Source C’s account of the same programme records the second-order costs that the measurement in Source A was never designed to capture.”*

Summary in sequence is not synthesis. The sources must be **integrated into the writer’s own claim**, with commentary establishing the relationship between them.

Exam tips

- Commentary has **two jobs**: introducing evidence into the reasoning, and explaining the relationship afterwards. Write both sentences.
- **Synthesis means integration**, not summary in sequence. A paragraph per source is the classic low-scoring shape.
- To find a writer's line of reasoning, **summarise each paragraph in one sentence** and read the list.
- Ask of your own paragraphs: *why does this one follow that one?* No answer means no line of reasoning.
- **Narration needs reflection**. An anecdote without it has told a story, not made an argument.
- Choose a method of development for a **rhetorical** reason and be able to say what it is.



Unit 3 – key takeaways

1

Commentary

introduce the evidence, then
explain the relationship

2

Synthesis

integration, not a paragraph per
source

3

Line of reasoning

one-sentence summaries, then
read the list

4

Narration

needs reflection or it is only a
story

Check yourself

- 1 What two jobs does commentary have?
- 2 What is the classic low-scoring synthesis shape?
- 3 How do you find a writer's line of reasoning?
- 4 What does narration need?

Answers: introduce and explain ▪ a paragraph per source ▪ summarise each paragraph ▪ reflection