

Guidelines for the Ethical Use of Evidence

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Evaluating Speech Content

1. Does my evidence come from credible sources that are free from bias?
2. Is my evidence relevant to the points I wish to make?
3. Would my evidence be verified by other expert sources?
4. Is my evidence complete? Has anything been purposely or carelessly withheld?
5. Is my evidence the most recent available?
6. Have I adequately identified the sources of my evidence?
7. Has testimony been used properly - ie: expert testimony to establish facts, prestige testimony to enhance general credibility, lay testimony to humanize a subject and create identification?
8. Are my "experts" qualified to speak on my subject?
9. Have I quoted or paraphrased testimony accurately?
10. Are my examples and narrative representative of the situation and not exceptions to the rule?

Evaluating Facts and Figures

1. Are the facts and figures relevant?
2. Is the information recent and does it apply precisely to the locale of the speech?
3. Is the information reliable? Do other authorities confirm it?
4. Are the sources credible? Are they competent, trustworthy, and unbiased?
5. Is the information complete? Has anything important been omitted or withheld?
6. Is this factual information, or is it opinion masquerading as fact?
7. Do statistical differences represent actual differences?

Evaluating Testimony

1. Is the testimony relevant and recent?
2. Is the testimony truly representative of the source's position?

3. Is the source objective, unbiased, and an authority on the topic?
4. Has the proper kind of testimony -- expert, prestige, or lay -- been used?
5. Was testimony taken out of context?

Evaluating Examples

1. Are the examples relevant and representative?
2. Do the examples seem plausible and authentic?
3. Are the examples fresh and interesting?
4. Are the examples tactful and tasteful?
5. Were there adequate examples provided?

Other Message Making Obligations

1. Require that statements and claims be supported with facts and figures, testimony, examples, or narratives; insist that these be relevant, representative, recent, and reliable.
2. Do not accept what anyone says at face value. Examine the credentials of sources, particularly in terms of their competence and trustworthiness.
3. Differentiate among facts, inferences, and opinions.
4. Be wary of language that seems purposely or carelessly vague or incomprehensible.
5. Be on guard against claims that promise too much.
6. Look for plausible reasoning, especially when messages arouse emotion.
7. Be receptive to new ideas and new perspectives, but scrutinize them carefully.
8. Ask probing, incisive, challenging questions. Responsible advocates welcome serious questions; unethical speakers fear them and usually become defensive.