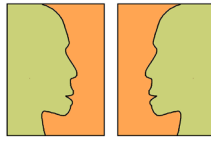


## MINI-LESSON



# CHOOSING EVIDENCE

## Types of Evidence

When you're making a point to support your argument, you need evidence to back that point up. We will study five different types of evidence. Below you'll see examples of these types that were used in the sample essays:

Type of Evidence	Example
<b>Fact or Statistic</b>	<i>A 2014 study by the Economic Policy Institute estimated that people with four-year college degrees earned 98 percent more per hour than those who did not finish college.</i> (to prove college graduates earn more money)
<b>Story or Anecdote</b>	<i>Colleen Conroy took a gap year and discovered her true passion was for writing, not geology, so she switched her major and had a successful academic career.</i> (to prove a gap year can help you find the right career path)
<b>Example</b>	<i>To become a web designer, real estate agent, or chef, you don't have to have a college degree, but having a degree won't prevent you from getting any of those jobs. On the other hand, you can't become a teacher, an accountant, a doctor, or an engineer without a degree.</i> (to prove a college degree increases your job options)
<b>Quote</b> (Expert or Non-Expert)	<i>"Now, as a junior, I am happier than ever. I am stimulated by my academic work and enthusiastic about my growth as a writer."</i> (to prove that college allows students to try different career paths until they find one they're happy with)
<b>Scenario</b> ("What If" Situation)	<i>Suppose you got a 40-hour-per-week job that paid \$10 per hour. Over the course of one year, that's a total of \$19,200. If you could save half—\$9,600—that could pay for a year of in-state tuition at many public 4-year colleges.</i> (to prove it's possible to save good money during a gap year)

## Choosing the RIGHT Evidence

When choosing evidence to support your argument, look for evidence that is relevant, sufficient, and credible.

**Relevant** means it actually supports the argument you're trying to make. Evidence that is not relevant may still be on the same topic, but it doesn't prove the point you're making. Suppose you're trying to convince your parents to let you stay out an hour later; you argue that you are responsible and they can trust you to make good decisions.

not relevant	<i>I walk the dog any time you ask, so obviously I can be trusted.</i> (Although doing a household chore shows responsibility, it's not the kind you need to make good choices about safety.)
relevant	<i>You have left me home on my own a few times and everything went fine; that proves I am trustworthy.</i> (This is pretty good proof that you can be trusted in situations where you're unsupervised. Being able to stay out later seems like a logical next step.)

**Sufficient** means there's *enough* evidence to support the argument. You might provide some fact or story that proves your point, but if it's only a small sample, it won't be very convincing. Let's say you are trying to convince your principal to make the school start time later. You argue that students will perform better academically if they wake up later.

not sufficient	<i>I can personally focus much better in my later classes.</i> (This might be true for all students, but only one example is not sufficient to prove it.)
sufficient	<i>A Northwestern University study of over 2,000 students showed that student test scores rose by 10 percent in schools that moved to a later start time.</i> (Because this study observed over 2,000 students, it is stronger proof that a later start time impacts student achievement.)

**Credible** means the evidence comes from a reliable, unbiased source. Suppose you are trying to convince a parent to only buy locally grown food. You argue that local food is healthier.

not credible     *The local association of farmers reports that locally grown vegetables have a higher vitamin content than those shipped to stores from across the country.*

(Although this might be true, it comes from local farmers, who would benefit from more people buying local food, so it is less credible.)

credible     *The USDA has reported that locally grown vegetables have a higher vitamin content than those shipped to stores from across the country.*

(It's the exact same fact, but because it comes from a federal agency rather than local farmers, it seems more believable.)

### **What to Do Now**

Go back to your [Essay Planner](#) and begin filling out the evidence you will use to support each of your three points. Is the evidence relevant, sufficient, and credible? If not, start looking for other evidence that will be more effective. If you can't find any, think about changing that point to something else that can be proven with better evidence.