

Exercise walk-through

Identifying claims and evidence ■ 1.2

eXercise

You must be able to

- tell a claim from a fact and from an opinion without support
- identify the evidence attached to a given claim
- state what kind of evidence a passage uses
- explain why unattached evidence weakens an argument

Method — What makes a claim

A **claim** is a statement that could be disputed and that the writer is undertaking to support. “The river is 40 km long” is a fact; “the river has been mismanaged” is a claim.

Method — Finding the evidence

Evidence is whatever the writer offers so that a reader who doubts the claim might accept it: data, examples, testimony, precedent, anecdote. The test is the question *why should I believe that?* — the answer is the evidence.

Method — Naming the kind

Say **what kind** of evidence it is, not just that there is some: statistical, anecdotal, expert testimony, historical precedent, direct observation. The kind is what makes it fit or unfit for the audience.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State the difference between a claim and a fact.

Solution 2.1

Method: What makes a claim

Worked steps

a fact can be verified and is not in dispute **B1**; a claim could be disputed and the writer undertakes to support it **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

State two kinds of evidence a writer might use.

Solution 2.2

Method: Finding the evidence

Worked steps

any two of: statistics, anecdote, expert testimony, historical precedent, direct observation **B2**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

A writer states: "Our libraries are failing. Visits fell 30% in five years."

- (a) Identify the claim.
- (b) Identify the kind of evidence.

Solution 2.3

Method: Finding the evidence

Worked steps

(a) “our libraries are failing” **B1**. (b) statistical **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

Which of these is a claim rather than a fact?

- A** The bridge was built in 1932.
- B** The bridge carries 12,000 vehicles daily.
- C** The bridge should be replaced.
- D** The bridge is 400 metres long.

Solution 3.1

Method: What makes a claim

- A The bridge was built in 1932.
- B The bridge carries 12,000 vehicles daily.
- C The bridge should be replaced. 
- D The bridge is 400 metres long.

Worked steps

- C. it is disputable and requires support.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

A paragraph gives three vivid personal stories and no figures. Its evidence is best described as

- A** statistical
- B** anecdotal
- C** expert testimony
- D** historical precedent

Solution 3.2

A statistical

B anecdotal 

C expert testimony

D historical precedent

Worked steps

B. personal stories without figures are anecdotal evidence.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

A passage presents striking data and then moves to a new topic without comment.

- (a) State what is missing.
- (b) Explain why the argument is weaker for it.

Solution 3.3

Worked steps

(a) the link between the evidence and the claim — commentary **B1**. (b) the reader must supply the connection themselves **B1**, and may draw a different conclusion from the same data **B1**.