CSC: CoR: Chapter 8: Making Claims

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.

Ten Salient Sentence Strings

1. Beyond distinguishing between practical and conceptual claims, it is useful to recognize that claims address a range of questions: *Does a thing or situation exist? If so, how should we characterize it? How did it get this way? Is it good or bad? What can be done about it?*
2. Vague claims make lead to vague arguments. The more specific your claim, the more it helps you plan your argument and keeps your readers on track as they read it. You make a claim more specific through language and explicit logic.
3. While that claim seems overwritten, it foreshadows three of the five elements that you need for a full argument: (1) *Although I acknowledge X,* (2) *I claim Y* (3) *because of Z.*
4. If readers think of those qualifications, acknowledge them first. You not only imply that you understand their views, but commit yourself to responding to them in the course of your argument.
5. After the specificity of a claim, readers look most closely at its *significance*, a quality they measure by how much it asks them to change what they think… The most significant claims ask a research community to change its deepest beliefs.
6. Readers value research more highly when it not only offers new data but *uses* those data to settle what seems to be puzzling, inconsistent or otherwise problematic.
7. But you don't have to make big claims to make a useful contribution: small findings can open up new lines of thinking.
8. Some new researchers think their claims are most credible when they are stated most forcefully. But nothing damages your ethos more than arrogant certainty. As paradoxical as it seems, you make your argument stronger and more credible by modestly acknowledging its limits.
9. Only rarely can we state in good conscience that we are 100 percent certain that our claims are unqualifiedly true. Careful writers qualify their certainty with words and phrases called hedges.
10. Hedge to much and you seem mealy-mouthed; hedge to little and you can seem overconfident.