

General and Specific Exercise

In order to write compelling papers, you must be able to balance **general claims** and **specific evidence**. I find that most students more easily handle the former than the latter.

Compare these two statements:

- In our society today women are oppressed.
- Although one could argue, along with the attractive Virginia Slims cigarette advertisements, that we have “come a long way, baby,” women in the United States in the third millennium still face glass ceilings, lower wages, and significantly higher rates of poverty than men. One in three women, by many estimates, will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime, perhaps, in part, as a result of the absolutely omnipresent portrayal of women as decorative embodiments of an unattainable female ideal and as objects of the male gaze, particularly in pornography.

Aim, of course, for the latter. It is very easy to overgeneralize. Ground yourself in specifics; unify these specifics into a coherent argument.

Try a few for practice:

(1) That’s a cool car.

(2) Lethal injection can be a bad way to die.

(3) Marijuana helps cancer patients.