WHO SAID THAT?
Finding and evaluating evidence

The first step to making a strong argument is to build it on evidence that's trustworthy. This week, we look at the defintion of evidence, sources, and ways we can make sure that the information we rely on is... reliable!

As debaters know, every debate starts with a **claim**, a statement that can be argued because it has more than one side. Like, "Organic food is always healthier than non-organic food," or "The United States should continue space exploration." Claims are different from **facts**, which are always either true or false. For example, "Today is Tuesday" is a statement of fact-- whether or not it's actually Tuesday and whether or not you're even aware of what day it is! A statement of fact has only one possible truth: either it is Tuesday, or it is not Tuesday.

For debaters, stating your claim is just the first step! To make a full argument, the claim must be supported by **evidence**, and **reasoning** which ties the two together. In DebateAble clubs, we spend a lot of time working on reasoning skills, which are essential to creating a strong and convincing argument.

BUT today, our focus is on the importance of evidence, a.k.a. (also known as) the information you choose to support your claim. How do you decide which evidence is trustworthy, and which is not? And how can we all get better at choosing and using evidence to <u>make arguments</u>, <u>make decisions</u>, and <u>make up our minds about what we personally believe in</u>?

Let's start with The Story of Rover. Imagine this...

Part One
Your family's beloved pet dog, Rover, is suddenly sick. Rover's regular veterinarian (animal doctor), who you trust with his life, is on vacation. Rover needs help but you don't have time to do the research to find another veterinarian. You take your sick dog to the first name that comes up on an internet search for "veterinarians in my neighborhood." Once you get there, the doctor does a quick exam of Rover. She does not ask you any questions. After the exam, she tells you she knows what is wrong and how to fix it, based on something a stranger told her that morning about another sick dog with the exact same symptoms.
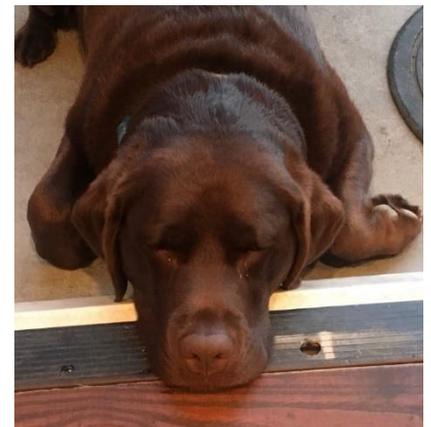
• Answer these questions. And if you're sharing this activity with someone else, have them answer, too. Compare your answers.

List some reasons you'd **trust** what the vet told you?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

List some reasons **not to trust** what the vet told you?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Part Two
Now, imagine a different situation with the veterinarian. This time, after she examines Rover, she pulls out a copy of "The Best Veterinarian Medical Journal" --a magazine so popular that even *you* have heard of it! She turns to an article by the world-famous Doctor Doolittle and reads it in front of you. Then she tells you that she now knows exactly what's wrong with Rover and how to fix it. Would you be more likely to believe her diagnosis?

Why? _____

Why not? _____

EVIDENCE: Type, Source and Reliability

What *is* evidence?

Evidence is anything that you can **see**, **experience**, **read,** or are **told** that supports a claim.

"evidence" (2020) Collins Dictionary, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/evidence/related

What are some TYPES of evidence?

Some of the main types of evidence are listed below. Can you come up with a definition for each one and write it out? See if your answer looks like ours by turning your paper upside down to read the box, below. And remember, there's more than one way to say the same thing-- your words don't have to match ours exactly for your answer to be correct!
TIP: "testimony" means the words that a person speaks or writes.

Eyewitness testimony: _____

Expert witness testimony: _____

Scientific research:_____

Statistics: _____

Statistics: A collection of data (information) used to understand and analyze a problem or situation, often with numbers.
Scientific research: Studies conducted by scientists or doctors to prove an idea, solve a problem or learn something new.
Expert testimony: A report from someone who saw or heard the evidence, and who ALSO has some special education or experience that helps them to explain the evidence.
Eyewitness testimony: A report from someone who saw or heard the evidence themself.

What are some of the SOURCES we use for evidence?

A source of evidence refers to the way we get access to the evidence, or the method that delivers it to us.

Quick! Take one minute and list as many different sources of evidence as you can. Or, challenge someone else to see who can list the most sources. When you're finished, check by turning your paper upside down to read the box, below.
Ready. Set. GO! (We'll give you the first one...)

_____Magazines_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

Newspapers, books, letters, photographs, scientific reports, internet, government reports, court cases, cartoons, movies, posters, news on television, news on the radio, another person, commercials, print advertisements.

Name all the <u>sources</u> that Rover's substitute veterinarian used in The Story of Rover, Part One and Part Two.

_____

How do we make sure that the evidence we use is RELIABLE?

"Reliable" means that something is trustworthy, honest and dependable. Here's a short list of questions to ask yourself to help you decide whether evidence is reliable:

1) Who is the author or creator of the information?
2) When was it created?
3) Is the author connected with any organization or media outlet? What can you find out about that outlet?

4) Does the author offer more than one perspective?
5) Does the content make you feel like the source is desperate for you to believe them?
6) Common sense. Does the information make sense to you based on what you know about the world?

INFORMATION AND SOURCE MATCHING

Read each piece of evidence draw a line to match it to its source. Check out the answers in the box below to see how many you got correct.

1. A University of Illinois study found that banning vending machines in schools doesn't necessarily lead to healthier eating.

2. There is no question that increased levels of greenhouse gases are causing the Earth to warm.

3. There's reason to believe that Harry and Meghan are currently expecting a little sibling for baby Archie.

4. Providing dogs with a fresh, raw, varied diet will greatly enhance their joy of life, and health.

5. Balloons should be given to every child, no matter what age.

6. Working parents don't have time to prepare complicated meals for their family and need easy, quick options.

7. Eating meat is bad for your health and for the environment.

8. Soda pop is not only delicious, but they make every occasion special!

9. Heading to a beach surrounded by palm trees and soaking up the sun is the best thing you can do to escape the winter blues.

10. Every school playground should have a roller coaster.

A. thehollywoodgossip.com
(website)

B. TravelHawaii.com
(website)

C. Fast Food Workers of America
(organization)

D. The Coca Cola Company
(company)

E. Carnivals4Rent.com
(website)

F. climate.nasa.gov
(website)

G. Vending Machine Distributors USA
(organization)

H. darwinspet.com
(website)

I. Bozo the Clown
(celebrity)

J. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
(organization)

ANSWER KEY: 1G, 2F, 3A, 4H, 5I, 6C, 7J, 8D, 9B, 10E

Which evidence and source combination did you find most reliable and least reliable? Why?

Most reliable: _____

Least reliable: _____

BONUS: GUIDE TO EVALUATING INTERNET SOURCES.
Most of today's news comes from the internet and television. Americans rely on social media more than any other source for their news. But how do we decide what's reliable and what's not? There's only one way, and that's to work at it. We recommend this short list of questions from The International Literary Society, Is This A Hoax, We keep a copy near our laptops to help guide us when we search for evidence on the internet and wanted to share it with you, too!

Debate|Able