

7. The evidence



Facts and figures

Statistics, surveys, expert opinion and quotes, peer reviews and research (from reputable institutions)

Trust and credibility

It is important that the author is well-informed on a subject as this knowledge helps to earn readers' trust. Authors must understand all relevant facts and figures in order to present a logical argument and make sound conclusions.

The **facts and figures** must be: reputable (from a reliable and independent source) and up-to-date.

Authors must present the facts fairly, without fear or favour (without a profit motive).

"People" stories

Anecdotes
Human-interest stories
Personal/first-hand experiences and observations
Eye-witness accounts
Case studies and
Quotes

Personal connections and descriptions of people

A human interest story is a news story that presents people, their experiences and problems in a way that reaches out to others and arouses emotions.

An anecdote is a story usually told in a few sentences. It is always based on real life, is often humorous and may include some dialogue.

A case study involves extensive research and evaluation of a person, small group, or specific "case" to show the consequences or impact of a particular situation or scenario.

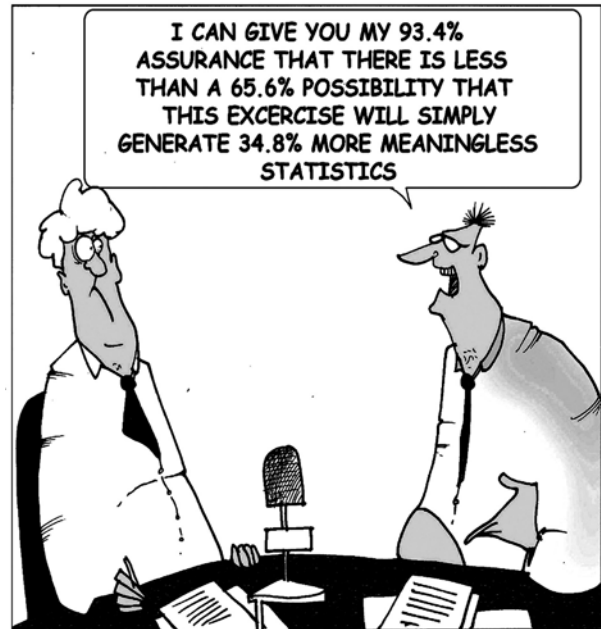
Personal experience: "I'm talking opinions. Which are basically just 'I reckon'. Opinions are a mix of what we know, what we feel, what we've experienced and gut instinct." (Catherine Deveney)

Experts and quotes

Writers often include quotes from famous people or refer to expert opinion to support their views. If the expert has undertaken research or works in a particular field, their views are likely to improve the credibility of the message. It is important that the experts are sincere and honest and that they do not earn money or gain fame because of their support for a cause.

People may be considered experts because they:

- ◆ have formal qualifications; for example they may be a professor or a doctor;
- ◆ have extensive experience in the field;
- ◆ occupy a respected position within an organisation; or
- ◆ have witnessed or were directly involved in an event or situation, for example an eyewitness.



Statistics and surveys

Authors often shock or surprise the reader with startling facts and figures. Statistics and surveys are often effective when it comes to persuading us to “see” an issue from the author’s perspective. They draw attention to the size of the problem or potential dangers and often place the issue in perspective. It is important that the source of the statistics is available so they can be verified. The Australian Bureau of Statistics is a common source.

According to a survey in May 2012, Facebook had 7.5 million users younger than 13 — more than 5 million of them under the age of 11.

Sixty-one per cent of adults and 25 per cent of children are either overweight or obese, putting our obesity levels among the worst in developed nations.
The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Choose two articles from the newspaper. Identify a range of evidence. How does it support the author’s views?

Why?

- ◆ to show readers that, as an author, one has a good knowledge of the issue; this enhances one’s trustworthiness;
- ◆ to make readers feel smart and clever if they adopt the author’s “sensible” and “logical” views;
- ◆ to convince people to follow the “majority” or the “most popular” view;
- ◆ to make us feel ignorant if we disagree;
- ◆ to highlight how widespread the problem is in the community; and
- ◆ to create a sense of authority in order to win support, trust and cooperation.