Evidence

What is evidence?

Evidence is simply a reason or set of reasons to believe that a claim is true or false.

Evidence plays a key role in arguments - it's what supports the truth of a claim.

Imagine you're trying to prove a point. You have a few facts (these are your evidence) to support your claim.

For example, saying "All humans are mortal" and "Socrates was human" helps you make the claim that "Socrates was mortal."

But evidence is NOT always about facts and claims.

Evidence can also be about what you experience or feel.

For instance, if you see an animal that looks like a cow in a field, and you believe that animals looking like that are cows, then you'd reasonably conclude there's a cow in the field, based on the **evidence you have gathered from your sight.**

Similarly, if you see a grey ball, that's your evidence for believing the ball is actually grey.

Here's the tricky part: sometimes what we see or believe can be **misleading.**

For example, a ball might look grey, but it could actually be overshadowed due to dark lighting. Or, perhaps you have protanopia (colour blindness) and are unable to see that the ball is actually red. So, the ball isn't really grey, but it seems that way to you. **The evidence you have collected from your senses (sight), has misled you.**

This gap between what seems real and what's actually real has puzzled many philosophers for ages

It's precisely why we can't always trust everything at face value.

We have to be careful about what we believe and always look for strong evidence before fully buying into something.

Evidence is key for a few reasons:

1. **Making Beliefs:** For example, can you believe there's a giant pink elephant in your room without any proof? Sounds tough, right?

2. **Evaluating Beliefs:** If you hear that someone typed a chapter on a computer, you'd believe it based on what you know about how books are made nowadays.

3. **Persuading Others:** Let's say someone tells you a wild story, telling you that their friend is the Prime Minister. You'd want solid evidence, such as seeing them carry out the duties of a Prime Minister or checking reliable sources, before believing it.

Evidence can be strong or weak. For instance, knowing a lot of people have died is stronger proof that all people are mortal than just one person's death. Understanding different types of evidence, like direct (seeing something yourself) or indirect (hearing about it from someone else), is key. This helps you figure out how reliable or trustworthy the evidence is.

So, whenever you hear a claim or a story, think about the evidence. Is it solid or shaky? Does it make sense, or does it seem a bit off? This is how you start thinking critically and making smart decisions about what to believe.

Understanding Different Types of Evidence:

There are two main types: direct and indirect. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses, so let's break them down:

Direct Evidence:

1. **Sensory Evidence**: This is what you see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. It's the most immediate type of evidence.

2. **Logical Evidence & Deduction**: This comes from rules of logic. For example, if 'A is true, and A leads to B, then B must be true'.

Indirect Evidence:

1. **Scientific Experiments**: These are based on tools, data and methods that extend beyond our immediate senses.

2. **Testimony**: This is when you rely on someone else's word or experience.

3. **Memory**: Your recollection of past events, but remember, memories can be tricky and sometimes inaccurate.

4. **Inductive Inferences**: This is when you make an educated guess based on incomplete information.

The Bottom Line: Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of different types of evidence helps you make better judgments. Also, understanding the reliability, relevance and trustworthiness of evidence are essential critical reasoning skills.