

## Craft of Research (CoR): Chapter 6 – Engaging Sources

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. Nothing is more frustrating than having the perfect quotation or bit of data in your notes and being unable to use it in your writing, because you didn't completely document your source and can't find it again.
2. Experienced researchers don't read passively; they engage their sources actively, entering into conversation with them.
3. Then, if your source seems important or seems to challenge your own position, read it a second time slowly and more critically. When you read a passage, think not only about what it says but about how you would respond.
4. Don't accept a claim just because an authority asserts it.
5. When some students hear experts disagree, they become cynical and dismiss expert knowledge as just opinion. But don't mistake informed and thoughtful debate over legitimately contested issues for mere opinion.
6. Look for claims that seem puzzling, inaccurate, or simplistic—anything you can disagree with. You're more likely to find a research problem when you disagree with a source, but you can also find one in sources you agree with.
7. When you acknowledge the views of others, you show that you not only know those views, but have carefully considered and can confidently respond to them.
8. You can't record *everything*, but you have to record enough to *ensure* that you accurately capture the source's meaning. As you use the material from your sources, record not just what they say but how they use the information.
9. To avoid such mistakes, distinguish statements that are central to an argument from qualifications or concessions that the author acknowledges but downplays. Unless you are reading “against the grain” of the writer's intention—to expose hidden tendencies, for example—do not report minor aspects of a source as though they were major or, worse, as if they were the source's whole point.
10. Good thinking is a skill that you can learn, but you can exercise it only when you have a deep and wide base of knowledge to work on. So read sources not just to answer the question you ask today, but to help you think better about every question you'll ask for the rest of your research career. To that end, everything you read is relevant.