

## Craft of Research (CoR): Chapter 10 – Acknowledgements and Responses

The 10 salient sentence strings presented below are lifted from the chapter as is, without modification (except, perhaps, for a bit of punctuation here or there). They are presented in order of appearance in the chapter.

1. When planning and drafting your argument, you may freeze up if you try from the outset to imagine every possible reaction to it. Therefore, focus first on what you yourself want to say, on the claims, reasons, and evidence that make up your argument's core. Once you have that core, try to imagine readers' responses to it.
2. Readers can be particularly skeptical when they have a stake in a solution that differs from yours. So if you feel your evidence is less than unassailable, you may want to admit its limitations candidly, before readers reject your argument because you overstated it.
3. You can then address at least the most important objections that you can imagine them raising. Show readers that you put your argument through your own wringer before they put it through theirs.
4. When you recognize your own argument's limitations, you build credibility by showing readers that you are making an honest case and dealing with them fairly. But that's just a defensive move. You will seem even more credible if you show not just that you understand the strengths and limitations of your own argument, but that you also understand and have thought about the alternatives to it.
5. You can think of your secondary sources as a written record of the conversation about your topic, question, or problem. Knowing that conversation allows you to contribute to it. When you read your sources, note where they advance claims different from yours, take different approaches, focus on different aspects of the problem, and so on. Note especially where— and why—you and your sources disagree.
6. You can respond not only to your sources' claims but also to their evidence. If you find a source's evidence unreliable or irrelevant, don't simply ignore it. If your readers might take it seriously, you can acknowledge it but explain why you didn't use it.

7. If you can imagine just a few of the questions, alternatives, and objections that your readers might have, you'll face a Goldilocks moment: acknowledge too many and you distract readers from the core of your argument; acknowledge too few and you seem indifferent to or even ignorant of their views. You need to figure out how many acknowledgments will feel "just right."
8. If you discover a flaw in your argument that you cannot fix or explain away, try to redefine your problem or rebuild your argument to avoid it. But if you cannot, you face a tough decision. You could just ignore the flaw and hope your readers don't notice it. But that's dishonest. If they do notice it, they will doubt your competence, and if they think you tried to hide it, they will question your honesty.
9. Others can think of views to acknowledge, but fear that if they do, they weaken their argument. In fact, most readers think that such acknowledgments enhance a writer's credibility. Writers also shy away from acknowledging and responding to objections and alternatives because they don't know how to do those things in writing, on the page or screen.
10. When you want to acknowledge and respond to an objection or alternative, you have to decide how much credence to give it: options range from just mentioning an objection and dismissing it to addressing it at length.