Evaluating Evidence

Is the evidence given sufficient enough to support the claim?
Is the evidence given sound enough to support the claim?
Is the evidence given relevant to the claim and the argument?

How do warrants help build sound, sufficient, and relevant arguments?
Learning Targets for This Lesson
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I can assess whether the reasoning is sound and evidence is relevant and sufficient.
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I can identify when irrelevant evidence is introduced.
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I can analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
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Evaluating Evidence

• Your job as a reader is to locate EVIDENCE, determine whether or not it is SUFFICIENT (having enough support), whether or not it is RELEVANT (fits with the topic), and whether or not it is SOUND (logical).

• First, you look for BIAS.

• However, even if a writer LACKS bias, his/her argument may still not have sound, sufficient, or relevant evidence.

• These 3 qualities are important to determining the effectiveness of the argument.
What is Bias?

- A preference or prejudice for one side, position, or belief usually in a way that is unfair or close-minded.
- A preconceived judgment or opinion that is formed without sufficient knowledge.
- A personal judgment that is based on experience.
Why is Bias a Big Deal?

- If an author has an obvious bias, his/her argument is automatically WEAKENED because he/she sticks too closely to one point-of-view and does not consider all sides.
- Bias often results in twisting and manipulating information to prove a point.
- Recognizing bias helps YOU determine whether or not you can believe this author’s argument, claims, and/or evidence.
How Can an Author Show Bias?

- not having complete information (i.e. researching evidence only to prove a point)
- deliberately manipulating the audience with emotions
- allowing personal experiences to influence their attitude
- leaving out information that damages their argument (not using a counterargument)
- using strong, inflammatory word choices
- adding positive or negative information that is irrelevant
What makes evidence sufficient?

- It completely supports the claim (not just part of the claim).
  **Warrants are important to provide enough information to support a claim.**

- There are multiple types of evidence (not only relying on one type).

- No important information is left out.

- All of the reader’s IMPORTANT questions are answered
  **Warrants are important to add enough detail to do this.**

- A counterargument is addressed

- Rule of thumb: Evidence is sufficient when a claim flows smoothly into its evidence and one point leads directly to another.
What makes evidence relevant?

- It has a **definite relationship** to the claim (and thus to the argument). You might have to infer this connection or think about it carefully.

- It actually **proves** the writer’s point.
  **Warrants become important to explain how a piece of evidence supports a claim.**

- **Rule of thumb:** Assume evidence is relevant and then determine HOW it’s relevant. If you can’t do this, it’s **IRRELEVANT.**
What makes evidence sound?

• If all of its premises (conclusions) are true. Consider whether the source is credible (i.e. using Wikipedia vs the website from Harvard University).
  **Warrants become important to show how the statement is true.**

• If it is REPRESENTATIVE (typical): gives a complete picture that applies broadly to the real world. EX: To prove that Americans are generous, I would NOT choose Bill Gates as an example, even though he gave away billions of dollars last year–because Bill Gates is NOT a typical American. Instead, I might point toward a middle-class family who gave 20% of their income to charity.

• Uses one of the following types of evidence: scientific experiment, statistics, examples, comparisons/analogies, logical inferences, expert opinion, logical cause & effect, historical documentation.

• UNSOUND evidence includes: over-generalizations, statements from biased experts, illogical causation, opinions that sound like facts

• Rule of thumb: Evidence is sufficient when it is logical, factual, and true.
Illogical Causation

Internet Explorer vs Murder Rate

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<th>Year</th>
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Underlying Motives in Arguments

Whether or not a source is CREDIBLE sometimes depends on its MOTIVES.

- Motives = the author’s underlying reasons for presenting the argument

Generally there are 3 types of motives:

- SOCIAL = to improve the condition (safety, health, etc.) of the overall society by influencing individuals’ behavior or choices. EX: the anti-smoking ad we watched at the beginning of this unit (“Every Cigarette Does You Damage”).

- POLITICAL = to convince individuals to vote for a candidate, support a certain side of a political issue, support a particular law or bill, join a certain political party, etc. EX: the “Vote for Obama Because He Has a Great Economic Plan” ad we watched; the poster advocating nuclear bombing of Japan in WWII.

- COMMERCIAL = to convince you to buy something or support something financially. EX: commercials for McDonald’s, Wal-Mart, etc.

- Some arguments can have more than one motive: EX: Feed the Children and Humane Society commercials