

CSC: 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.

Ten Salient Sentence Strings

1. At the core of every research argument is the answer to your research question, the solution to your problem—your main claim.
2. The first kind of support, a reason, is a statement that leads readers to accept your claim.
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.
4. We use our minds to think up reasons. We have to search for evidence "out there" in the world, then make it available for everyone to see.
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.
6. The logic behind all warrants is that if a generalization is true or reasonable, then so must be specific instances of it. [...] 3. The specific circumstance in the reason qualifies as a *plausible instance* of the general circumstance in the warrant. 4. The specific consequence in the claim qualifies as a *plausible instance* of the general consequence in the warrant.
7. Experienced researchers usually state [warrants] 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.

10. [W]hen you become familiar with your field, you may be tempted to oversimplify in a different way. When some beginning researchers succeed at making one kind of argument, they just keep making it over and over. Their mastery of one kind of complexity blinds them to another: they fail to see that their field, if it is an active one, is marked by competing methodologies, competing solutions, competing goals and objectives. Don't fall into this trap. 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.