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

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. In a research argument, you make a claim, back it 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. (Quote – top of page 110).

2. The first kind of support, a reason, is a statement that leads readers to accept your claim. We often join a reason to a claim with *because*. (Quote – bottom of page 111).

3. The second kind of support is the evidence on which you base your reasons. We've said that reasons can be supported by still more reasons, but these chains don't go on forever. Eventually you have to show some data. That's your evidence. This distinction between reasons and evidence can seem just a matter of semantics, and in some contexts the words do seem interchangeable: *You have to base your claim on good reasons*. *You have to base your claim on good evidence.* But they are not synonyms, and distinguishing them is crucial in making sound arguments. (Quote – middle of page 113).

4. When you address serious issues, readers expect you to base each reason on its own foundation of evidence, because careful readers don't accept reasons at face value. They ask for the evidence, the data, the facts on which you base those reasons. (Quote – top of page 114).

5. Careful readers will question every part of your argument, so you must anticipate as many of their questions as you can, and then acknowledge and respond to the most important ones. For example, when readers consider the claim that schools should make foreign- language instruction a priority, they may wonder if doing that might detract from the teaching of other subjects. If you think readers might ask that question, you would be wise to acknowledge and respond to it. (Quote – bottom of page 114).

6. Even when your readers agree that a reason is true, they may still object that it's not relevant to your claim. Consider this argument: We are facing significantly higher health care costs in Europe and North America (*claim*) because climate change is moving the line of extended hard freezes steadily northward (*reason*). Readers might accept the truth of that reason but question its relevance to the claim, asking: What do higher health costs have to do with hard freezes? I don't see the connection. To answer, you must offer a

general principle that justifies relating your particular reason to your particular claim: When an area has fewer hard freezes, it must pay more to combat new diseases carried by subtropical insects no longer killed by those freezes. (Quote – bottom of page 115).

7. Like all warrants, this one says that if a general circumstance exists (an area has fewer hard freezes), then we can infer a general consequence (that area will have higher costs to combat new dis eases). The logic behind all warrants is that if a generalization is true or reasonable, then so must be specific instances of it. (Quote – top of page 116).

8. As we'll see, it's not easy to decide when you even need a warrant. Experienced researchers usually state them on only two occasions: when they think readers in their fields might ask how a reason is relevant to a claim or when they are explaining their fields' ways of reasoning to general readers. If you think your readers might not see the connection between a claim and reason, you must add a warrant to justify it. (Quote – top of page 117).

9. Moreover, each reason, warrant, or response to an objection (all of which are statements or assertions) may itself have to be treated as a subclaim and supported by its own argument. 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. (Quote – pages 118-119).

10. Readers judge your arguments not just by the reasons and evidence you offer but also by how well you anticipate and address their questions and 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. Do you seem to be the sort of person who considers issues from all sides, who supports claims with evidence that readers accept, and who thoughtfully considers other points of view? Or do you seem to be someone who sees only one point of view and dismisses or even ignores the views of others? (Quote – middle of page 119).