

Here are three things to note when reconstructing arguments:

1. Sometimes you need to fill in premises that the author hasn't explicitly stated in order to reconstruct their argument. It may require some creativity on your part to figure out the missing premises:

For example, suppose your text reads: "Even white lies are lies and therefore wrong."

The following is not a very good reconstruction of the argument:

- A. White lies are lies.
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- B. White lies are wrong.

The following is a better reconstruction of the argument:

- A. White lies are lies.
- B. All lies are wrong.
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- C. White lies are wrong.

2. Sometimes a passage will contain a sub-conclusion on the way to the main conclusion.

For example, suppose your text reads: "He won't be home, so he won't be able to water the flowers and they'll die."

This would best be rendered:

- A. He won't be home.
- B. If he won't be home, he won't be able to water the flowers.
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- C. He won't be able to water the flowers.
- D. If he won't be able to water the flowers, the flowers will die.

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- E. The flowers will die.

3. Sometimes the text will contain a bunch of extraneous information, or keep using different words. Try to get rid of the extraneous information, and to rephrase so the wording is consistent.

For example, suppose your text reads: "A fact that many know but few think about is that a pig is smarter than a dog. So if we're to eat animals based on intelligence -- as indeed we should -- we should not eat pigs but rather dogs, the former, as we noted, being brainier and thus not as appropriate a meal."

The following is not a very good reconstruction:

- A. A fact that few think about is that a pig is smarter than a dog.
- B. We should judge moral worth by intelligence.
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- C. We should not eat pigs but rather dogs because the former are brainier than the latter.

The following is a better reconstruction:

- A. Dogs are less intelligent than pigs.
- B. It is better to eat less intelligent animals than to eat more intelligent animals.
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- C. It is better to eat dogs than pigs.

Here are some examples of arguments for you to reconstruct:

1. "... any student who says Notre Dame football didn't weigh heavily in their college decision is a liar. When you take football away, you're left with a really snowy (like in a bad way, not a romantic way) Catholic school with a big gold dome in the middle of Nowhere, Indiana." Parker Milender "Life lessons from the class of 2011" *Observer* August 30, 2015.

2. "At the end of the day, Notre Dame is not about the buildings or campus landmarks. They do play a role in bringing our community together, but if they no longer existed, Notre Dame still would. ... Notre Dame is about the students" Catherine Owers "Students are ND" *ND Observer* September 3, 2015.

Bonus Questions

1. “It is indeed an opinion strangely prevailing amongst men, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects, have an existence, natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding. But, with how great an assurance and acquiescence soever this principle may be entertained in the world, yet whoever shall find in his heart to call it in question may, if I mistake not, perceive it to involve a manifest contradiction. For, what are the fore-mentioned objects but the things we perceive by sense? and what do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations?” — George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*

2. “Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.” — Aristotle, *Politics*