

- concessions (*admittedly*);
- refutations (*on the other hand*);
- conclusions (*therefore*);
- reasons (*first, finally*).

Transitions may be useful in a forecasting statement, as in the preceding example, or in the *topic sentence* of a paragraph or group of paragraphs, as in the following examples from Solove's position argument:

To learn more about using cues, see Chapter 13.

One such harm, for example, . . . Another potential problem with . . . is. . . A related problem involves. . . Yet another problem. . . (pars. 11–14)

Readings

To learn more about how Jessica Statsky developed her response to readers' likely objections, see *A Writer at Work* on pp. 278–80. If you could have given Statsky advice in a peer review of her drafts, what objections would you have advised her to respond to, and how do you think she could have responded?

Jessica Statsky

Children Need to Play, Not Compete

THIS ESSAY by Jessica Statsky about children's competitive sports was written for a college composition course. When you were a child, you may have had experience playing competitive sports, in or out of school, for example in Peewee Football, Little League Baseball, American Youth Soccer, or some other organization. Or you may have had relatives or friends who were deeply involved in sports.

As you read, consider the following:

- In your experience and observation, was winning unduly emphasized or was more value placed on having a good time, learning to get along with others, developing athletic skills, or something else altogether?
- The questions in the margin: Your instructor may ask you to post your answers to a class blog or discussion board or to bring them to class.

Basic Features

A Focused,
Well-Presented Issue

A Well-Supported Position

An Effective Response
to Opposing Views

A Clear, Logical
Organization

- 1 "Organized sports for young people have become an institution in North America," reports sports journalist Steve Silverman, attracting more than 44 million youngsters according to a recent survey by the National Council of Youth Sports ("History"). Though many adults regard Little League Baseball and Peewee Football as a basic part of childhood, the games are not always joyous ones. When overzealous parents and coaches impose adult standards on children's sports, the result can be activities that are neither satisfying nor beneficial to children.

2 I am concerned about all organized sports activities for children between the ages of six and twelve. The damage I see results from noncontact as well as contact sports, from sports organized locally as well as those organized nationally. Highly organized competitive sports such as Peewee Football and Little League Baseball are too often played to adult standards, which are developmentally inappropriate for children and can be both physically and psychologically harmful. Furthermore, because they eliminate many children from organized sports before they are ready to compete, they are actually counterproductive for developing either future players or fans. Finally, because they emphasize competition and winning, they unfortunately provide occasions for some parents and coaches to place their own fantasies and needs ahead of children's welfare.

3 One readily understandable danger of overly competitive sports is that they entice children into physical actions that are bad for growing bodies. "There is a growing epidemic of preventable youth sports injuries," according to the STOP Sports Injuries campaign ("Youth Sports"). "Among athletes ages 5 to 14, 28 percent of football players, 25 percent of baseball players, 22 percent of soccer players, 15 percent of basketball players, and 12 percent of softball players were injured while playing their respective sports." Although the official Little League Web site acknowledges that children do risk injury playing baseball, it insists that "severe injuries . . . are infrequent," the risk "far less than the risk of riding a skateboard, a bicycle, or even the school bus" ("What about My Child?"). Nevertheless, Leonard Koppett in *Sports Illusion, Sports Reality* claims that a twelve-year-old trying to throw a curve ball, for example, may put abnormal strain on developing arm and shoulder muscles, sometimes resulting in lifelong injuries (294). Contact sports like football can be even more hazardous. Thomas Tutko, a psychology professor at San Jose State University and coauthor of the book *Winning Is Everything and Other American Myths*, writes:

I am strongly opposed to young kids playing tackle football. It is not the right stage of development for them to be taught to crash into other kids. Kids under the age of fourteen are not by nature physical. Their main concern is self-preservation. They don't want to meet head on and slam into each other. But tackle football absolutely requires that they try to hit each other as hard as they can. And it is too traumatic for young kids. (qtd. in Tosches A1)

How does Statsky present the issue in a way that prepares readers for her argument?

How does she qualify her position in par. 2?

What reasons does she forecast here, and in which paragraphs does she discuss each reason? Do her reasons appeal primarily to readers' intellect (logos), to their sense of fairness and what's credible (ethos), or to their feelings (pathos)?

How does Statsky try to establish the credibility of her sources in pars. 3–5 (ethos)?

Why do you think she uses block quotations instead of integrating these quotes into her own sentences?

How does Statsky try to refute this objection?

As Tutko indicates, even when children are not injured, fear of being hurt detracts from their enjoyment of the sport. The Little League Web site ranks fear of injury as the seventh of seven reasons children quit (“What about My Child?”). One mother of an eight-year-old Peewee Football player explained, “The kids get so scared. They get hit once and they don’t want anything to do with football anymore. They’ll sit on the bench and pretend their leg hurts...” (qtd. in Tosches A1). Some children are driven to even more desperate measures. For example, in one Peewee Football game, a reporter watched the following scene as a player took himself out of the game:

“Coach, my tummy hurts. I can’t play,” he said. The coach told the player to get back onto the field. “There’s nothing wrong with your stomach,” he said. When the coach turned his head the seven-year-old stuck a finger down his throat and made himself vomit. When the coach turned back, the boy pointed to the ground and told him, “Yes there is, coach. See?” (Tosches A33)

Besides physical hazards and anxieties, competitive sports pose psychological dangers for children. Martin Rablovsky, a former sports editor for the *New York Times*, says that in all his years of watching young children play organized sports, he has noticed very few of them smiling. “I’ve seen children enjoying a spontaneous pre-practice scrimmage become somber and serious when the coach’s whistle blows,” Rablovsky says. “The spirit of play suddenly disappears, and sport becomes joblike” (qtd. in Coakley 94). The primary goal of a professional athlete — winning — is not appropriate for children. Their goals should be having fun, learning, and being with friends. Although winning does add to the fun, too many adults lose sight of what matters and make winning the most important goal. Several studies have shown that when children are asked whether they would rather be warming the bench on a winning team or playing regularly on a losing team, about 90 percent choose the latter (Smith, Smith, and Smoll 11).

Winning and losing may be an inevitable part of adult life, but they should not be part of childhood. Too much competition too early in life can affect a child’s development. Children are easily influenced, and when they sense that their competence and worth are based on their ability to live up to their parents’ and coaches’ high expectations — and on their ability to win — they can become discouraged and depressed. Little League advises parents to “keep winning in perspective” (“Your

Role”), noting that the most common reasons children give for quitting, aside from change in interest, are lack of playing time, failure and fear of failure, disapproval by significant others, and psychological stress (“What about My Child?”). According to Dr. Glyn C. Roberts, a professor of kinesiology at the Institute of Child Behavior and Development at the University of Illinois, 80 to 90 percent of children who play competitive sports at a young age drop out by sixteen (Kutner).

This statistic illustrates another reason I oppose competitive sports for children: because they are so highly selective, very few children get to participate. Far too soon, a few children are singled out for their athletic promise, while many others, who may be on the verge of developing the necessary strength and ability, are screened out and discouraged from trying out again. Like adults, children fear failure, and so even those with good physical skills may stay away because they lack self-confidence. Consequently, teams lose many promising players who with some encouragement and experience might have become stars. The problem is that many parent-sponsored, out-of-school programs give more importance to having a winning team than to developing children’s physical skills and self-esteem.

Indeed, it is no secret that too often scorekeeping, league standings, and the drive to win bring out the worst in adults who are more absorbed in living out their own fantasies than in enhancing the quality of the experience for children (Smith, Smith, and Smoll 9). Recent newspaper articles on children’s sports contain plenty of horror stories. *Los Angeles Times* reporter Rich Tosches, for example, tells the story of a brawl among seventy-five parents following a Pee wee Football game (A33). As a result of the brawl, which began when a parent from one team confronted a player from the other team, the teams are now thinking of hiring security guards for future games. Another example is provided by a *Los Angeles Times* editorial about a Little League manager who intimidated the opposing team by setting fire to one of their team’s jerseys on the pitcher’s mound before the game began. As the editorial writer commented, the manager showed his young team that “intimidation could substitute for playing well” (“The Bad News”).

Although not all parents or coaches behave so inappropriately, the seriousness of the problem is illustrated by the fact that Adelphi University in Garden City, New York, offers a sports psychology workshop for Little League coaches, designed to

How effective do you think Statsky’s argument in par. 7 is? Why?

In criticizing some parents’ behavior in pars. 8–9, Statsky risks alienating her readers. How effective is this part of her argument?

How effective is Statsky's use of concession and refutation here?

10

balance their “animal instincts” with “educational theory” in hopes of reducing the “screaming and hollering,” in the words of Harold Weisman, manager of sixteen Little Leagues in New York City (Schmitt). In a three-and-one-half-hour Sunday morning workshop, coaches learn how to make practices more fun, treat injuries, deal with irate parents, and be “more sensitive to their young players’ fears, emotional frailties, and need for recognition.” Little League is to be credited with recognizing the need for such workshops.

Some parents would no doubt argue that children cannot start too soon preparing to live in a competitive free-market economy. After all, secondary schools and colleges require students to compete for grades, and college admission is extremely competitive. And it is perfectly obvious how important competitive skills are in finding a job. Yet the ability to cooperate is also important for success in life. Before children are psychologically ready for competition, maybe we should emphasize cooperation and individual performance in team sports rather than winning.

11

Many people are ready for such an emphasis. In 1988, one New York Little League official who had attended the Adelphi workshop tried to ban scoring from six- to eight-year-olds’ games — but parents wouldn’t support him (Schmitt). An innovative children’s sports program in New York City, City Sports for Kids, emphasizes fitness, self-esteem, and sportsmanship. In this program’s basketball games, every member on a team plays at least two of six eight-minute periods. The basket is seven feet from the floor, rather than ten feet, and a player can score a point just by hitting the rim (Bloch). I believe this kind of local program should replace overly competitive programs like Pee wee Football and Little League Baseball. As one coach explains, significant improvements can result from a few simple rule changes, such as including every player in the batting order and giving every player, regardless of age or ability, the opportunity to play at least four innings a game (Frank).

How effectively does Statsky conclude her argument?

12

Some children *want* to play competitive sports; they are not being forced to play. These children are eager to learn skills, to enjoy the camaraderie of the team, and earn self-respect by trying hard to benefit their team. I acknowledge that some children may benefit from playing competitive sports. While some children do benefit from these programs, however, many more would benefit from programs that avoid the excesses and dangers of many competitive sports programs and instead emphasize fitness, cooperation, sportsmanship, and individual performance.

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Are Statsky's sources adequate to support her position, in number and kind? Has she documented them clearly and accurately?