

## Craft of Research (CoR): Chapter 11 – Warrants

---

The 10 **salient sentence strings** presented below are lifted from the chapter without modification. They are presented in order of appearance in the chapter.

---

### Ten Salient Sentence Strings

1. The basic principle is this: state your warrants only if your readers will not be able to understand your reasoning without them, or if you anticipate that your reasoning will be challenged. (Quote – bottom of page 155).
2. Most proverbs describe a situation made up of two distinct parts: a circumstance (Where there's smoke,...) and its consequence (... there's fire). If the connection between the circumstance and consequence is true or reasonable in general, it must also be true or reasonable in specific instances. (Quote – bottom of page 156).
3. Experienced researchers rarely state their warrants explicitly when they write for specialized readers in their fields because they can safely assume that these readers already know them. (To state the obvious would seem not helpful but condescending.) This practice serves specialized readers well. But it poses a challenge to novices, who have to figure out what makes some reasons relevant to claims and others not, something those experts take for granted. That's why beginners in any field struggle with the logic of arguments written for specialists. (Quote – top of page 158).
4. Such a claim is likely to be resisted by those who believe that those who founded the United States owned guns. So even if they accept that the reason is true—that guns were in fact rarely mentioned in wills—they may still object: But I don't see how that counts as a reason to believe that few people owned a gun. It's irrelevant. If a writer anticipated that readers would raise that objection, Warrants 161 she would offer a warrant to link the specific reason to the specific claim before she stated them: In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, valuable objects were listed in wills, **so when someone failed to mention a valuable object in his will, he did not own one** (*warrant*) Since guns were valuable but were rarely mentioned in wills before 1850(*reason*), gun ownership must not have been widespread(*claim*). (Quote – bottom of 160).
5. If she wants her readers to accept that warrant, she must ask herself five questions before her readers do:  
1. Is that warrant reasonable? 2. Is it sufficiently limited? 3. Is it superior to any competing warrants? 4. Is it appropriate to this field? 5. Is it able to cover the reason and claim? (Quote – middle of page 161).

6. Your warrant may be reasonable, sufficiently limited, and superior to others, but your readers might still reject it if it is not appropriate to their particular research community. Law students get a painful lesson in the law when they find that many warrants they take for granted have no place in legal arguments. For example, like most of us, they start law school holding this commonsense belief: When a person is wronged, the law should correct it. But law students have to learn that legal warrants may trump such commonsense ideas. For example: When one ignores legal obligations, even inadvertently, one must suffer the consequences. Therefore: When elderly home owners forget to pay real estate taxes, others can buy their houses for back taxes and evict them. Against their most decent instincts, law students must learn to argue that justice is not the outcome they believe to be ethical but the one that the law and the courts support. (Quote – middle of page 163).
7. You make a claim that readers will resist because they just don't want it to be true. In this case, a good strategy is to start with a warrant that you hope readers will accept before you lay out a reason and claim that you fear they will resist. They may not like the claim any better, but you will at least encourage them to see that it is not unreasonable. (Quote – bottom of page 164).
8. Children aged 12– 16 today are significantly more violent than their counterparts from a generation ago(*reason*) Brown (2013) has shown that . . .(*evidence*) Given these facts, it seems highly likely that violent video games are exerting a destructive influence on today's youth(*claim*) To understand what's wrong here, we can imagine a warrant that would allow us to draw a conclusion about the effect of video games on children: When children are constantly exposed to images of sadistic violence, they are influenced for the worse(*warrant*) Children aged 12– 16 today are significantly more violent than their counterparts from a generation ago(*reason*) Brown (2013) has shown that . . .(*evidence*) Given these facts, it seems highly likely that violent video games are exerting a destructive influence on today's youth(*claim*). (Quote – top of page 166).
9. Now you understand why important issues are so endlessly contested, why, even when you feel your case is airtight, your readers can still say, Wait a minute. What about . . .? Readers can challenge reasons in two ways. They can object that your reasons are not grounded on sound evidence or that they seem irrelevant to a claim. To answer the first sort of objection, you must find better evidence. To answer the second sort, you must provide a warrant that makes your reasons relevant. If you can't, you must revise your argument. (Quote – top of page 168).
10. Some warrants are beyond challenge: Jefferson invoked one when he wrote, We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. . . . Others include When a claim is experienced as revealed truth, it must be true. When a claim is based on divine teaching, it must be true. Such warrants are backed not by evidence but by the certainty of those who espouse them. It is pointless to challenge them, because they are statements of faith, impervious to argument or evidence. If you encounter them as you gather your data, ignore them or treat them not as a subject for research but as an inquiry into the meaning of life. (Quote – bottom of page 170).