

Craft of Research (CoR): Chapter 7 – Making Good Arguments

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. In a research argument, you make a *claim*, back it up with *reasons* supported by *evidence*, *acknowledge* and *respond* to other views, and sometimes explain your *principles* of reasoning. There's nothing arcane about these things: you do them in every conversation that inquires thoughtfully into an unsettled issue...
2. It makes no sense to ask, *Where do I go to see your reasons?* It does make sense to ask, *Where do I go to see your evidence?*
3. But when you address serious issues, readers expect you to base each reason with its own foundation of evidence, because careful readers don't accept reasons at face value.
4. The challenge all researchers face, however, is not just responding to readers' questions, alternatives, and objections, but imagining them in the first place.
5. Only the evidence "stands alone," but even then you may have to explain where you got it, why you think it's reliable, and how it supports your reason—and that may require yet another argument.
6. Readers judge your arguments not just by the reasons and evidence you offer but also how well you anticipate and address their concerns. By "thickening" your argument in this way, you earn the confidence of your readers, building up what is traditionally called your *ethos*: the character you project in your argument.
7. When you acknowledge other views and explain your principles of reasoning in warrants, you give readers good reason to work *with* you in developing and testing new ideas. In the long run, the *ethos* you project in individual arguments hardens into your reputation, something every researcher must care about, because your reputation is the tacit sixth element in every argument you write. It answers the unspoken question, *Can I trust you?* That answer must be *Yes*.
8. Being a researcher means allowing yourself to be surprised by your discoveries and insights.
9. If you've mastered one type of argument, try others: seek out alternative methods, formulate not only multiple solutions but multiple ways of supporting them, ask whether others would approach your problem differently.
10. But guard against uncritically imposing familiar methods on new problems. As you learn more, you'll recognize that things are neither as blindingly complex as your first feared nor as simple as you then hoped.