

6.8 Choosing Good Evidence

This activity develops evidence evaluation skills. Students practice choosing the most useful evidence for proving a particular argument. In the activity, you give students a series of untagged cards and they pick which ones are relevant as if they were writing a file. This activity is best for students who are preparing to begin writing their own briefs, but still require guided practice to learn the steps.

Time Allotment

Take-home activity or in-class small group activity (20-30 minutes).

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- develop their ability to evaluate the quality of evidence.
- build their understanding of evidence.

Materials and Preparation

Copy several untagged cards onto a page (or two). Give each student one copy. The cards you choose should relate to a debate position, like a disadvantage or an affirmative case. Some of the cards should be better than others, and some should not be relevant.

Method

Hand out the sheets of untagged cards to the students. Be sure that the students are familiar with the positions (disadvantage, counterplan, etc.) that the cards are supposed to support.

Beneath each card on the page, student should indicate whether the card should be kept or thrown out. Students should write a brief (1-2 sentence) reason for their decision.

If students indicate that the card should be kept, they should write a tag above or next to the card.

Wrap-up:

Go through the cards as a class and talk about which ones students decided to keep. If students came to different conclusions about the evidence, allow students to discuss the reasoning behind their choices. Collect the handouts at the conclusion of the activity.