

Everything You Know is WRONG!

Invited researched essay for our annual compendium

Name:

Date:

Instructions:

Congratulations! You have been selected to submit a story to the world's bestselling annual compendium, **Everything You Know is WRONG!** We take opinion essays from top writers and invite them to turn their mirror back on themselves, scrutinizing their own positions for flaws and inaccuracies the way an investigative reporter would scrutinize their own worst enemy.

This requires recognizing and overcoming your own confirmation bias. Although we all want to be right all of the time, no learning can occur with that mindset. You are to take your own opinion essay on the issue of _____ and thoroughly research the facts behind it, verifying or refuting the veracity of claims made surrounding it, and evaluating the quality of information coming from your sources, writing a final treatise.

A successful treatise will contain appropriate (MLA / APA) citations to the sources you obtained your information from, as well as a critical evaluation of each source as it related to your particular issue. Factual statements are to be sourced properly and used to assemble your conclusions, *not* the other way around! In other words, do *not* pick your conclusions before you assemble your facts, and then assemble your facts in a way that supports your conclusion. This is the logical flaw that confirmation bias is all about, and you must be able to overcome it!

It is highly recommended that you use Trapit as the first tool to gather information about your issue, and it is furthermore recommended that you attempt a variety of discoveries using different search terms in order to bring the greatest variety of relevant sources and perspectives to your fingertips. Although every source that Trapit brings you has been hand-checked for quality, original content, neither the sources nor the individual articles contained therein have been checked for *factual accuracy*: that task is up to you!

The final treatise that you submit must be a well-argued story supported by the full gamut of facts available, that takes a critical look at the issue of _____, and reaches conclusions that are appropriately strong (but no stronger) and that accurately reflect the quality of evidence presently available. The treatise should also evaluate your original writing piece in light of the evidence you now possess, and you should end by articulating what evidence would be sufficient to change your mind on this issue.



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Criteria for grading:

* The **initial essay** is an important starting point for your submission to **Everything You Know is WRONG!** However, you will be graded on how thoroughly you evaluate and fact-check each of your points and arguments therein, *not* on the content of the initial essay itself. (**Optional:** Any text from the initial essay that you evaluate as **100% true** may be **highlighted in green**; any text that you evaluate as **100% untrue or untrustworthy** may be **highlighted in red.**)

* The **thoroughness of fact collection** in your research is an incredibly important component of your final treatise. Submissions that only address the points made by one side on a polarizing issue will be heavily penalized, and are not suitable for publication in our compendium. A truly excellent submission will present all the relevant facts to the issue at hand, properly sourcing them (as specified by your particular district/region), and use them to evaluate the claims made by all parties that have a public stance on the issue.

* It is also up to you to **give a voice to all the different opinions out there**, and to **evaluate how well they hold up to the facts you have collected**. It is important to include your own initial essay as one of these. Although we are extremely demanding that your conclusions be backed up with facts you have collected and sources yourself, we are uninterested in publishing stories that do not acknowledge the full range of opinions that are currently being entertained as respects your particular issue.

* Your **conclusions** must be only as strong as the facts and arguments that support them. An excellent treatise will detail not only what conclusion you reach as a result of your research, but how confident you are that this conclusion is correct, and whether any of the alternative conclusions are still viable. You should also identify what **challenges** remain as respects this issue, both factually/scientifically as well as in the court of public opinion.

* Finally, you should answer the question of what new evidence could come in that would **change your mind** on this issue. For a story in **Everything You Know is WRONG!**, you must demonstrate that what you currently “know” is subject to revision if new evidence comes in. To that end, it is strongly preferred that our authors all state what a *reasonable* standard of evidence would be to compel them to re-evaluate their conclusion(s).

