

1.) but if you give your readers only claims, reasons, and evidence- no matter how compelling these are to you- they may still find your arguments thin or, worse, ignorant or dismissive of their views.

2.) 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.

3.) if you come up with a question that you can't answer, decide whether you can find the answer before you go on. Don't go easy on yourself with this one: the time to fix a problem with your argument is when you find it.

4.) 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.

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 I send you and your sources disagree.

6.) if you can imagine just a few of the questions, alternatives, and objections that you reader might have, you'll face a Goldilocks moment: knowledge too many and you distract readers from the core of your argument; Acknowledged too few and you seem indifferent to or even ignorant of their views. You need to figure out how many acknowledgements will feel "just right".

7.) 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.

8.) knowledgeable readers will think better of your argument and of you if, rather than pretending you have all the answers, you acknowledge your arguments limits, especially those that squeeze you more than you like.

9.) 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 in dismissing it to addressing it at length.

10.) begin your response with a term or phrase that signals disagreement, such as *but*, *however*, or *on the other hand*. If readers do not already know the basis for that response, support it with at least one reason or even with a complete subordinate argument.