| **Type of evidence** | **Definition** | **Value** |
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| **Expert evidence** | Evidence from reputable sources, usually academics, practitioners or researchers in organisations acknowledged by the field to be leaders in their area of study | Expert evidence is considered to be high quality evidence. It forms the backbone of most academic writing. |
| **Corroborative evidence** | Evidence which is supported by other research. Evidence from multiple sources is more convincing than further evidence from the same source. | Corroborative evidence is highly valued in academic writing provided that the sources of the corroboration are themselves reputable. |
| **Contradictory evidence** | Evidence which qualifies or does not support the position you have taken (your thesis). | Contradictory evidence may come from highly expert sources within the field. It cannot be ignored. It is usually acknowledged within the structure of an individual argument, but its significance is downplayed in relation to the supporting evidence. To see how to use language that downplays evidence, review Module 2, Unit 4, Strategy 4: Using concessive clauses |
| **Evidence from related fields** | Evidence which comes from fields other than the primary field, eg language development may range over the fields of linguistics, neurology, psychology, sociology, etc | Evidence from related fields is usually highly valued in academic writing provided that the primary field itself recognises the significance of contributions from these fields. It would not be advisable, however, to rely on this type of evidence where evidence from the primary field is scarce or lacking. |
| **Common knowledge** | Knowledge universally acknowledged, and so not in need of supporting evidence from sources. | Common knowledge is an acceptable part of all academic writing. However, the purpose of most academic research and writing is to explore what is not common knowledge. Its place is therefore limited. Too much common knowledge will make a piece of writing appear under-researched and trite. |
| **Anecdotal evidence** | Verbal or written evidence which comes from third parties or hearsay rather than informed and controlled research. | Anecdotal evidence is rarely highly valued in academic writing. Where it is used, it is usually used to further support something which has already been established by reference to expert sources, or in the complete absence of evidence from expert sources. It is usually openly acknowledged: Example: 'Anecdotal evidence from child care centres suggests that ...' |
| **Unsourced evidence** | Evidence which cannot be correctly sourced and referenced | Unsourced evidence is not valued in academic writing and should always be avoided. |