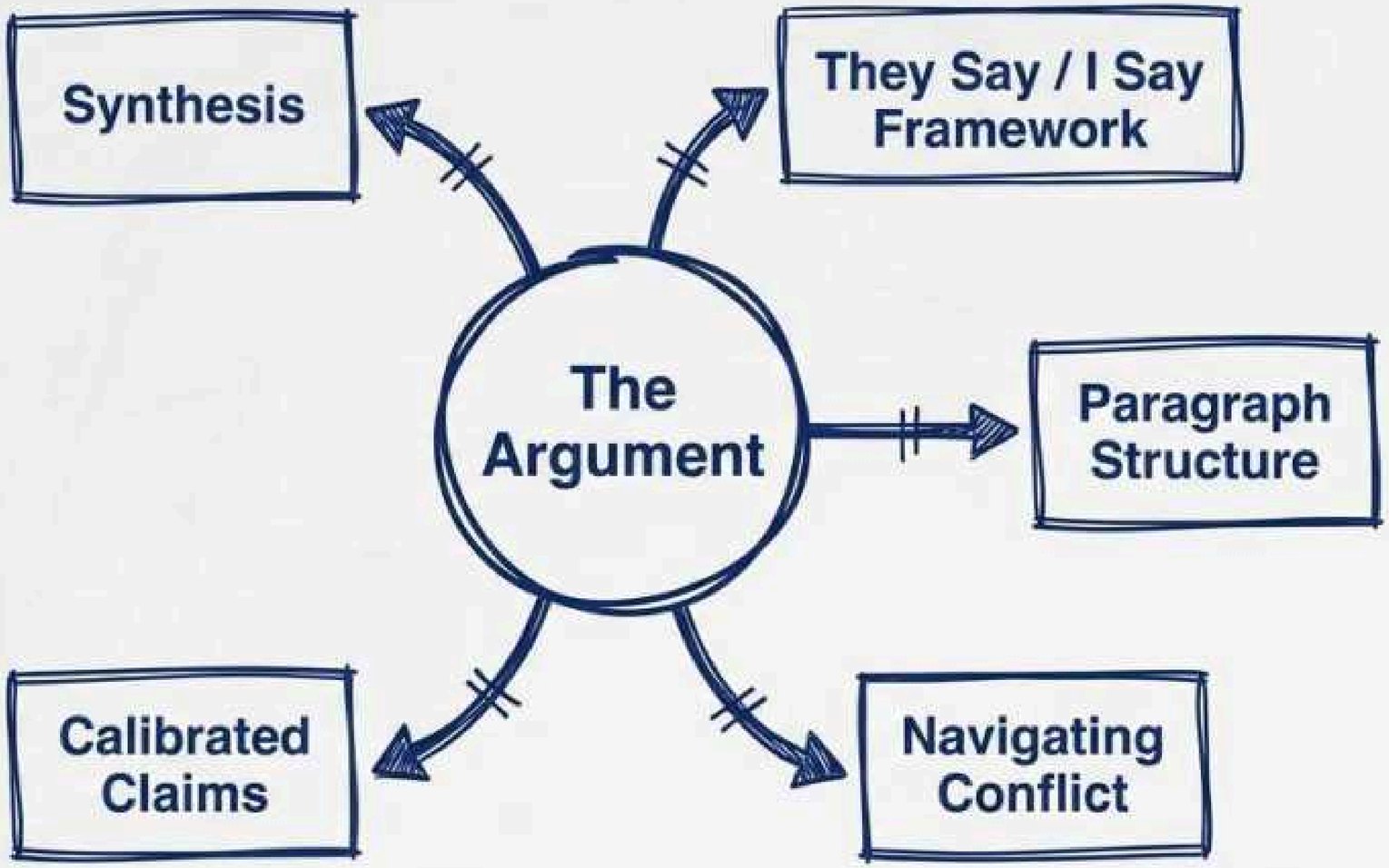
¶ 5.1

Building the Research Argument

At a glance — moving from source notes to a structurally sound paper.



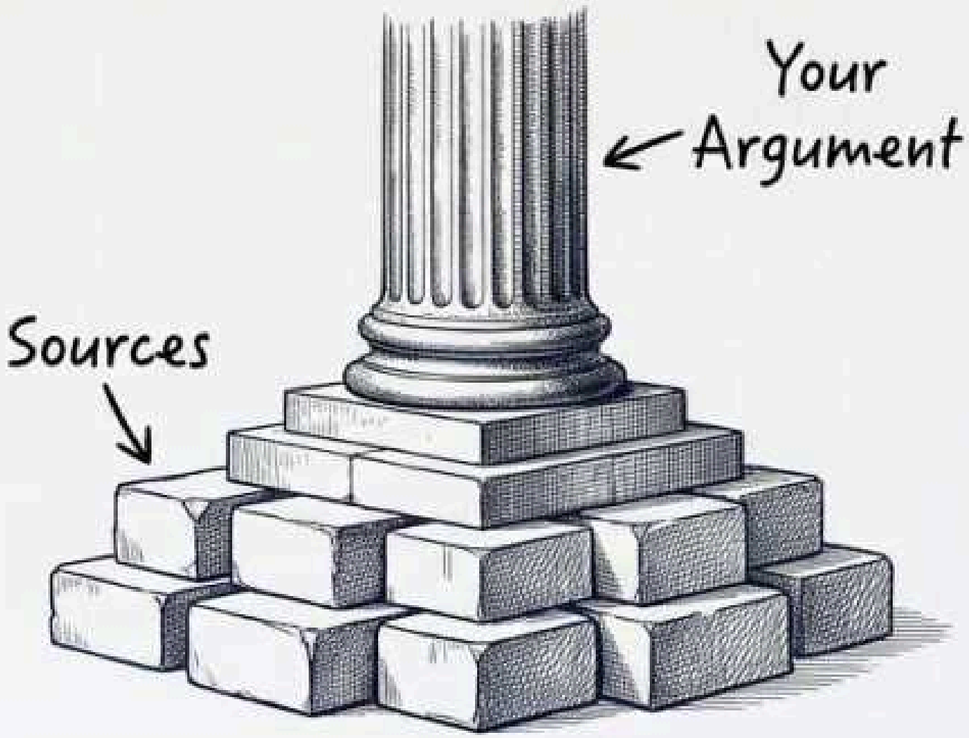
An Argument is Supported by Sources, Not a Report of Them

You have a question, sources, and notes. The typical mistake is to report what each source says, one after another. **A research paper is your argument**, supported by **their work.**

The Book Report

Source 1
+
Source 2
+
Source 3

The Argument

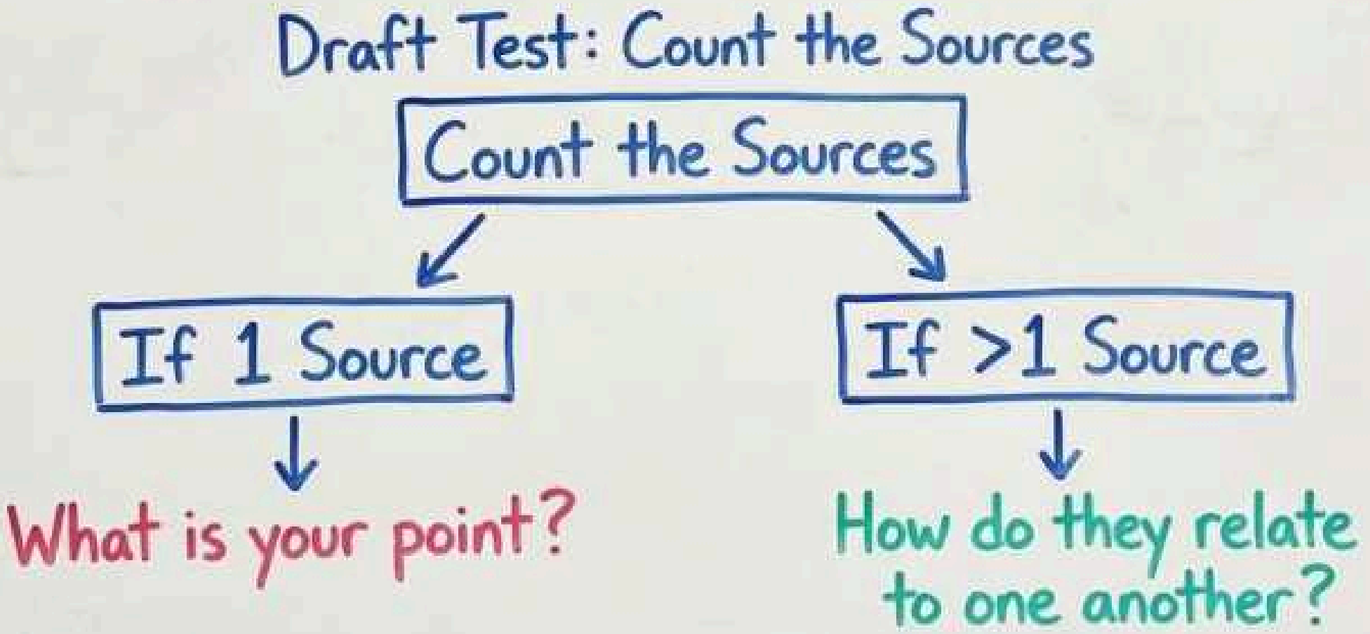


The Mathematics of Synthesis vs. Summary

Summary tells the reader what one source says. Synthesis brings several sources together to show something no single one shows by itself: a pattern, disagreement, gap, or better answer.

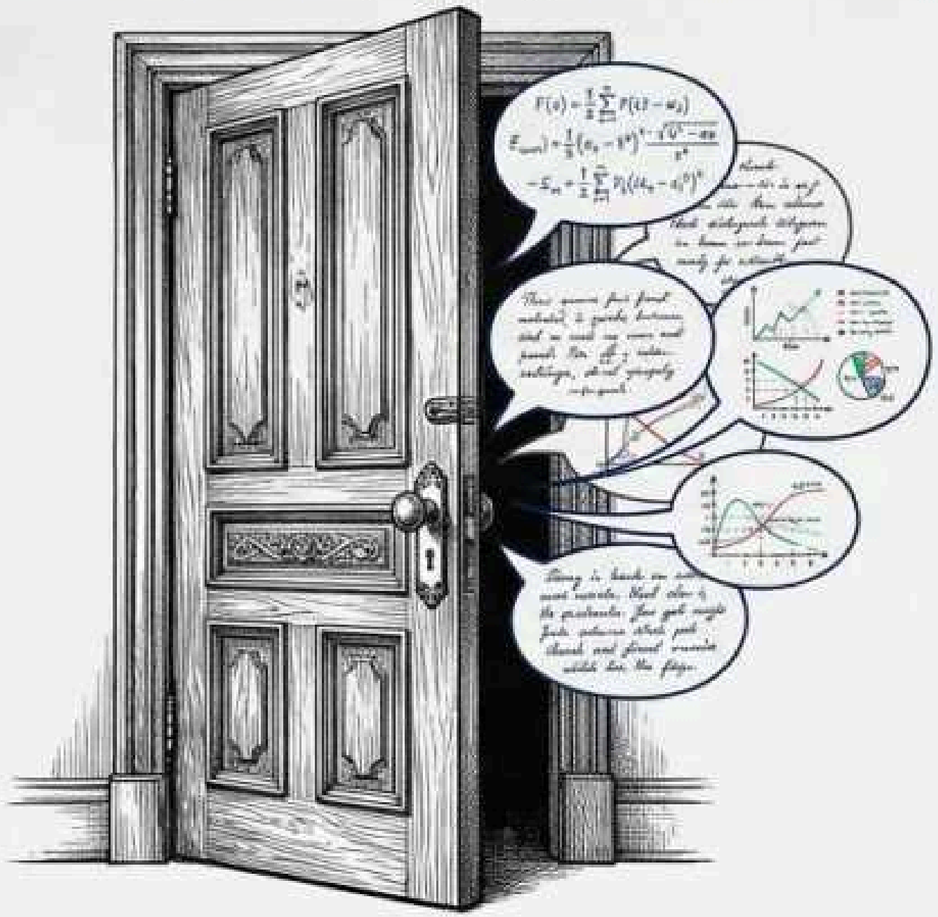
Summary = 1 Node

Synthesis = f(Source A ∩ Source B ∩ Source C) → New Pattern/Gap/Disagreement



Scholarship Operates as a Continuous Conversation

Following Kenneth Burke's parlor metaphor & Graff and Birkenstein's "They Say, I Say"



Pre-existing discussion

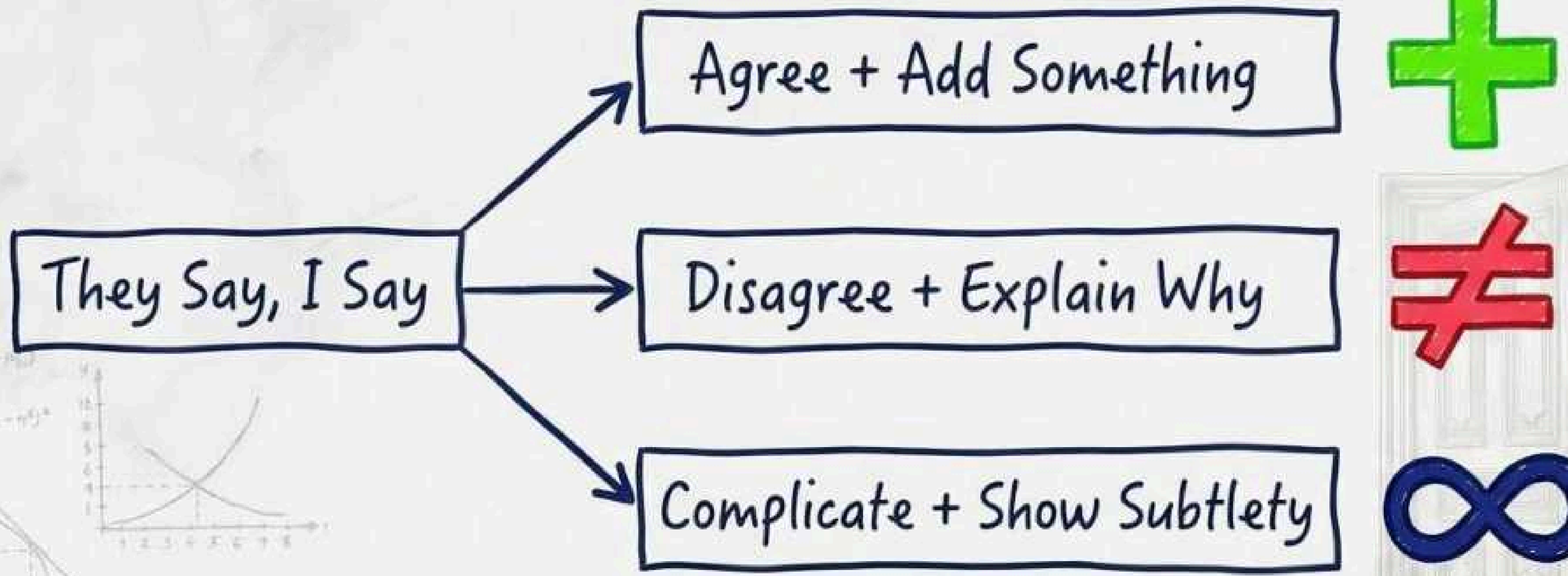
You listen & understand

You enter and add your voice here

¶ 5.5

Three Valid Paths to Enter the Conversation

First, say what others have said. Then, say what you think in response.
All three branches are real contributions.



Isolate the Variables to Find Patterns in the Matrix

Where do most sources agree? Where do they split, and why?
Name the pattern in a single sentence: Most find X, but a few find Y, because they measured something different.

	Finding	Method	Context
Source A			
Source B			
Source C			

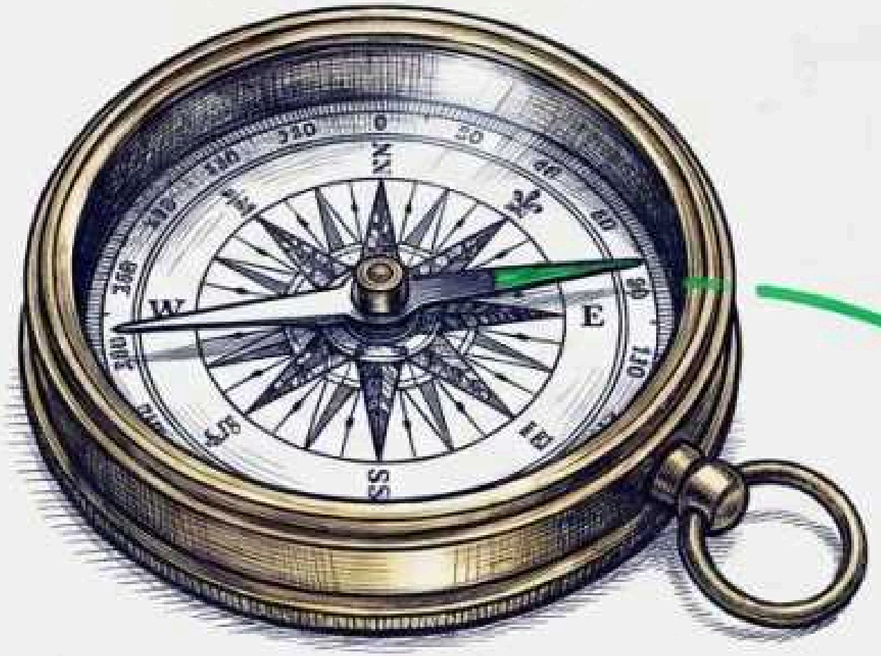
Divergence Variables

- Δ Definitions
- Δ Data
- Δ Time Periods

¶5.7

Follow the Evidence to a Specific, Arguable Position

Do not be afraid to change your mind in public. A paper that says, "At first I expected this, but the evidence showed that," can be very persuasive. Follow the evidence. That is what research is for.



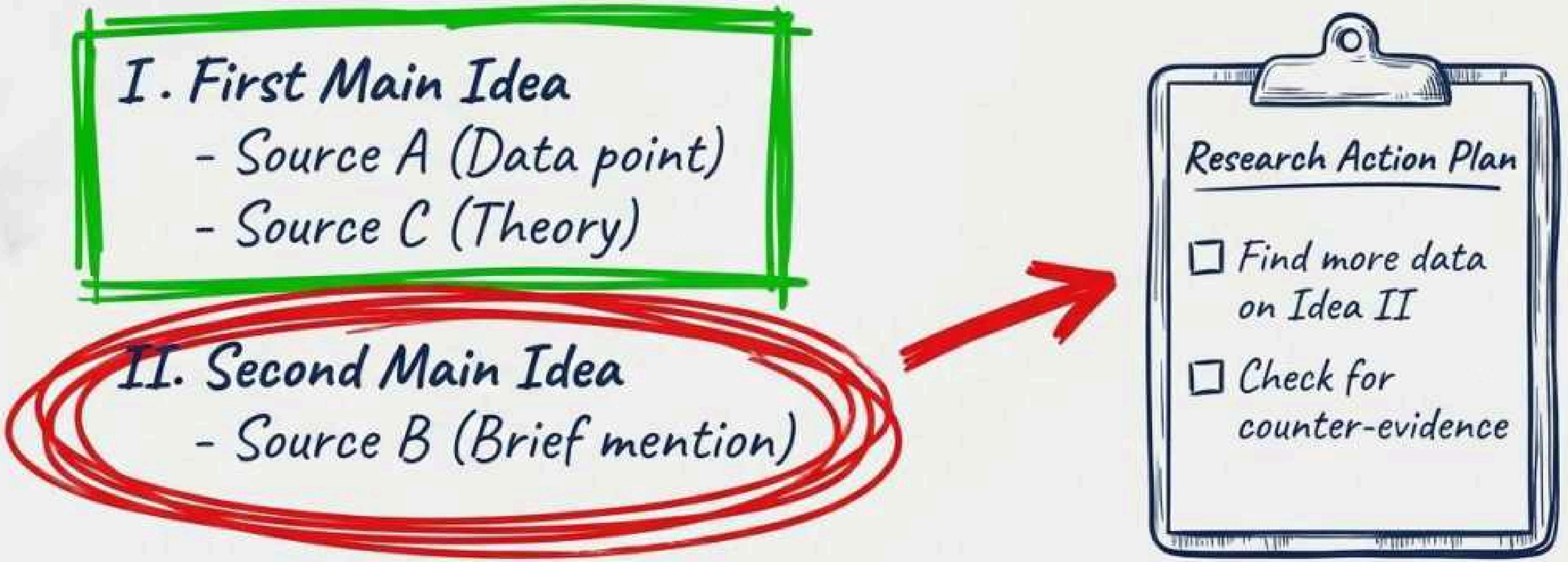
Working Thesis / Initial Guess

Evidence Pressure

Actual Position / Specific & Arguable

Architect the Paper by Ideas, Not by Sources

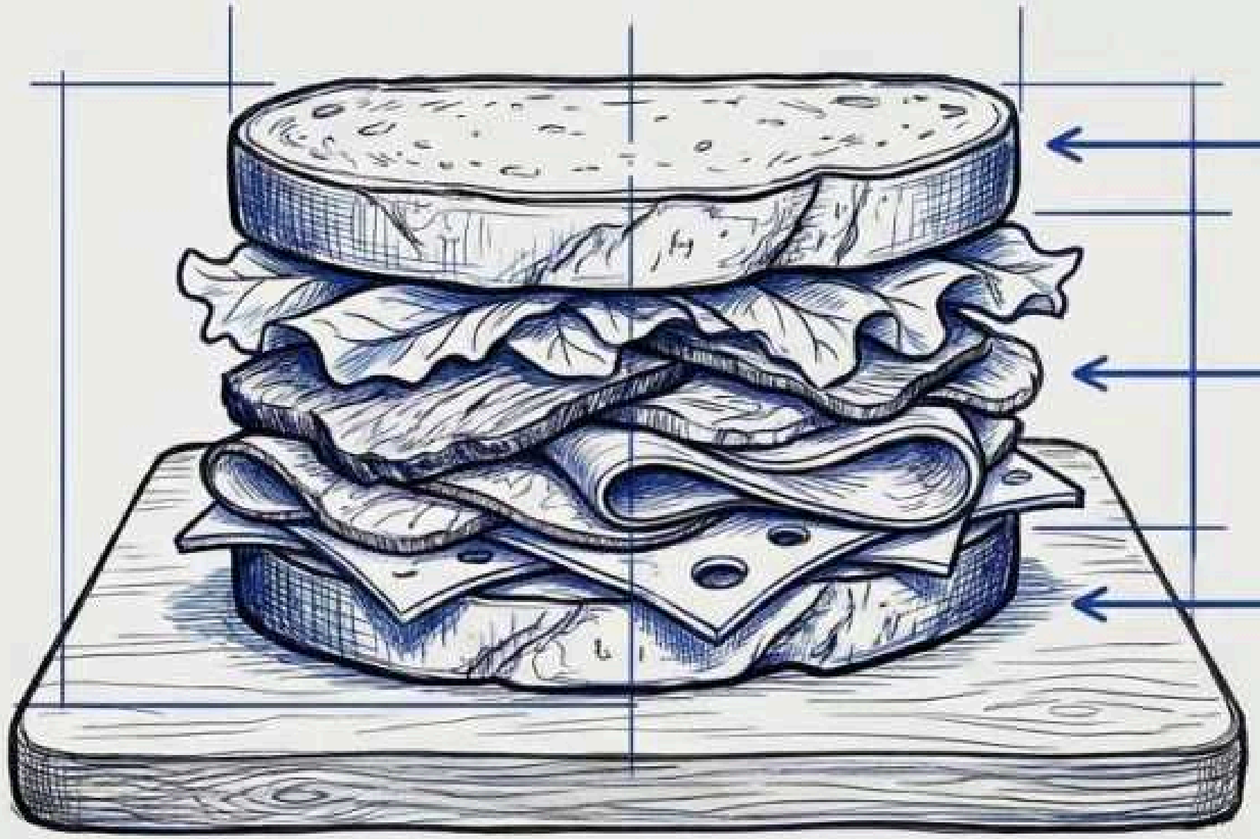
Write down main points in logical order. List sources bearing on each. The outline instantly reveals where's *where support is strong (green)* and *where* it is *thin (red)*.



¶ 5.9

The Paragraph Sandwich Anchors Your Voice

Build each body paragraph around a claim of your own. The sandwich ensures your voice structurally contains the source material.



One Body Paragraph

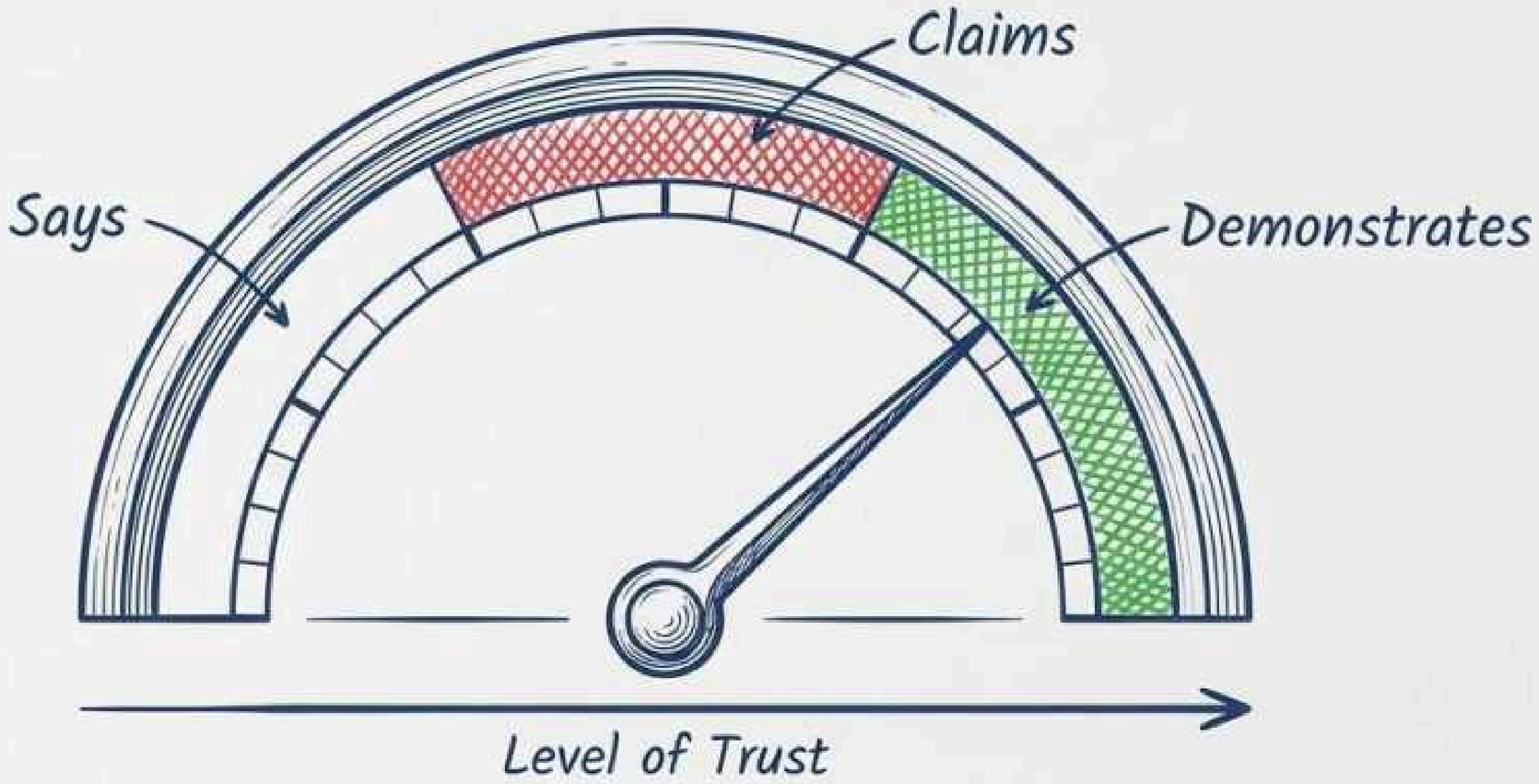
Topic sentence / Your framing claim

Source evidence (introduced and explained)

Explanation of what this means for your thesis

Calibrate Your Signal Verbs to Indicate Trust

Introduce every source with a signal phrase naming the author and why to listen. The verb quietly tells the reader how much you trust the source. Vary your phrasing —sometimes lead with the idea, putting the author in the middle of the sentence.



¶ 5.11

Quotes Never Speak for Themselves

Readers need to be told what to notice. If your paragraph is mostly quotations from other people, your own voice has gone missing.

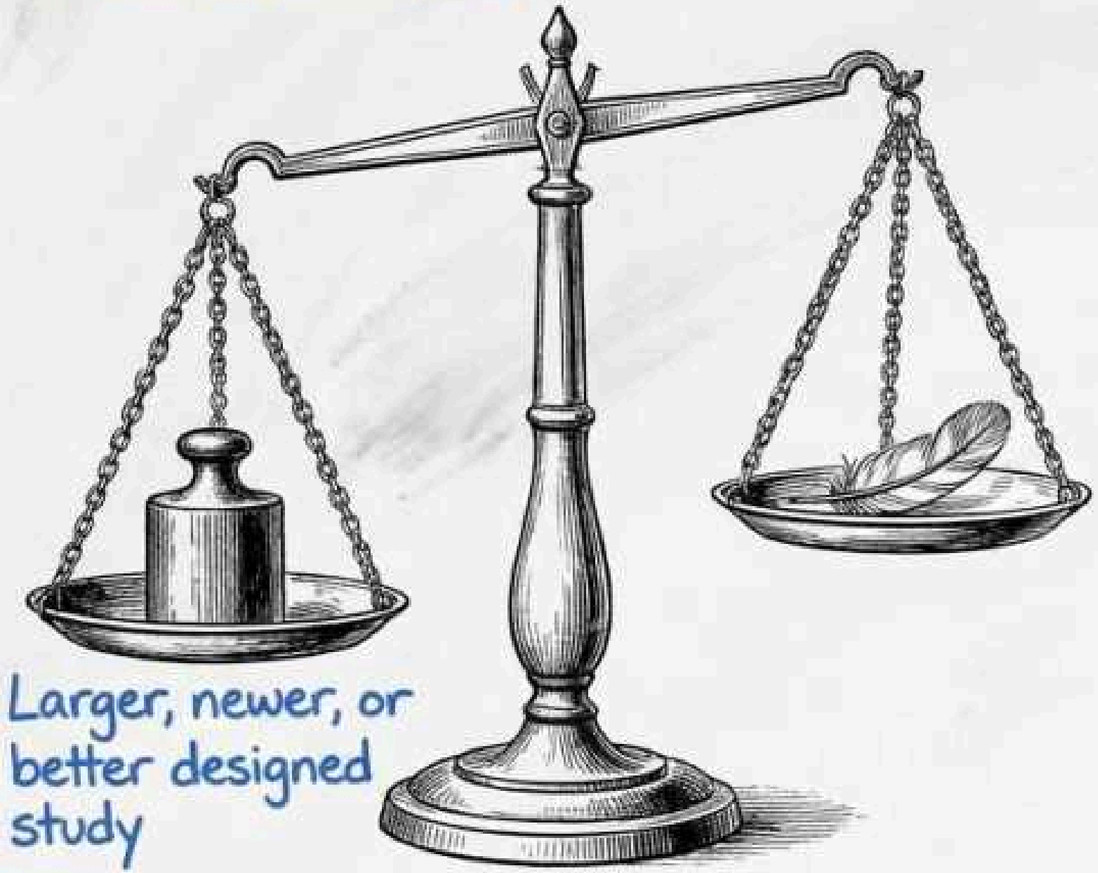


Quotation + (What it shows + Connection to your point) = Writer's Voice

¶ 5.12

Weigh Conflicting Evidence in the Open

Do **not quietly pick the sources you like**. Readers **respect writers who show the hard parts**. Say they disagree, explain why, and state which side is more convincing. Weighing evidence openly shows how you reached your view.

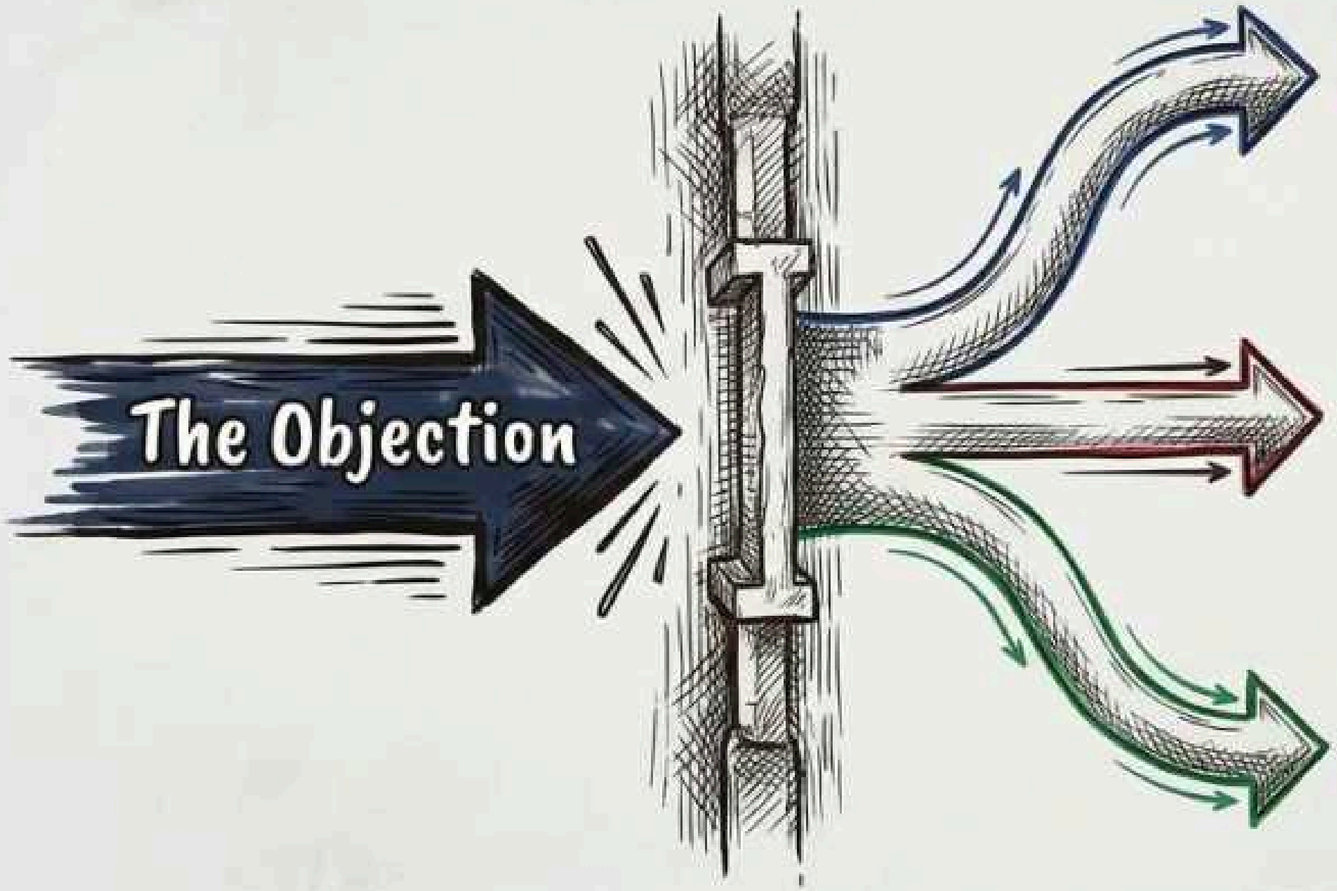




¶ 5.13

Three Defensive Maneuvers for Serious Objections

Answer it with evidence. The best objection to raise is the one that worries you most. A reader will think of it anyway; answering it first gains trust.



Concede

Acknowledge it, but show it matters less than it seems.

Dismantle

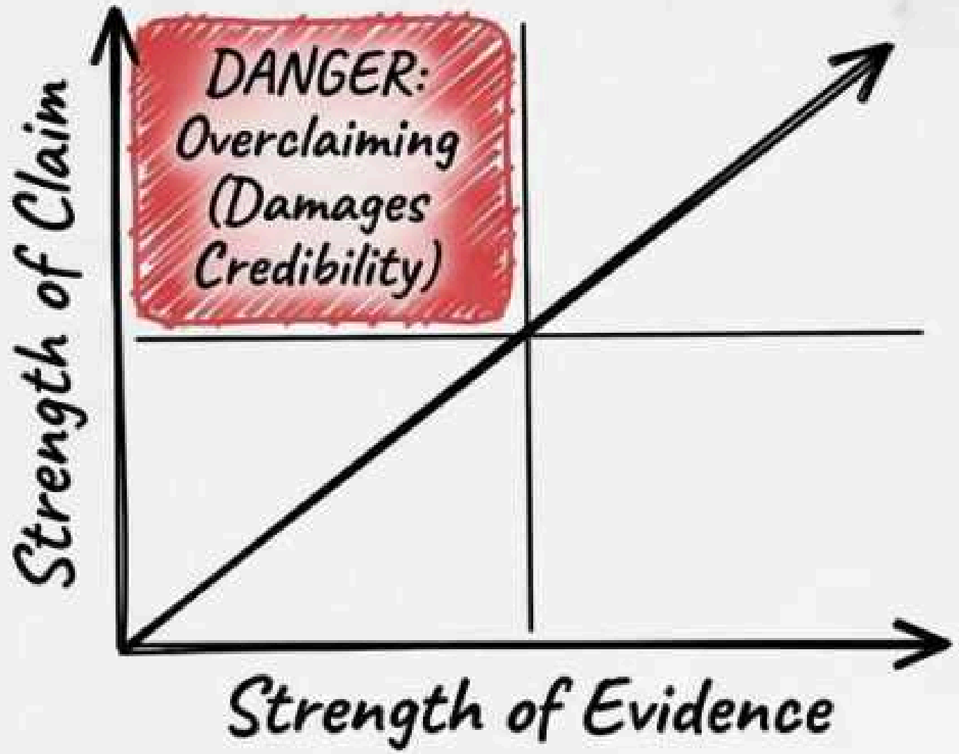
Show the objection rests on weak data.

Adjust

Modify the thesis so it survives the objection.

Match Claim Certainty to Evidence Strength

*Evidence rarely proves a claim beyond all doubt. Words like **suggests**, **indicates**, and **is likely to** are not weakness. They are **precision**.*



This proves that screens harm sleep.

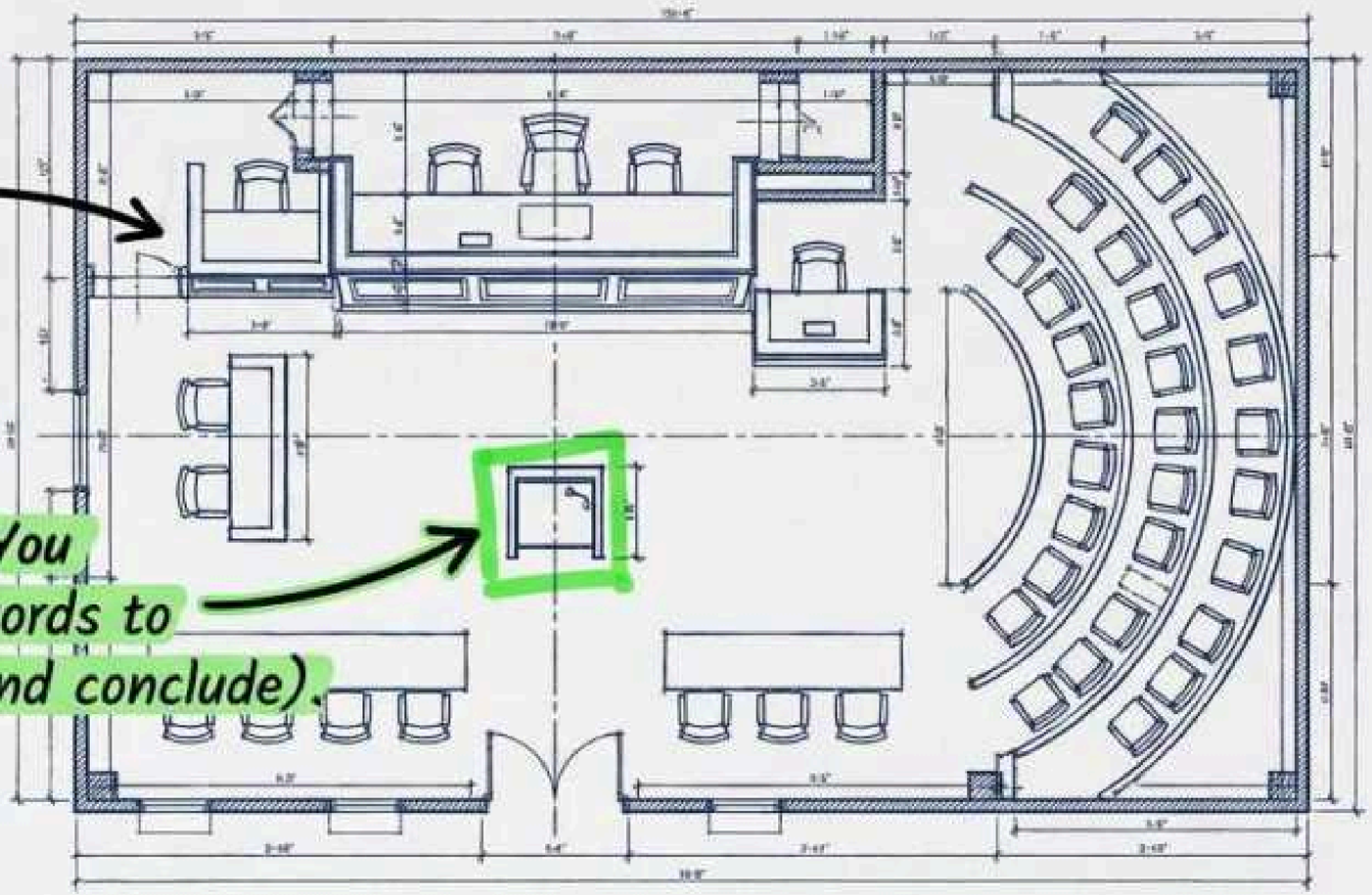
This **suggests** heavy evening screen use is linked to poorer sleep. ✓

You Are the Lawyer; The Sources Are Your Witnesses

Keep your own voice and judgment. A paper where every sentence cites someone is not stronger. The reader came for your argument. You are the one making the case.

Witness Box: Sources (Cited for evidence and borrowed ideas).

Lawyer's Podium: You (Using your own words to connect, explain, and conclude).



¶ 5.16

Honesty About Limits Marks a Careful Thinker

Admitting limits does not weaken the paper. A final section that points to the next question is a mark of a mature piece of research.



- [x] What the evidence does not show.
- [x] Which questions remain open.
- [x] Where future research is needed.

¶ 5.17

Lecture 5 Assignment: The Synthesis Paragraph

Input: 3 Sources.
Output: 1 Synthesized Paragraph.

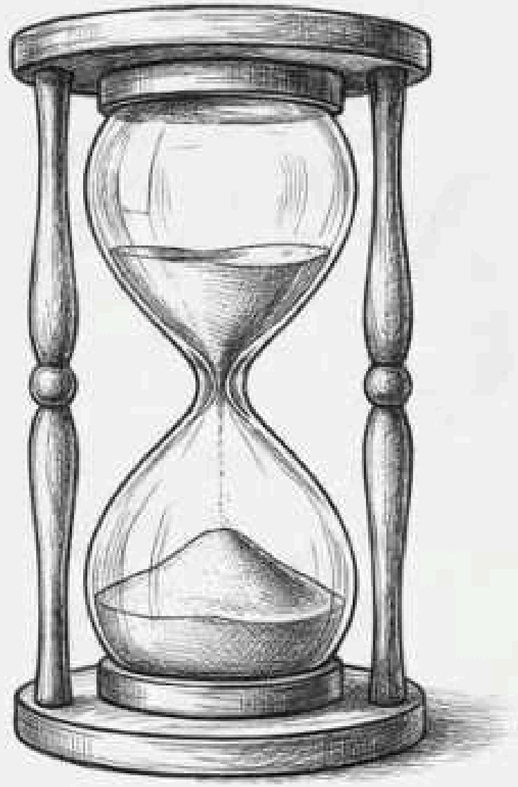
Requirements:
✓ Make a point of your own.
- Use ≥ 2 sources as evidence.
- Explicitly state how they agree or differ.

Prompt: How does this paragraph differ from a summary of the three?

¶ 5.18

Looking Ahead: The Final Polish

In lecture six, the final lecture, we turn the argument into a finished paper, with citations, and then into a presentation.



The Argument (Lecture 5) → Finished Paper + Citations → The Presentation (Lecture 6)