

Student edition

College and community

College courses, libraries, youth programs and community groups working with people ages 18 to 24.

20 cases

How this book works

Each case is a short chapter. The pages follow the same order in every case, so you learn the layout once.

-  **What happened** Read the story and the question you will answer.
-  **Reading passage** Read a longer passage about the case. Stop and think at each question.
-  **Key idea and In the news** Read the idea behind the case, a code of ethics and two real news stories.
-  **Practice** Choose the best response and fix two phrases in a student's draft.
-  **Check your work** Answer yes-or-no questions and mark your level in the rubric.
-  **Talk about this case at home** Take home a page of questions for your family.
-  **Key terms** Learn the words the case needs, each with its Spanish word.
-  **Look at the evidence** Read each document. Write what it shows and what it leaves out.
-  **Sort the evidence** Decide which evidence supports each claim and whose view is missing.
-  **Your task** Follow the numbered steps, plan in the boxes and write your draft.
-  **Questions to discuss** Write short answers, then finish My take.

Labels on the page

Evidence A | Group-chat post

A document from the case. Read it closely and compare it with the other documents.

Real source | Publisher | Date

A real news story, code or study. Scan its code to read the original.

Directions on each page

On your own A short direction under a heading tells you what to do if you work without a teacher, and about how long it takes.

When a page continues

Some sections run onto a second page. Its heading says “continued,” and it keeps the next page number.

Filling in this book

- Fill it in on paper or in a PDF app. Save a copy before you type.
- What you type stays on your device. Nothing is sent to us.
- Do not write private information about yourself or other people.

Contents

1	Is the screening canceled?	3
2	Does the worksheet show what Dec knows?	24
3	What should a group do after a public mistake?	45
4	Who gets a say when a shared room changes?	66
5	Why is my deposit smaller than what I earned?	87
6	What can your family see in your college records?	107
7	Did one complaint get the novel banned?	127
8	Is it a recommendation or an ad?	149
9	What is on your ballot, and where do you check?	170
10	Whose job is it to fix the blocked route?	192
11	Why are Jordy and Gia paid different rates?	213
12	When can a school limit what students say?	233
13	Can the crew cut waste before it reaches the bin?	253
14	Does giving credit let the crew use the song?	275
15	Is Rafa's unpaid internship really a job?	297
16	Who wrote the new building rule?	317
17	How should the crew give out ten free seats?	338
18	Why is the theater curtain still falling apart?	358
19	What should Gia say in her two-minute comment?	379
20	Can the crew post this image as true?	400

Case 1: Is the screening canceled?

A cropped clip in the group chat seems to cancel the crew's screening, so you check the original documents and write an update.

On your own Read What happened. Underline the sentence that worries the crew. About 5 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who reads the full transcript before Gia posts. **New skill:** Find the original source.



Gia and Mateo read the message about tonight's screening.

What happened

It is Friday afternoon at the Common Room, a shared event space inside a bookshop in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. Mateo, 22, booked the room for tonight's 6 p.m. screening, the crew's first in the neighborhood. He has been moving tables and chairs all afternoon.

Gia, 21, is helping between her class and her shift at a café. Jordy is testing the projector and captions. Sami is on her way from the print shop.

At 4:52 p.m., someone forwards a seven-second clip to the group chat. The clip comes from a meeting about the room. Its caption asks whether the screening is canceled.

Gia wants to warn people before they leave home. Mateo hopes the post is wrong. Gia has about ten minutes before she has to leave for work.

Your question: Is the screening really canceled, and what should the crew tell people?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Claim A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.

En español: afirmación

In this case: The caption “Screening canceled?” is a claim. It ends with a question mark, and no document confirms it.

Context Context is the information around an event or a quote that you need to understand what it means.

En español: contexto

In this case: The full transcript adds the words “through that reader tonight.” Those words show that only the broken side door is closing.

Framing Framing is choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward.

En español: encuadre

In this case: The crop and the caption choose what viewers notice: “removing access,” not “through that reader.”

Holding statement A holding statement is a short update that says what is known, what is still being checked and when people will hear more.

En español: comunicado provisional

In this case: Jordy posts: “We’re checking the original. Hold your plans for a moment.”

Who is involved



Mateo

Booked the room for tonight

“I’ve been moving these tables all afternoon. Please tell me we didn’t cancel this in a group chat.”



Gia

Leaving soon for a café shift

“Sami’s already on the train from the print shop. “We’re figuring it out” doesn’t tell her whether to keep coming.”

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think is going on?

[illegible]

Reading passage

Urgent updates and the ethics of the crop

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Context:** Context is the information around an event or a quote that you need to understand what it means.
- **Framing:** Framing is choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward.
- **Holding statement:** A holding statement is a short update that says what is known, what is still being checked and when people will hear more.

The story: An accurate clip, a false conclusion

The crew's first neighborhood screening is set for 6 p.m. on a Friday at the Common Room, an event space inside a bookshop in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. Mateo, 22, booked the room and has spent the afternoon moving tables. Gia, 21, is helping between class and a café shift. Jordy is testing the projector and captions, and Sami is traveling from the print shop. At 4:52 p.m., a forwarded seven-second clip reaches the group chat. In it, the room coordinator says, "we are removing access," and the recording stops. The caption asks whether the screening is canceled.

The case is useful for adult communicators because each person's first impulse is reasonable. Gia wants to warn guests before they travel. Mateo wants the event to happen and admits he wants the clip to be fake. Jordy wants the rest of the sentence. Each impulse becomes a different message, and each message has different consequences for people already on the move.

In this case, you are the one who reads the full transcript before Gia posts. Treat that role as a professional one. You are the check between a claim and an organization's public answer.

❓ Stop and think. Which of the three first impulses would a real organization most likely act on, and why?

What the documents support

The caption makes a **claim**: a statement that something is true, which can be checked with evidence. The coordinator's 3:30 p.m. transcript says the side-door reader is broken and that access is removed "through that reader tonight."

What the documents support, continued

It adds that existing bookings remain in place and that people should use the staffed front entrance. The booking email, sent Tuesday, confirms Friday from 6 to 9 p.m. with a step-free, staffed front entrance from 5:30.

Read together, the documents support a narrow conclusion. The event is on, one entrance has changed, and a person who relies on the side door needs that information before arrival. **Context**, the information around a quote that you need to understand what it means, turns an apparent cancellation into a routing change. The documents also have limits. Neither says how long the repair will take, and neither confirms that every visitor can use the front entrance.

The crew's sequence is a small model of crisis communication. A **holding statement** comes first. It is a short update that says what is known, what is still being checked and when people will hear more. Jordy's version, "We're checking the original. Hold your plans for a moment," neither repeats the rumor's key word nor overclaims by calling the clip fake. The correction follows in the channel where the rumor spread, with the time, the entrance and the original update. It is captioned for people reading without sound, and the full transcript stays linked beside the crop.

 **Stop and think.** What does the crew still not know after reading both documents, and how should the correction handle that gap?

Framing, verification and professional duty

Entman's often-cited definition treats **framing** as selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a text (Robert M. Entman, "Framing," 1993). In this case, framing is choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward. The analytical value of the concept is that it separates two questions that are often merged: what a message emphasizes, and why the sender chose it. The crew can answer the first question with documents. The second would require evidence the crew does not have.

Professional codes turn this analysis into duties. The SPJ Code of Ethics asks journalists to "verify information before releasing it" and to "use original sources whenever possible" (Society of Professional Journalists, September 6, 2014). The RTDNA code grants that "going viral" may increase urgency, but it says such moments "only heighten the need for strict standards of accuracy" (RTDNA Code of Ethics, June 11, 2015). A host organization that relays an urgent update carries the same obligations as a newsroom, even when the audience is a group chat.

The research on audiences is both sobering and hopeful. A Stanford study of 3,446 students found that most judged posts by appearance rather than authorship (Stanford Graduate School of Education, November 18, 2019).

Framing, verification and professional duty, continued

A peer-reviewed field study in high school government classes found that instruction in lateral reading measurably improved students’ judgments (Wineburg et al., Journal of Educational Psychology, July 2022). For communicators, the implication is practical. Audiences can learn verification, but an organization should not rely on its audience to do the checking. In this series, finding the original source is the first skill, and later cases assume you will use it without being told.

 **Stop and think.** Should a small host group be held to the same verification standard as a newsroom? What would change if it were not?

Sources

Real source | Robert M. Entman | 1993

Framing

Real source | Society of Professional Journalists | September 6, 2014

SPJ Code of Ethics

Real source | Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) | 2015

RTDNA Code of Ethics

Real source | Stanford Graduate School of Education | November 18, 2019

High school students are unprepared to judge the credibility of information on the internet, according to Stanford researchers

Real source | Journal of Educational Psychology (Wineburg et al.) | July 2022

Lateral reading on the open Internet: A district-wide field study in high school government classes

Notes

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 10 minutes.

Evidence A | **Group-chat** post, Friday 4:52 p.m.

The post

They're removing access tonight. Screening canceled?" A seven-second clip is attached. In it, the coordinator says "we are removing access," and the clip ends there.

Look closely: Which word in the caption goes further than the clip itself?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Coordinator's meeting transcript, Friday 3:30 p.m.

The full update

"The side-door reader is broken. We are removing access through that reader tonight. Existing room bookings remain in place. Use the staffed front entrance while we repair it."

Look closely: Which four words narrow what "access" means? Underline them.

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Booking email to Mateo, sent Tuesday

The booking email

Friday, 6—9 p.m. Screening confirmed. Front entrance: step-free. Staff member at the desk from 5:30 p.m. Contact the coordinator for arrival support.

Look closely: What does this confirm? What does it not say about the side door?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: framing

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

The clip in the group chat is real, but that only tells you the video is authentic. A **claim** is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence. **Context** is the information around an event or a quote that you need to understand what it means. Here, the clip stops before the rest of the coordinator's sentence, so the clip alone cannot confirm the caption's claim.

Framing is choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward. Media researcher Robert Entman uses this idea to study what messages select and emphasize. The crop makes "removing access" stand out and hides "through that reader," the words that limit the change to one broken side door. You do not have to prove that anyone meant to mislead people. You only need to show what the edit leaves out.

A **holding statement** is a short update that says what is known, what is still being checked and when people will hear more. It gives people a next step while the crew checks the documents. The correction that follows needs the time, the door and a contact for arrival help. People who are already traveling need those details before they arrive.

Professional standards

Real source | Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)

SPJ Code of Ethics: Seek Truth and Report It

"Verify information before releasing it. Use original sources whenever possible."

In plain words: Journalists who follow the SPJ code check a claim against the original source before they share it.

Question: What does the full meeting transcript say right after the point where the seven-second clip ends?

Your answer

The transcript goes on to say ____, which changes ____.

Check Yourself with Lateral Reading: Crash Course Navigating Digital Information #3

Shows the move the crew makes: leave the screenshot, open new tabs and check who made it and what other sources say.



Viral image shows fake story from The Atlantic about Biden

A real fact-check of a fabricated news screenshot: the image looked official, but the outlet never published it.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Sort the evidence

On your own Compare each piece of evidence with each claim. Write supports, challenges or neither in each box. About 6 minutes.

Draw an arrow from each piece of evidence to the claim it supports or challenges. Which claim is left standing, and which gap still needs a check before you post?

Evidence	Claim 1 The screening is canceled.	Claim 2 The screening is on; use the staffed front entrance.
1 The clip: “we are removing access...” ends mid-sentence.		
2 The transcript: access is removed “through that reader,” and existing bookings remain in place.		
3 The booking email: Friday 6—9 p.m., screening confirmed, step-free front entrance.		

Still open

- Can every visitor use the temporary entrance?

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the message you would send and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines.
About 6 minutes.

The post arrived a few minutes ago, and nobody has checked the original yet. What do you send to the group chat?

- ☐ **A** Cancel your plans before you travel.
- ☐ **B** We're checking the original. Hold your plans for a moment.
- ☐ **C** The post is fake. Ignore it.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Hey everyone, so there was a clip going around that said the screening was canceled but **1** that is NOT true lol. Someone didn't watch the whole thing and posted it anyway which is kind of annoying. I checked with Mateo and he said the booking is still good. They are just removing access through one door so everything is fine and **2** you can come like normal. The event is still happening Friday. Bring snacks if you want, Jordy is doing the projector. See you there!! Also if you have questions ask Mateo.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write an update-and-correction procedure for a student club's group chat and social accounts, using the Common Room rumor as the worked example. Include the correction the club would post.

Use: Case documents: the forwarded screenshot, the coordinator's transcript, the booking email and Jordy's holding message. Real sources: the SPJ Code of Ethics summary, the RTDNA code and the PRSSA member pledge.

You'll make: Procedure, 250—350 words, plus a model correction of 60—90 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Reread Evidence A, B and C. Note what each one can confirm.
- 2 List who in a club would check the original record, and when.
- 3 Write a holding-message step that gives a time for the next update.
- 4 Write a correction step that says what the correction includes and where it goes.
- 5 Draft the procedure, 250 to 350 words, on the Your draft page.
- 6 Write a model correction of 60 to 90 words for the Common Room rumor.
- 7 Cite one code of ethics in your procedure and say whom it applies to.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Who checks the original, and when

Your task, continued

The holding-message step

One code, and whom it applies to

How the correction reaches people in other chats

Notes

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Your model correction, 60 to 90 words

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your procedure say who checks the original record before anyone posts?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it include a holding step with a time for the next update?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your model correction give the time, the entrance and the source?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Did you keep guesses about motive out of the correction?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Repeats the screenshot's claim or ignores the documents.	☐ Mentions a source but not the detail that changes the meaning.	☐ Uses the transcript or email to correct the claim accurately.	☐ Uses both documents and names what they still cannot confirm.
Reasoning	☐ Treats the clip as fake or as final.	☐ Corrects the claim but adds a guess about motive.	☐ Explains the difference between an entrance change and a cancellation.	☐ Explains how the crop produced the wrong conclusion and avoids inventing motive.
Audience & purpose	☐ Message would not help someone decide whether to leave.	☐ Gives the verdict but leaves out time or entrance.	☐ Gives time, entrance and a contact.	☐ Anticipates access needs and people who saw only the original post.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change after feedback.	☐ Surface edits only.	☐ Adds a missing fact or removes an unsupported claim.	☐ Explains why each edit makes the update more usable.

I changed ___ because ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

1 The clip is real. How did it lead people to the wrong conclusion?

2 Should the crew say why they think the clip was posted? Why or why not?

3 Jordy's holding message does not repeat the word "canceled." Why might that matter?

4 What rule could the Common Room adopt for urgent updates? What would the rule cost?

My take

My claim: ____.

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 1: Is the screening canceled?

In this case, a short video clip in a group chat makes a group of friends think their movie night is canceled. Your student compared the clip with the full meeting notes and a booking email, then wrote a message that corrects the mix-up.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What would you check before you share a screenshot?
- 2 Where does your school post official updates, such as closings?
- 3 What makes a correction easy to trust?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 2: Does the worksheet show what Dec knows?

Dec can explain a circuit out loud but gets lost on a crowded worksheet, so the crew asks what the task measures.

On your own Read What happened. Underline what Dec can do out loud and where he gets stuck. About 5 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who reads the goal line before anyone decides what Dec knows. **New skill:** Check what a task is meant to measure.



Dec points to a small light circuit on the table while Anika watches.

What happened

Anika, 16, and Dec, 17, are at the study table twenty minutes before theater rehearsal. They are building a light circuit for a school set. Dec can explain out loud how the current travels through the circuit. On the written practice sheet, he loses his place in the instructions.

The sheet has six dense paragraphs and one small diagram. Anika's first idea is to run the same timed practice sheet again. Then she draws a larger sketch, and Dec traces the whole circuit correctly.

Mari, 19, is on her break from the bookshop. She does not assume she knows why Dec is stuck. Dec wants help with this task, but he does not want a diagnosis from the group chat.

Your question: Does the practice sheet show what Dec knows, and what should Dec ask his teacher?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 6 minutes.

Learning goal A learning goal is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show.

En español: meta de aprendizaje

In this case: The practice brief names one goal: explain how a simple circuit works. It does not list speed or reading six dense paragraphs.

Evaluation An evaluation is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure.

En español: evaluación

In this case: Dec's practice sheet is not an evaluation. It is one observation the crew can describe to a teacher.

Eligibility Eligibility is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program.

En español: elegibilidad

In this case: A practice sheet cannot show whether Dec is eligible for special education. Under IDEA, no single measure can be the only basis for that decision.

Who is involved



Dec

Theater crew, working on the circuit sheet

"I can show you where the current goes. Then I get halfway through the written question and lose my place."



Anika

Studying the circuit with Dec

"I kept pointing at the page and saying 'it's right there.' I never looked at how the question was written."

Before you look at the evidence, why do you think Dec gets stuck on the worksheet?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Validity, support and who decides

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Learning goal:** A learning goal is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show.
- **Evaluation:** An evaluation is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure.
- **Eligibility:** Eligibility is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program.
- **Context:** Context is the information around an event or a quote that you need to understand what it means.

The story: A correct explanation and a wrong answer

Dec, 17, can explain a simple circuit aloud with complete accuracy. He is building one for a school theater set with Anika, 16, at a study table twenty minutes before rehearsal. The written practice sheet for the same content defeats him. It has six dense paragraphs, one small diagram and four questions to answer in complete sentences. On paper, he skips a line in the instructions and answers a question that was not asked. When Anika redraws the circuit larger, he traces it correctly.

The case is built around a problem that teachers, testers and employers meet constantly. A performance can fail for reasons unrelated to the skill being measured. It also shows how quickly helpful people overreach. Anika's first proposal is to repeat the timed sheet. A group chat could easily move from "Dec struggled" to a confident theory about why. Dec draws the line himself. He asks his friends to say what happened, not what is wrong with him, and to ask him before anyone tells his teacher what he needs.

Mari, who is dyslexic and switches between print and audio, models a different stance. She asks Dec to walk her through the circuit and then compares that with the worksheet. Your role is to read the goal line before anyone decides what Dec knows.

❓ Stop and think. Where have you seen a test or application measure format more than the skill it names?

Construct and format

The practice brief states its **learning goal**: explain how a simple circuit works. A learning goal is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show. In assessment language, the goal is the construct, and everything else about the sheet is format. The brief does not ask for speed and sets no time limit. The density of the text and the size of the diagram may still be affecting the score. When format drives performance, the result says less about the construct.

Case 1's habit of returning to the original source applies directly. The goal line, not the group's impression, defines what should be measured. Case 1's term **context** also applies. The written answer is authentic evidence, but alone it is a partial frame, like a cropped clip. The study-table notes supply the rest: correct aloud, incorrect on paper, cause unknown.

The crew's response respects those limits. Dec tries a clearer practice diagram and explains his reasoning again, so the new format still requires the target skill. Anika changes the study plan. Dec decides whether to raise the question of support.

? **Stop and think.** Dec sets the terms for what his friends say. What would change if Anika wrote to Ms. R on her own?

Evaluation, eligibility and professional duty

The crew cannot answer the question of support, and the law says why. An **evaluation** is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure. **Eligibility** is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program. Under the IDEA regulations, a public school must use a variety of assessment tools and strategies, and no single measure may be the sole basis for an eligibility decision (U.S. Department of Education, IDEA regulations, 34 CFR 300.304). The rule guards against the very shortcut the case warns about: one performance, read as a verdict.

Professional codes reinforce the point. The Council for Exceptional Children asks special educators to use assessment procedures that "accurately measure what is intended to be measured." It also calls for "actively involving families and individuals with exceptionalities in educational decision making" (CEC Ethical Principles and Practice Standards, no date listed). The NEA code limits what educators may disclose about students (National Education Association, Code of Ethics, 1975). Federal testing guidance frames accommodations as a way to measure skill, not disability (ADA.gov, U.S. Department of Justice, February 28, 2020).

Design research offers a complementary strategy. CAST's Universal Design for Learning Guidelines recommend building more than one path into and out of a task from the start (CAST, 2024). A systematic review and meta-analysis examined the effectiveness of that approach (Almeqdad et al., Cogent Education, May 29, 2023). Journalists continue to test specific supports, asking whether extended time helps students with ADHD show what they know (Education Week, October 13, 2025).

Evaluation, eligibility and professional duty, continued

The unresolved questions are real. The ethical baseline is not. Measure the goal, and let the student decide what is shared about him. That question, what is this document or task designed to show, will return when you read pay statements, ballots and budgets in later cases.

?

Stop and think. CEC calls for involving individuals in decisions about them. How does the crew follow that principle without being bound by it?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Department of Education | No date listed
IDEA regulations, 34 CFR § 300.304 (evaluation procedures)

Real source | Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) | No date listed
CEC Ethical Principles and Practice Standards

Real source | National Education Association (NEA) | 1975
Code of Ethics of the Education Profession

Real source | ADA.gov (U.S. Department of Justice) | February 28, 2020
ADA Requirements: Testing Accommodations

Real source | CAST | 2024
Universal Design for Learning Guidelines 3.0

Real source | Cogent Education (Almeqdad et al.) | May 29, 2023
The effectiveness of universal design for learning: A systematic review of the literature and meta-analysis

Real source | Education Week | October 13, 2025
Does Extended Time on Tests Actually Help Students With ADHD?

Notes

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 10 minutes.

Evidence A | Practice brief, handed out Monday

The assignment

Goal: Explain how a simple circuit works. Read the six paragraphs below before you answer. Use the diagram to trace the path of the current from the battery through the switch and the LED and back. Answer questions 1–4 in complete sentences.

Look closely: Which skill does the goal line name, and which does it leave out?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Study-table notes, Wednesday 3:40 p.m.

Dec's explanation

Out loud, with the larger sketch: traced the whole path, battery to switch to LED and back. Correct. Written sheet: skipped a line in the instructions and answered a different question from the one asked. Dec: the layout is hard to follow.

Look closely: What did Dec get right out loud that the sheet did not record?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Key idea: learning goals

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 12 minutes.

Dec's written answer and his spoken explanation give the crew different information. A **learning goal** is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show. The practice brief names one goal: explain how a simple circuit works. It does not list speed, and it does not list reading six dense paragraphs. So the next question is what the sheet was meant to measure and what got in the way.

CAST's Universal Design for Learning Guidelines encourage giving learners more than one way to take in information and show what they know. For Dec, a larger diagram is a practice option to test. It is not a diagnosis, and it does not change an official test. Ask Dec what helped, and check that he can still explain the circuit.

An **evaluation** is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure. Under IDEA, a federal law, a public school must use varied tools in an evaluation. No single measure can be the only basis for deciding **eligibility**. Eligibility is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program. A study session is not an evaluation, so Dec decides whether to ask his school how that process starts.

Professional standards

Real source | Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

CEC Ethical Principles and Practice Standards: Special Education Standards for Professional Practice: Teaching and Assessment

“Use culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment procedures that accurately measure what is intended to be measured”

In plain words: Special educators who follow CEC's standards use assessments that measure the skill the task is meant to measure.

Question: The goal is explaining a circuit. Which parts of the sheet test something else, like reading six dense paragraphs?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

Besides its goal, the sheet measures ____, so ____.

In the news



Real source | Education Week | October 13, 2025

Does Extended Time on Tests Actually Help Students With ADHD?

Asks the case’s question in real life: does a test accommodation help students show what they actually know?



Real source | K-12 Dive | December 3, 2025

IDEA at 50: How the landmark law changed education

Explains where IDEA, evaluations and IEPs came from and why schools must plan around each student’s needs.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Read each decision in the diagram. Write who decides it in each blank box. About 8 minutes.

Sort who can decide each question. Which decision belongs to the teacher, which to a formal school process, and which only to Dec?

Try a clearer practice format for the circuit goal

Who decides

The teacher, who sets the practice format and the learning goal

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Dec, who decides what to share and whether to ask

Your way in

Start a formal IDEA evaluation or a Section 504 conversation

Who decides

The school's evaluation process, with a parent or guardian for a student under 18

Under which rule

IDEA evaluation rule: varied tools, no single measure as the sole basis

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what the crew should try and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines. About 6 minutes.

What should the crew try at the study table?

- ☐ **A** Run the same timed sheet again so Dec gets more practice.
- ☐ **B** Let Dec explain with a larger diagram, then compare his reasoning with the sheet.
- ☐ **C** Tell Dec he probably needs an IEP.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Hi Ms. R, Dec failed the circuit sheet again and we think the test is unfair to him. He obviously knows the material because he explained it to us perfectly. At the study table he went through the whole thing out loud with no mistakes. ① We think he might have a learning disability and should get an IEP so he can get extra time. My cousin has one and it helped her a lot. ② Can you give him an easier version? We really think this would help him pass. Thanks, Anika and Mari.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a one-page guide for volunteer tutors in a library or youth program who work with high school students like Dec. The guide shows how to describe what a tutor observes without diagnosing and how to point a student and family to the school's own process.

Use: Case documents: Dec's practice brief, his study-table notes and Dec's and Anika's statements. Real sources: the IDEA evaluation rule summary (34 CFR § 300.304) and the CAST UDL Guidelines summary. Also use the case's safety note.

You'll make: Tutor guide, 350—450 words, with one worked example based on Dec

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Sort the details in Evidence B into observed, possible explanation and not established.
- 2 Write the IDEA rule in one plain sentence.
- 3 List who a tutor should send formal questions to.
- 4 Sketch one redesign of the practice sheet that keeps the circuit goal.
- 5 Draft the guide, 350 to 450 words, on the Your draft page.
- 6 Use Dec's case as the one worked example, without diagnosing him.
- 7 Check the guide with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Observed

Possible explanation

Not established

[illegible][illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines in total. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your guide separate what was observed from what is not established?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it state the IDEA rule accurately?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it send formal questions to the student, the family and the school?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Did you leave out every real student's grades, diagnosis and support plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Mentions only the score.	☐ Describes Dec's explanation vaguely.	☐ Cites the goal and two specific observations.	☐ Uses observations and notes what they cannot show.
Reasoning	☐ Concludes Dec has a disability or the test is illegal.	☐ Suggests easier content without linking to the goal.	☐ Connects a possible format barrier to the learning goal.	☐ Distinguishes classroom support from IDEA evaluation accurately.
Audience & purpose	☐ Message speaks for Dec without his input.	☐ Mentions Dec but ignores his voice.	☐ Written in Dec's voice with his permission.	☐ Respects Dec's control and gives the teacher a clear next step.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Removes one problem line.	☐ Replaces the diagnosis with an observation.	☐ Explains how each change protects Dec's privacy and agency.

I changed ___ because ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

1 Is the practice sheet checking circuit understanding, reading speed or both?

2 How would you know a new format shows Dec's learning more clearly instead of giving away the answer?

3 What does the IDEA evaluation rule cover, and why does a study session fall outside it?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Talk about this case at home

Case 2: Does the worksheet show what Dec knows?

In this case, a student can explain a light circuit out loud but gets lost on a crowded worksheet. Your student compared the worksheet's goal with notes from a study session and thought about what the worksheet really measures.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Can one test show everything a person knows? Why or why not?
- 2 What makes the directions on a worksheet or a form easy to follow?
- 3 Who at a school can students ask about help with schoolwork?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 3: What should a group do after a public mistake?

The crew's recap caption blamed younger neighbors for a late start, but the event log shows the projector failed.

On your own Read What happened. Underline the caption and the time the projector failed. About 5 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who checks the log's times before the correction goes up. **New skill:** Correct a public mistake.



Gia and Jordy sit at a table with a laptop and a printed page.

What happened

It is Sunday at the edit desk. Caio, 24, edited a short recap of Friday's screening. The crew posted it on Saturday morning. Gia's caption, "Great night, once the younger crowd finally got organized," sounded believable, because a few people did arrive late.

Then Jordy checks the setup log. The projector failed at 5:40 p.m. The replacement was not running until 6:20, twenty minutes after everyone was seated. The log also says Anika and Dec helped carry chairs before the doors opened.

Anika sends the group a voice note asking why she and Dec are the problem in the post. Gia wants to take responsibility. Her first draft of a correction is mostly about how bad she feels, and the recap caption is still up.

Your question: What should the correction say, and what will the crew do differently next time?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Claim A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.

En español: afirmación

In this case: The caption claims the late start happened because “the younger crowd” was not organized. Jordy’s setup log checks that claim.

Correction A correction is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information.

En español: corrección

In this case: Gia edits the original caption, not just her story, so people who saw it learn what was wrong.

Accountability Accountability is owning a mistake and doing what you said you would do to fix it.

En español: rendición de cuentas

In this case: The crew names who fixes the caption, who contacts Anika and Dec, and who checks the next recap against the log.

Who is involved



Gia

Wrote the recap caption

“I wrote ‘once the younger crowd finally got organized.’ A few people did come in late, so it felt true. I never checked why we started late.”



Jordy

Kept the setup log on Friday

“My log says Anika and Dec were carrying chairs before doors opened. The caption turned them into the reason we started late.”

Before you look at the evidence, what should Gia's correction say first?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Corrections, repair and responsibility

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Correction:** A correction is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information.
- **Accountability:** Accountability is owning a mistake and doing what you said you would do to fix it.

The story: A believable caption

After the crew's first neighborhood screening, the one saved from a cropped clip in Case 1, the crew posted a recap on Saturday at 11:08 a.m. Caio, 24, edited the video, and Gia, 21, wrote the caption: "Great night, once the younger crowd finally got organized." The caption was plausible for an ordinary reason. Some people did arrive late, and the event did start late.

Jordy's setup log from Friday tells a different story. A projector failure was reported at 5:40 p.m. Attendees were seated by 6:00. The replacement was connected at 6:20. The log also records that Anika, 16, and Dec, 17, helped carry chairs before the doors opened. The caption had turned two volunteers into the cause of a delay they had no part in.

Anika responds with a voice note: "We were helping you set up. Why are we the problem in this post?" Gia's unpublished first draft reads, "Sorry if this came across wrong. We love our younger neighbors and would never want anyone to feel excluded." Its conditional "if" shifts responsibility to the reader. It also omits the facts, which leaves the false explanation standing.

 **Stop and think.** Gia's draft uses the word "if." How does a conditional apology shift responsibility?

Anatomy of a repair

The caption contains a causal **claim**, a statement that something is true that can be checked with evidence. Applying the Case 1 skill, finding the original source, the crew checks the claim against the log, and the log refutes it.

Anatomy of a repair, continued

A **correction** is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information. Three design choices determine whether it works. The first is placement. Caio insists on editing the original post rather than publishing a new one, so the correction reaches the same audience. The second is content. The correction names the specific error and states the documented cause. The third is order. The facts come before the author's feelings, which may not belong in the correction at all.

Accountability is owning a mistake and doing what you said you would do to fix it. The crew converts that principle into assigned tasks: Gia corrects the post, Caio keeps a visible correction note with the edit and Jordy adds a pre-publication source check. The case also marks the boundary of accountability. The people harmed are not recruited into the repair. Anika is not asked to approve the correction publicly or to reassure Gia. She is offered a private channel and left to decide how she feels. Finally, Jordy defines success by audience understanding rather than reach. If people who saw the original post still attribute the delay to "the younger crowd," the correction has not worked.

 **Stop and think.** Why should the people harmed by a mistake be kept out of the work of repairing it?

Evidence from research and practice

Research on apologies supports the crew's priorities. Lewicki and colleagues identified six elements of an effective apology and found that acknowledging responsibility and offering repair carried the most weight (Negotiation and Conflict Management Research, April 6, 2016). Research on misinformation reaches a compatible conclusion. Walter and Murphy's meta-analysis of 65 studies found that corrections are more effective when they give a clear explanation rather than a bare denial (Communication Monographs, May 15, 2018).

Professional codes translate these findings into obligations. PRSA members commit to "act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the practitioner is responsible" (PRSA Code of Ethics, October 2000). The RTDNA code requires "giving corrections as much prominence as the error itself had" (RTDNA Code of Ethics, June 11, 2015). The National Communication Association's credo states, "We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our own communication and expect the same from others" (NCA Credo for Ethical Communication, 2024).

Corporate cases show the gap between regret and repair. Dove expressed regret after an ad played into a racial stereotype (NPR, October 8, 2017). H&M hired a diversity leader after outrage over its "monkey hoodie" ad (NBC News, January 17, 2018). Whether such steps count as repair is a fair question to put to any organization, including your own.

The film connection shows the same error at a larger scale. In *Zootopia* (2016), Judy tells a press conference that a set of incidents has a biological explanation tied to one group.

Evidence from research and practice, continued

Nick's reaction shows a personal cost that her official answer overlooks. In our reading, good intentions do not erase the effect of an unsupported claim about a group, and the animal groups in the film are not a scientific model of human race. Your job in this case is to check the log's times before the correction goes up.

? **Stop and think.** Choose one of the brand apologies. Using the six-element research, what would count as repair rather than regret?

Sources

Real source | Negotiation and Conflict Management Research (Lewicki et al.) | April 6, 2016
An Exploration of the Structure of Effective Apologies

Real source | Communication Monographs (Walter & Murphy) | May 15, 2018
How to unring the bell: A meta-analytic approach to correction of misinformation

Real source | Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) | October 2000
PRSA Code of Ethics

Real source | Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) | 2015
RTDNA Code of Ethics

Real source | National Communication Association (NCA) | 2024
Credo for Ethical Communication

Real source | NPR | October 8, 2017
Dove Expresses 'Regret' For Racially Insensitive Ad

Real source | NBC News | January 17, 2018
H&M hires diversity leader after outrage over 'monkey hoodie' ad

Real source | Critical Media Project | No date listed
Zootopia: the press conference

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Recap caption, posted Saturday 11:08 a.m.

The caption

Great night, once the younger crowd finally got organized.

Look closely: Which group does this caption ask readers to blame, and on what evidence?

What it shows	What it leaves out

Evidence B | Setup log, Friday evening

Jordy’s event log

5:40 p.m. Projector failure reported. 6:00 p.m. Attendees seated. 6:20 p.m. Replacement projector connected. Note: Anika and Dec helped carry chairs before doors opened.

Look closely: What happened at 5:40 that the caption never mentions?

What it shows	What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Voice note to the crew

Anika’s message

“We were helping you set up. Why are we the problem in this post?”

Look closely: What fact does Anika add, and what is she asking the crew?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence D | Draft correction, Saturday 2:15 p.m., not posted

Gia’s first correction

Sorry if this came across wrong. We love our younger neighbors and would never want anyone to feel excluded.

Look closely: What fact does this correct? Who does the word “if” put the problem on?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Key idea: corrections

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

Gia's caption did two jobs at once. It explained the late start, and it blamed a group of people for it. A **claim** is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence. Jordy's setup log checks the caption's claim and shows a projector failure instead.

A **correction** is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information. It should appear where people saw the mistake, so the crew should edit the recap caption itself. A 2016 study of apologies found that taking responsibility and offering to repair the harm mattered most. Gia's first draft talks about loving younger neighbors, and it does neither.

Accountability is owning a mistake and doing what you said you would do to fix it. That means naming who corrects the caption, who contacts the people it blamed and who checks the next recap. Anika does not have to comfort Gia or approve the correction in public. The crew can offer her a private way to respond.

Professional standards

Real source | Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)

PRSA Code of Ethics: Free Flow of Information

"Act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the practitioner is responsible."

In plain words: Public relations professionals who belong to PRSA agree to fix their own mistakes quickly.

Question: The recap caption went up Saturday at 11:08 a.m. What should the crew change first, and where?

Your answer

The first change is ____, made in ____, because ____.

How a real newsroom corrects mistakes: name the error, fix it on the story and keep a public list.



A real brand apology after an ad played into a racial stereotype; compare the words with what changed afterward.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook paper or a document template. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

Sort the evidence

On your own Compare the four accounts. Mark where they agree, where they differ and which one was written at the time. About 6 minutes.

Place the four accounts side by side. Where do they agree, where do they split, and which one was written down at the time?

Account 1
Caption: the night went well once the younger crowd got organized.

Account 2
Event log: projector failed at 5:40; replacement connected at 6:20; Anika and Dec carried chairs.

Account 3
Anika: “We were helping you set up.”

Where they agree

Where they differ

Check: Which account was recorded at the time rather than remembered afterward?

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what goes first in the correction and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines.
About 6 minutes.

What should go first in the correction?

☐ **A** An explanation of how bad Gia feels about the caption.

☐ **B** The wrong claim, and what the event log shows.

☐ **C** Delete the post and stay quiet.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

We want to apologize for our last post. We didn't mean to offend anyone and we love having younger people at our events. It was a really stressful night and **1** things were hectic so we said something we shouldn't have. Honestly we were all tired and trying to get everything set up on time, and it's been a lot. We are sorry if anyone was hurt. **2** We promise it won't happen again and we hope everyone keeps coming! Thank you all for your support and understanding, it means a lot to us.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a corrections policy for a student club's social accounts, then use it to write the correction for the crew's recap caption.

Use: Case documents: the recap caption, Jordy's setup log, Anika's message and Gia's unposted first draft. Real sources: the PRSA Code of Ethics summary, the RTDNA rule on prominent corrections and the NPR Public Editor's column "That was wrong" (October 21, 2022).

You'll make: Corrections policy, 250—350 words, plus a posted correction of 70—100 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Reread Evidence A, B, C and D. List what the crew's process missed.
- 2 Decide who writes corrections, where they appear and how quickly.
- 3 Choose whether the club edits the original, posts a new one or does both.
- 4 Write a repair step with an owner and a check.
- 5 Draft the policy, 250 to 350 words, on the Your draft page.
- 6 Write the correction for the recap caption, 70 to 100 words.
- 7 Cite the PRSA or RTDNA code and say whom it applies to.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Who writes corrections

Where corrections appear, and how fast

Edit, new post or both, and why

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Your draft, continued

Your correction, 70 to 100 words

Correction:

Notes

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your policy say who writes corrections, where they appear and how quickly?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it include a repair step with an owner and a check?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your correction name the error and state what the log shows?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you cite a code accurately and repeat no stereotype?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No evidence about the delay.	☐ Mentions “technical issues” vaguely.	☐ Cites the projector failure from the log.	☐ Cites specific times and corrects who actually helped.
Reasoning	☐ Apologizes for feelings only.	☐ Admits error but not what it was.	☐ Names the inaccurate claim and replaces it.	☐ Explains why the claim harmed a group and how the repair prevents a repeat.
Audience & purpose	☐ Does not consider who saw the post.	☐ Speaks to readers in general.	☐ Reaches the people who were blamed.	☐ Reaches the original audience and the blamed group through appropriate channels.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Softens tone only.	☐ Adds facts and a repair.	☐ Adds facts, an owner, a check and removes shifting of blame.

I changed ___ because ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

- 1 The caption felt true to Gia because a few people came in late. Why was that not enough evidence?

- 2 What evidence would show that the repair happened?

- 3 After the correction goes up, what is still up to Anika and Dec to decide?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

[illegible]

Talk about this case at home

Case 3: What should a group do after a public mistake?

In this case, a group of friends posts a caption that wrongly blames younger neighbors for a late start. Your student compared the caption with an event log and wrote a correction and a plan to repair the harm.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What makes an apology feel complete?
- 2 Where should a correction appear so the people who saw a mistake will see it?
- 3 How can a group check a claim before it posts about an event?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 4: Who gets a say when a shared room changes?

The Common Room's board is weighing paid rentals on two free evenings, so the crew prepares a comment before the meeting.

On your own Read What happened. Underline who decides and what the board is considering. About 5 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who checks the budget figures before the crew speaks to the board. **New skill:** Weigh the trade-offs of each option.



Mari shows Sami a printed schedule.

What happened

It is the Friday after the crew's first screening, and the board meeting is coming up. A small neighborhood nonprofit runs the Common Room alongside the bookshop. The nonprofit's board is considering paid rentals on two evenings a week to help cover staffing. No vote has happened yet.

Mari, 19, works the bookshop counter and closes the shop. She knows that "just keep it free" does not pay the evening staff. Sami runs a print workshop in the room after her afternoon shift. It is one of the few step-free rooms nearby.

Caio, 24, runs the crew's Tuesday film night. Tuesday is one of the evenings Option B would rent out. Mateo already has a headline for a petition. The crew agrees the room matters, but they do not agree on the best schedule.

Your question: Which option should the crew support, and what should they ask the board?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Proposal A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.

En español: propuesta

In this case: Option B is a proposal on the board's agenda. No vote has been taken, so it is not a decision yet.

Trade-off A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.

En español: compensación entre opciones

In this case: Paid rentals help close the \$200 weekly gap but take away free evenings Sami and Dec use.

Decision-maker A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.

En español: quien toma la decisión

In this case: The nonprofit board decides, not a city community board and not the crew.

Who is involved



Mari

Closes the bookshop, then stays for zine night

"I'm the one they pay to lock up, and I'm also one of the people using this room after. I can't pretend either half away."



Sami

Runs a print workshop in the room

"We keep deciding what the evening people need. Has anyone asked them yet?"

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think the crew should ask the board for?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Budgets, access and the politics of a shared room

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Proposal:** A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.
- **Trade-off:** A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.
- **Decision-maker:** A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.
- **Framing:** Framing is choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward.

The story: A small board with a real deficit

The Common Room is a shared space run by a small neighborhood nonprofit alongside a Fort Greene bookshop. Its board is considering paid rentals on two evenings a week to help cover staffing, and it will discuss the idea at a Wednesday 6:30 p.m. meeting. No vote has been taken. The crew, who hold screenings, workshops and film nights there, agree that the room matters. They disagree about the best schedule.

Their positions follow their circumstances. Mateo arrives with a petition headline and, by his own account, no budget. Mari, 19, is paid to close the bookshop and also uses the room afterward, so she sees a cost that nobody has recorded. Rental nights would turn her zine evenings into shifts spent staffing a stranger's event. Sami, who works afternoons and runs a print workshop in one of the few step-free rooms nearby, objects to the process. The crew is deciding what evening users need without consulting them. She also rejects the easy substitute of moving her workshop online, which would require devices, quiet space and supplies that not everyone has. Caio, 24, runs the Tuesday film night that Option B would end.

❓ Stop and think. Sami wants to know what her input can change. How does that question test whether a consultation is real?

The documents and the frame

The agenda offers three **proposals**. A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet. Option A keeps the free evenings and accepts a continuing funding gap.

The documents and the frame, continued

Option B replaces Tuesday and Thursday evenings with paid rentals. Option C pilots one rental evening for six weeks while the board seeks other funding. The weekly budget note shows \$600 in evening staffing and utilities against \$400 in grants and donations. Each rental is projected to net \$120, so two would close the \$200 gap and one would leave \$80. The note flags demand as uncertain and does not say whether the \$120 figure rests on any past bookings.

A **trade-off** is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up. Carol Bacchi's policy-analysis approach asks what a proposed solution assumes the problem is (Carol Bacchi, November 1, 2017). Option B represents the problem as a revenue shortfall, which makes free evenings the natural place to find money. The Case 1 concept of **framing**, choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward, describes the same move. A different representation, such as unequal access to the few step-free rooms nearby, would make different options look reasonable. Bacchi's method is symmetrical. It applies equally to the petition, which represents the problem as a threat to free space and treats staffing costs as someone else's concern.

The listening notes supply the evidence a representation can hide. Sami works afternoons. Dec rehearses on Thursdays. Mari closes the shop. A nearby resident worries about late noise. The meeting time overlaps several shifts, so the people with the most at stake are the least able to attend.

 **Stop and think.** Propose a different representation of the problem. Which option would it favor, and why?

Participation, authority and professional duty

A **decision-maker** is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice. The board decides its own schedule. Public bodies distribute authority differently. New York's community boards advise rather than decide (NYC.gov, Brooklyn Community Board 13, no date listed). The city's library cuts illustrate the chain. Budget reductions ended Sunday service at every branch that still had it, with Brooklyn's last Sunday on December 17, 2023 (NY1, November 17, 2023). A \$58.3 million restoration brought Sundays back from July 14, 2024 (NYC Mayor's Office, July 1, 2024), and Council members credited residents who called and wrote (New York City Council, July 14, 2024).

Some institutions share the decision itself. Researchers at Tufts' CIRCLE found that participatory budgeting in Illinois high schools helped students weigh competing needs (CIRCLE, August 9, 2024). A peer-reviewed study examined how young people take part when communities share decisions about public resources (Farahmandpour and Zrudlo, Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, December 4, 2023).

For administrators, the ASPA code asks them to provide "accurate, honest, comprehensive, and timely information and advice" to governing boards (ASPA Code of Ethics, 2013).

Participation, authority and professional duty, continued

A budget note that projects revenue without stating its basis falls short of that standard. The crew answers in kind: one joint question that leaves room for disagreement, checked figures and an accessible way to send written feedback. Your role is to check the figures before the crew speaks, and to ask the board how certain the \$120 projection is.

? **Stop and think.** What would a budget note that met the ASPA standard say about the \$120 projection?

Sources

Real source | Carol Bacchi | November 1, 2017

What's the problem represented to be?

Real source | NYC.gov, Brooklyn Community Board 13 | No date listed

About community boards

Real source | NY1 | November 17, 2023

Public libraries over the next two weeks to begin closing on Sundays

Real source | NYC Mayor's Office | July 1, 2024

Mayor Adams Celebrates \$58.3 Million Investment in City's Three Library Systems

Real source | New York City Council | July 14, 2024

NYC Council, Library Leaders, and New Yorkers Celebrate Library Budget Restorations to Restore Full Service, as Branches Reopen and Reinstate Services on Sunday for First Time in Months

Real source | CIRCLE (Tufts University) | August 9, 2024

Participatory Budgeting in Schools Helps Build Student Voice and Civic Skills

Real source | Education, Citizenship and Social Justice (Farahmandpour & Zrudlo) | December 4, 2023

Investigating young people's involvement in participatory budgeting

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) | 2013

ASPA Code of Ethics

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 10 minutes.

Evidence A | Board agenda, Wednesday 6:30 p.m. meeting

The proposal

Evening rentals, for discussion. Option A: keep the current free evenings; the funding gap remains. Option B: replace Tuesday and Thursday evenings with paid rentals. Option C: pilot one rental evening for six weeks while seeking additional funding. No vote has been taken.

Look closely: Is this a vote or a discussion? Which words tell you?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Weekly budget note for the board

The budget note

Evening staffing and utilities: \$600. Current grants and donations: \$400. Each paid rental is projected to add \$120 after its extra costs. Two bookings would add \$240; one would add \$120. Demand is uncertain.

Look closely: Which number is a guess, and what could change it?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Listening notes from evening users

The missing voices

Sami works afternoons. Dec rehearses on Thursdays. Mari closes the shop. A nearby resident worries about late noise. The proposed meeting time overlaps with several shifts.

Look closely: Whose voice is missing from these four notes?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: trade-offs

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

The board is weighing a **proposal** about the free evenings. A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet. Option B would help close the \$200 weekly gap, but it would end the free Tuesday and Thursday evenings. A **trade-off** is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up. Every option on the agenda has one, including the one you prefer.

Carol Bacchi's policy-analysis approach asks what a proposed solution assumes the problem is. Option B treats the \$200 gap as the problem and two free evenings as the price. That leaves two questions open: who loses those evenings, and what happens if bookings come in lower than projected? Ask the same questions about your own favorite option.

A **decision-maker** is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice. Here, the nonprofit's board controls its own schedule. A community board or a city agency would follow other rules. A strong comment names the proposal, explains one effect with evidence and asks for a decision the board can make. The board can still choose an option the crew did not ask for.

Professional standards

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)

ASPA Code of Ethics: 5. Fully Inform and Advise

"Provide accurate, honest, comprehensive, and timely information and advice to elected and appointed officials and governing board members"

In plain words: ASPA members agree to give decision-makers, such as board members, accurate and complete information.

Question: The budget note projects \$120 more per rental. What should it also tell the board about how certain that is?

Your answer

The note should also state ____, so that ____.

Real source | Education Week | February 6, 2023

Letting Students Decide Where Money Should Go: How One District Did It

A real district let students propose and vote on how shared school spaces and money would change.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners on the left side and a dark border around the edges.

Sort the evidence

On your own Follow each option to its consequences. Mark the consequences that depend on a projection. About 8 minutes.

Follow each option to its consequences. Which consequences depend on a projection, and who carries the cost if it misses?

Option B: paid rentals replace Tuesday and Thursday evenings

A projected \$240 would cover the \$200 gap if both evenings book

Who is affected

Check: What happens if bookings fall short of the projection?

Option C: one rental evening piloted for six weeks

A projected \$80 gap remains while the board seeks funding and reviews the pilot

Who is affected

Check: What happens if bookings fall short of the projection?

Dec loses Thursday rehearsals and Mari's late evenings stop being usable

Who is affected

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what the crew should ask for first and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines. About 6 minutes.

What should the crew ask the board for first?

- ☐ **A** Post that the board is taking away the free nights.
- ☐ **B** Ask for the budget assumptions, who uses each evening and a way to comment without attending.
- ☐ **C** Support whichever option brings in the most money.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

1 The board should not take away our free nights. The Common Room is important to the community and a lot of people use it. I have been coming here for movie nights since it opened and it's one of the only places we can all hang out without paying. Renting it out just shows **2** the board cares more about money than people. Sami and Dec would lose their spot and that is not fair. Please keep it free for everyone. Thank you for listening.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a proposal to the nonprofit board for hearing from evening users before it chooses among Options A, B and C. Add a written comment that recommends one option.

Use: Case documents: the board agenda, the weekly budget note, the listening notes and Mari's and Sami's statements. Real sources: the Bacchi summary, ASPA's principle on promoting democratic participation and the first principle of the ALA code.

You'll make: Proposal, 300—400 words, plus a written comment of 150—200 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Reread Evidence A, B and C. Note who the meeting time leaves out.
- 2 Plan two ways the board can hear from evening users before it decides.
- 3 Add a way to hear the nearby resident's concern about noise.
- 4 Say how the board will report back what it heard.
- 5 Draft the proposal, 300 to 400 words, on the Your draft page.
- 6 Write a comment of 150 to 200 words that recommends one option.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Who the meeting time leaves out

Input method 1

Input method 2

How the board reports back

[illegible][illegible]

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

[illegible]

Your written comment, 150 to 200 words

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your proposal name the board as the decision-maker and say no vote has been taken?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you use the figures accurately and call the \$120 a projection?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your plan reach people whose shifts overlap with the meeting?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you make one request the board can act on?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No figures or perspectives.	☐ Mentions money or people vaguely.	☐ Uses one figure and one affected perspective accurately.	☐ Uses figures conditionally and names an uncertainty.
Reasoning	☐ Assigns bad motives to the board.	☐ States a preference without addressing the gap.	☐ Recommends an option and addresses the gap.	☐ Weighs trade-offs across options and explains the choice.
Audience & purpose	☐ Speaks to the wrong decision-maker.	☐ Addresses the board but asks for nothing specific.	☐ Makes a request the board can act on.	☐ Requests a process that includes people who can't attend.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Tone edits only.	☐ Replaces a motive claim with evidence.	☐ Adds a figure, a perspective and a follow-up request.

One change I made after feedback

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

- 1** Option B treats the \$200 gap as the problem. What does that way of stating the problem leave out?

- 2** Mari is paid to close the shop and also uses the room at night. How does that shape what she asks for?

- 3** If the board chooses an option the crew did not support, how should the crew tell the group what happened?

- 4** How is the Common Room's board different from the City Council that helped restore library Sundays?

My take

My claim: ____.

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 4: Who gets a say when a shared room changes?

In this case, a community room's board is weighing whether to rent out two free evenings to cover its costs. Your student used a budget note and notes from evening users to write a comment the board could act on.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Who decides the hours at a public library or community center?
- 2 What should a group know before it asks a board for a change?
- 3 How can people give input if they cannot attend a meeting?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.

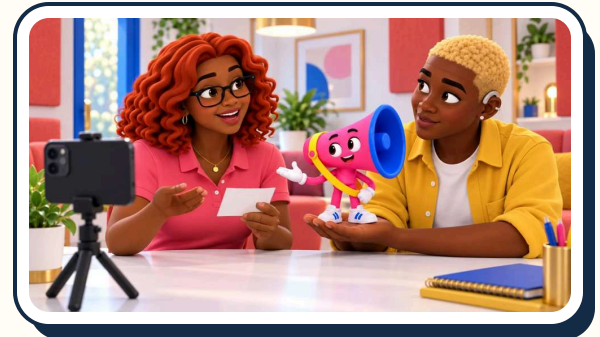


See the case online.

Case 5: Why is my deposit smaller than what I earned?

Gia's bank deposit is smaller than the pay she worked out, so she reads her pay statement line by line before asking payroll.

On your own Read What happened and underline the two hour totals that do not match. About 4 minutes.



Gia holds a small card and talks beside a phone on a tripod. Jordy holds Voz, one of the crew's companions, on an open hand.

Your role: You're the one who adds up Gia's hours before she writes to payroll. **New skill:** Read a pay statement line by line.

What happened

It is Thursday evening, and it is payday for Gia. She works café shifts around her college classes. She checks her bank account and sees a deposit that is smaller than the pay she worked out. Gia keeps a shift log in her notes app. The log says 18 hours, but her pay statement says 15.

Jordy works event shifts, and their deposit looks different too. Jordy's shifts fall on different dates and hours, so their pay cannot explain Gia's. Jordy asks Gia to name the line that worries her instead of posting her whole statement.

Gia's pay statement lists her hours, her hourly rate and four tax lines. She expected the lines for Social Security and Medicare. She does not understand the line for federal income tax. Before she writes to payroll, she wants to know what her own records show.

Your question: Why is Gia's deposit smaller than her own count, and what should she ask payroll?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Gross pay Gross pay is the money you earn before any taxes or other deductions are taken out.

En español: salario bruto

In this case: Gia's statement pays 15 hours at \$17.00 an hour, so her gross pay is \$255.00.

Net pay Net pay is the money left after taxes and other deductions, often called take-home pay.

En español: salario neto

In this case: The \$220.99 that reached Gia's bank account is her net pay, not the amount she earned.

FICA FICA is the federal payroll tax that funds Social Security and Medicare.

En español: FICA (Seguro Social y Medicare)

In this case: On Gia's statement, FICA appears as two lines: Social Security tax, \$15.81, and Medicare tax, \$3.70.

Withholding Withholding is money an employer takes out of each paycheck to pay taxes or other costs for the worker.

En español: retención

In this case: Federal income tax withheld, \$8.40, is a separate line from FICA. The IRS says its amount depends partly on the W-4.

Who is involved



Gia

Works café shifts and keeps her own shift log

"My notes say 18 hours. The statement says 15. I counted twice, so where did three hours go?"



Jordy

Works event shifts on different dates

"Mine is event work. Different dates, different hours. My deposit can't tell Gia anything about hers."

Before you look at the evidence, why do you think Gia's deposit is smaller than she expected?

[illegible]

Reading passage

Pay statements, payroll taxes and privacy

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Gross pay:** Gross pay is the money you earn before any taxes or other deductions are taken out.
- **Net pay:** Net pay is the money left after taxes and other deductions, often called take-home pay.
- **FICA:** FICA is the federal payroll tax that funds Social Security and Medicare.
- **Withholding:** Withholding is money an employer takes out of each paycheck to pay taxes or other costs for the worker.
- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.

The story: A discrepancy with two causes

Gia, 21, works café shifts around her college classes and keeps her own record of every shift in a notes app. On payday, a Thursday, her bank deposit is smaller than her estimate. Her log shows five shifts totaling 18 hours. Her pay statement shows 15. The gap between what she expected and what arrived has two separate causes, and the case asks students to separate them before anyone writes to payroll.

Jordy, who works event shifts on different dates, steers the conversation. Comparing their deposits would prove nothing, because the inputs differ. Jordy also sets two privacy boundaries. Gia should not post her whole statement to the group. When Gia writes to payroll, she should leave out Jordy's pay and her own bank account number, which payroll already has. Keep the shift log, lose the bank details.

Your role is to add up Gia's hours before she writes to payroll. For many young workers, a pay statement is the first place they meet labor law and the social insurance system. It is also where an unreviewed assumption, such as "it all went to taxes," can hide a real error.

❓ Stop and think. Jordy separates two questions: what the deposit shows and what the statement shows. Why does that separation matter?

Two causes, read line by line

Gia's hypothesis that payroll shorted her is a **claim**, a statement that something is true that can be checked with evidence. Testing it draws on skills from earlier cases. Case 1 taught you to go to the original source, and Case 4 taught you to read figures carefully and ask what each one assumes.

The first cause is timing. The statement covers the period ending Friday the 12th and pays 15 hours at \$17.00, for \$255.00 in **gross pay**, the money you earn before any taxes or other deductions are taken out. Gia's shifts through the 12th total exactly 15 hours. The 3-hour shift on Saturday the 13th falls in the next period. The evidence strongly suggests a cutoff issue rather than an error, but only payroll can confirm when those hours will be paid.

The second cause is deductions. Social Security tax (\$15.81) and Medicare tax (\$3.70) are the two components of **FICA**, the federal payroll tax that funds Social Security and Medicare. Federal income tax withheld (\$8.40) and state and local income tax withheld (\$6.10) are separate. **Withholding** is money an employer takes out of each paycheck to pay taxes or other costs for the worker. The remainder, \$220.99, is **net pay**, the money left after taxes and other deductions, often called take-home pay.

A careful reader also notes what the statement does not show. It does not explain how the \$8.40 in federal income tax was figured. Gia asks whether the W-4 she completed on her first day is the reason. That is exactly the kind of targeted question payroll can answer.

 **Stop and think.** What would payroll have to say for the missing hours to count as an error rather than a timing issue?

Institutions behind the statement

The IRS explains that employers withhold federal income tax, Social Security and Medicare from employees' wages, and that the worker's Form W-4 partly determines income-tax withholding (Internal Revenue Service, updated May 1, 2026). Because withholding is credited toward a full year's liability, a single statement cannot reveal what a worker will owe. The IRS Tax Withholding Estimator exists for that check (Internal Revenue Service, updated June 27, 2026). This framework covers employees in the United States. Self-employed workers follow a different process.

The social insurance side is often invisible to new workers. The Peter G. Peterson Foundation explains what payroll taxes fund (May 26, 2026), and NPR's The Indicator explains why the Social Security portion comes out of nearly every paycheck (June 6, 2018). Wage floors shape gross pay before any of this. States can set a minimum above the federal level, and 19 states raised theirs in January 2026 (Money, January 1, 2026).

Professional ethics frames the employer's obligations.

Institutions behind the statement, continued

The PayrollOrg code commits members to “perfect compliance, accuracy, and timeliness of all payroll activities” and to “the absolute confidentiality of the payroll within the procedures of the employer” (PayrollOrg Code of Ethics, no date listed). Jordy’s privacy instincts mirror that second commitment from the worker’s side. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Young Worker Toolkit collects federal rules on young workers’ pay and hours for cases where a paycheck does not add up (U.S. Department of Labor, no date listed). Reading the statement line by line is the new skill here, and later cases ask you to read budgets, forms and offers the same way.

? **Stop and think.** Jordy’s privacy rules mirror a payroll code. Where else should a worker limit what they share about pay?

Sources

Real source | Internal Revenue Service | May 1, 2026

Understanding employment taxes

Real source | Internal Revenue Service | June 27, 2026

Tax Withholding Estimator

Real source | Peter G. Peterson Foundation | May 26, 2026

Payroll Taxes: What Are They and What Do They Fund?

Real source | NPR, The Indicator from Planet Money | June 6, 2018

Social Insecurity

Real source | Money | January 1, 2026

Minimum-Wage Workers in These 19 States Just Got a Raise

Real source | PayrollOrg | No date listed

PayrollOrg Code of Ethics

Real source | U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division | No date listed

Young Worker Toolkit

Look at the evidence

On your own Read the pay statement and the shift log, and fill in both boxes for each one. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Pay statement

Gia’s pay statement

Pay period ending Friday the 12th, paid the following Thursday. Hours: 15.00 at \$17.00. Gross pay: \$255.00. Social Security tax: \$15.81. Medicare tax: \$3.70. Federal income tax withheld: \$8.40. State and local income tax withheld: \$6.10. Net pay: \$220.99.

Look closely: Which line shows gross pay? Which two lines together make up FICA?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Notes app

Gia’s shift log for the last two weeks

Mon the 8th: 4 hrs. Wed the 10th: 4 hrs. Thu the 11th: 3 hrs. Fri the 12th: 4 hrs. Sat the 13th: 3 hrs. My total: 18 hrs.

Look closely: Which shift falls outside the pay period? Add the hours inside it.

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Key idea: gross pay and net pay

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 8 minutes.

A bank deposit shows how much money arrived, but the pay statement shows how the employer figured it. **Gross pay** is the money you earn before any taxes or other deductions are taken out. For an hourly worker, gross pay is the hours worked times the hourly rate, plus any other earnings. **Net pay** is the money left after taxes and other deductions, often called take-home pay. Gia's deposit is her net pay.

Deductions are the lines between those two totals. **FICA** is the federal payroll tax that funds Social Security and Medicare. On Gia's statement, FICA appears as two lines: Social Security tax and Medicare tax.

Withholding is money an employer takes out of each paycheck to pay taxes or other costs for the worker. Federal income-tax withholding is a separate line from FICA, and the IRS says its amount depends partly on the worker's Form W-4.

A statement can also list other deductions, such as benefit contributions, so read each line's name before you decide it is income tax. The federal income tax taken from each paycheck counts toward the tax a worker owes for the whole year. One paycheck cannot show what that yearly total will be. This explanation covers employees in the United States. Self-employed workers follow a different tax process.

Professional standards

Real source | PayrollOrg

PayrollOrg Code of Ethics: Item 2

"To strive for perfect compliance, accuracy, and timeliness of all payroll activities."

In plain words: Payroll professionals who belong to PayrollOrg aim to pay people correctly and on time.

Question: Gia worked Saturday the 13th, after the pay period ended. What should payroll confirm about when she gets paid?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

Payroll should confirm _____. This matters because _____.

In the news



Real source | Two Cents, PBS (YouTube) | April 10, 2019

How Do Your Tax Dollars Get Spent?

Starts with a first paycheck that's smaller than expected and explains FICA and income tax withholding.



Real source | NPR, The Indicator from Planet Money | June 6, 2018

Social Insecurity

A short episode on the Social Security part of FICA and why it comes out of nearly every paycheck.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Compare each piece of evidence with each claim and write supports, challenges or neither in each box. About 6 minutes.

Before calling it an error, sort the evidence. Which facts explain the smaller deposit, and which question is still worth asking payroll?

Evidence	Claim 1 Payroll shorted Gia’s pay.	Claim 2 The missing 3 hours belong on the next statement.
1 Shift log shows 18 hours; the statement shows 15		
2 The period ended Friday the 12th; the 3-hour shift was Saturday the 13th		
3 Gross pay of \$255.00 matches 15 × \$17.00		
4 FICA and withholding lines account for the gap between gross and net		

Still open

- Will the Saturday shift actually appear next time? Ask payroll.

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what Gia should do first and explain why, then fix the two marked lines. About 5 minutes.

Gia's deposit is smaller than the pay she worked out. What should she do first?

- ☐ **A** Compare her deposit with Jordy's.
- ☐ **B** Check her hours and the pay period, then read each line of her statement.
- ☐ **C** Treat the whole gap as taxes and let it go.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Hi, my paycheck is wrong. **1** I worked way more hours than what I got paid for and also a lot of money was taken out for taxes which doesn't seem right. I've been working really hard and picking up extra shifts so this is really frustrating. My friend Jordy works similar hours and got more than me. Can you fix it? **2** My account number is 4471-xxxx if you need it. Please let me know as soon as possible because I have bills. Thanks, Gia

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 10 minutes.

Write Gia’s question to payroll about the missing hours. Then write a one-page guide for new student workers that walks through her pay statement line by line. The guide could be used in a campus career office’s first-job workshop.

Use: Case documents: Gia’s pay statement, her shift log, her chat with Jordy and her statement. Real sources: the IRS page on employment taxes, the IRS tutorial on gross and net pay and the Department of Labor’s Young Worker Toolkit.

You’ll make: Payroll question, 50—80 words, plus a guide of 300—400 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Reread Evidence A and B, and mark the pay period and the Saturday shift on the calendar.
- 2 Fill in the table, line by line, from gross pay to net pay.
- 3 Write Gia’s payroll question, 50 to 80 words, in the Your draft box.
- 4 Draft the guide’s walkthrough and its privacy note in the Your draft boxes.
- 5 Finish the guide on lined paper, 300 to 400 words.
- 6 Check both pieces with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

From gross pay to net pay

The pay period and the Saturday shift

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

Gia’s payroll question, 50 to 80 words

Hi, I’m checking my pay statement for ____.

Guide: walk through the statement

Guide: keep it private

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 6 minutes.

Does the question name the pay period, the Saturday shift and what Gia wants confirmed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the guide follow \$255.00 gross pay to \$220.99 net pay?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it separate FICA from income-tax withholding and cite the IRS?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it say the amounts are invented and tell readers what never to post?

☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No specific numbers.	☐ Mentions hours but no period.	☐ Names hours, period and the line in question.	☐ Cites own records and the statement side by side.
Reasoning	☐ Assumes an error or theft.	☐ Assumes all difference is tax.	☐ Separates hours, deductions and period timing.	☐ Explains which differences are expected and which need checking.
Audience & purpose	☐ Shares private details or demands.	☐ Polite but vague.	☐ Clear question payroll can answer.	☐ Clear, private, and offers the right document.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Removes one issue.	☐ Adds period and line, removes private data.	☐ Explains why each change helps payroll respond.

One change I made after feedback

[illegible]

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames below. About 8 minutes.

- 1** What would Gia's statement need to show for the missing hours to be a payroll mistake?

- 2** Why might a new worker think that every missing dollar went to taxes?

- 3** Before a first job, what would you want to know about how and when you will be paid?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

[illegible]

Talk about this case at home

Case 5: Why is my deposit smaller than what I earned?

In this case, Gia's bank deposit is smaller than the pay she expected. Your student read a practice pay statement line by line and explained where the money went.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What is the difference between gross pay and net pay?
- 2 Why might a bank deposit be less than the hours worked times the hourly rate?
- 3 Who at a workplace can answer questions about a pay statement?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 6: What can your family see in your college records?

Rafa's parents help pay his college bill, and a family-access form asks whether they should also get information about his grades.

On your own Read What happened and underline what Rafa's dad asks for in the family chat. About 4 minutes.



Rafa and Caio sit on a sofa and look at Rafa's phone. Caio explains something with an open hand.

Your role: You're the one who reads each box on the form before Rafa signs. **New skill:** Read a form section by section before you sign.

What happened

Rafa, 18, has just started college, and his parents help pay his tuition bill. He commutes from the next block and helps at his family's shop after class. At the end of August, the college mailed Rafa a family-access form, but he has not opened the envelope yet.

On Sunday night, his parents ask about the form in the family group chat. His dad wants Rafa's login so the family can handle everything. Rafa is glad to share the bill, but he wants to read the rest of the form first.

Caio, an older friend who rents a room on the block, reads the form with Rafa, not for him. The form has separate sections for billing and for grades. Rafa wants to check the billing box. He wants to talk with his family before he decides about grades.

Your question: What will this form let Rafa's parents see, and what should he ask before he signs?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

FERPA FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, is a federal law about who can see student education records.

En español: FERPA (Ley de Derechos Educativos y Privacidad de la Familia)

In this case: Rafa is 18 and in college, so under the general rule the FERPA rights to his records are his, not his parents’.

Education record An education record is a record directly about a student that a school or college keeps.

En español: expediente educativo

In this case: Rafa’s grades and schedule are education records. Section 2 of his form asks whether his parents may receive information about his grades.

Consent Consent is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person.

En español: consentimiento

In this case: Rafa’s form asks for consent in two separate sections, one for billing and one for grades. He can say yes to one and no to the other.

Who is involved



Rafa

First-year commuter with a family-access form

“My parents help with the bill. The college mailed this form, and the family chat already wants to know if I signed it. I haven’t even opened it.”



Caio

Reads the form with Rafa, not for him

“I can sit with Rafa while he asks. Being the older friend doesn’t make this my decision.”

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think Rafa's parents are allowed to see?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Records, rights and the limits of family access

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **FERPA:** FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, is a federal law about who can see student education records.
- **Education record:** An education record is a record directly about a student that a school or college keeps.
- **Consent:** Consent is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person.
- **Decision-maker:** A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.

The story: The login shortcut

Rafa, 18, is a first-year commuter who helps at his family's shop after class. His parents contribute to his tuition. At the end of August, his college mailed him a parent and family access authorization. Before he opens it, his parents raise it in the family group chat. His mother offers help with the bill. His father proposes the shortcut many families would reach for: send the login, and they will handle everything.

The case turns on the difference between those two offers. Helping pay a bill requires access to billing. A login grants access to everything the account holds, including grades and schedules, and it bypasses any record of what was shared and why. Rafa answers that he can share the bill and wants to read the rest first.

Caio, 24, sits with him as he reads. He models the stance of a good advisor. He will help Rafa ask questions, but the decision is Rafa's. He also resists vague reassurance. If the law has an exception, they should find out which one and whether it applies, because "privacy law" is not an answer Rafa's father can act on.

Your role is to read each box on the form before Rafa signs.

-  **Stop and think.** Why is a shared login a weaker form of trust than a signed, specific authorization?

Granular consent in practice

The form is built for separate decisions. Section 1 authorizes a named person to view account statements and make payments. Section 2 authorizes that person to receive information about grades, enrollment and academic standing. Section 3 makes the authorization durable until Rafa changes or withdraws it in writing. Each of the first two sections has its own yes-or-no box.

The college's annual FERPA notice sets the background rule. Students may inspect their records, request corrections and consent to disclosures, except where the law permits disclosure without consent. Together, the documents show what Rafa controls and what he still needs to learn: which exceptions this college applies and where a written change goes.

This case extends two earlier skills. Case 5 asked you to read a statement line by line. Here you read a form section by section and decide each part independently. Case 4 introduced the **decision-maker**, the person or group with the power to make a particular choice. Rafa holds that role, and the form's structure lets him exercise it with precision. **Consent** is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person. For college records, it is written and identifies the record, the recipient and the purpose. A shared password is the opposite of that kind of consent.

 **Stop and think.** The exceptions are permitted, not required. How should that change what Rafa asks the records office?

FERPA's structure and the question of trust

FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, is a federal law about who can see student education records. An **education record** is a record directly about a student that a school or college keeps, on paper or stored digitally. Under the general rule, the rights transfer from parents to the student at 18 or upon entering college at any age, and the student becomes an "eligible student" (U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office, no date listed). The Department's guide for eligible students explains consent, access and the exceptions in plain language (U.S. Department of Education, March 8, 2023).

The exceptions matter for families like Rafa's. A college may disclose records to parents when the student is a dependent for federal tax purposes, or in a health or safety emergency. The Department describes these disclosures as permitted, not required, so practice varies by institution. American University's parent-access guide illustrates one institution's process, not a national rule (American University, June 30, 2025).

Records governance now reaches beyond the registrar. A breach at PowerSchool exposed millions of student records (Education Week, January 9, 2025). Classroom AI tools raise new questions about who can see student information (Chalkbeat, December 13, 2024).

FERPA's structure and the question of trust, continued

The Markup has reported on where FERPA's protections run out when software companies handle student data (The Markup, January 15, 2022).

Professional codes describe both duties the registrar holds. AACRAO asks members to “protect the legitimate privacy interests of all individuals” and to “dispense complete, accurate, understandable, and truthful information and advice at all times” (AACRAO Ethics and Practice, 2010). The National Communication Association's credo speaks to Rafa's side: “We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant decisions, while also respecting privacy and confidentiality” (NCA Credo for Ethical Communication, 2024). The case asks students to hold both values at once. Family support and privacy can be negotiated one box at a time.

? **Stop and think.** The NCA credo values both sharing and privacy. How could Rafa honor both in one conversation with his parents?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office | No date listed

What is FERPA?

Real source | U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office | March 8, 2023

An Eligible Student Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Real source | U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office | No date listed

Must postsecondary institutions provide a parent with access to an eligible student's education records?

Real source | American University, AU Central | June 30, 2025

FERPA and parent-access guide

Real source | Education Week | January 9, 2025

What Schools Should Know About the PowerSchool Data Breach

Real source | Chalkbeat | December 13, 2024

AI presents explosive risks to student data privacy. These educators want to defuse them.

Real source | The Markup | January 15, 2022

The Big Business of Tracking and Profiling Students

Real source | American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) | 2010

AACRAO Ethics and Practice

Real source | National Communication Association (NCA) | 2024

Credo for Ethical Communication

Look at the evidence

On your own Read the form and the notice, and fill in both boxes for each one. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | College form

Parent and family access authorization, mailed to Rafa on August 28

Section 1, Billing and payments: allow the person named below to view account statements and make payments. Yes or No. Section 2, Academic records: allow the person named below to receive information about grades, enrollment and academic standing. Yes or No. Section 3: this authorization stays in effect until the student changes or withdraws it in writing.

Look closely: Which section covers billing, and which covers grades? Circle each yes-or-no box.

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | College notice

Annual FERPA notice on the registrar’s page

Students have the right to inspect their education records, to request corrections and to consent to disclosures, except where the law allows disclosure without consent. Questions go to the Office of the Registrar.

Look closely: Which phrase tells you the law has exceptions? Underline it.

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Key idea: education records

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, is a federal law about who can see student education records. It gives parents, and later students, rights over those records. An **education record** is a record directly about a student that a school or college keeps. Grades, transcripts and schedules can be education records, on paper or stored digitally. Under the general rule, the rights transfer to the student at age 18 or when the student starts college, at any age. The law calls that student an “eligible student.”

Helping pay tuition does not, by itself, give those rights back to a parent. **Consent** is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person. For college records, consent is written and says which record, to whom and for what purpose. Rafa’s form asks about billing and about grades in separate sections. He can say yes to one section and no to the other. He can also change his choice later in writing.

FERPA also has exceptions, which are situations in which a college may share records without the student’s consent. A college may share records with parents if the student is a dependent for federal tax purposes. It may also share them in a health or safety emergency. The U.S. Department of Education says this sharing is allowed, not required, so Rafa should ask his records office what his college does.

Professional standards

Real source | American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

AACRAO Ethics and Practice: Standards of professional practice

“Protect the legitimate privacy interests of all individuals and maintain appropriate confidentiality of institutional and student education records”

In plain words: College registrars who belong to AACRAO agree to protect students' privacy and keep education records confidential.

Question: Rafa's form separates billing from grades. What would the registrar need before sharing his grades with his parents?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

The registrar would need ____, unless ____.

In the news



Real source | U.S. Department of Education (YouTube) | November 7, 2013

Student Privacy 101: FERPA for Parents and Students

The Education Department’s own short explainer of FERPA rights and when they move from parents to students.



Real source | U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office | No date listed

Must postsecondary institutions provide a parent with access to an eligible student’s education records?

Answers the case question directly, including the exception for students claimed as tax dependents.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Fill in the diagram to show who decides each question, which rule applies and who can ask. About 6 minutes.

Who actually decides each question: Rafa, the rule or the college? Mark where paying the bill and seeing grades split into two separate decisions.

Who may see Rafa's grades?

Who decides

Rafa, the eligible student, through written consent

Under which rule

FERPA: rights transfer to the student at 18 or on entering college

Who lives with it

Rafa's family, who help pay tuition

Your way in

Who may see and pay the tuition bill?

Who decides

Rafa, the eligible student, through written consent

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Rafa's family, who help pay tuition

Your way in

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose who holds Rafa's rights and explain why, then fix the two marked lines. About 5 minutes.

Rafa is 18 and in college, and his parents help pay his tuition. Under the general FERPA rule, who holds the rights to his education records?

- ☐ **A** Rafa does.
- ☐ **B** His parents do, because they help pay the bill.
- ☐ **C** His parents do, until Rafa signs a form that says otherwise.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Rafa, **①** your parents are paying so they can probably see everything, that's how it works at most schools. My parents could always see my grades on the portal in high school. FERPA is a privacy law but it's mostly for kids. **②** Once you're 18 it doesn't really matter anymore. If you want to keep your grades private you should just not give them your password. Honestly just ask your parents what they want to see. They're helping you a lot so it's probably fair for them to know how you're doing.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a plain-language explainer for first-year students and their families, suitable for an orientation program or a student government page. It separates billing access from access to academic records and explains how a student changes an authorization.

Use: Case documents: the authorization form, the FERPA notice, Rafa’s family chat and Caio’s statement. Real sources: two Department of Education FAQs, the Eligible Student Guide to FERPA (March 8, 2023) and the American University parent-access guide.

You’ll make: Explainer for students and families, 350—450 words, with three short questions and answers

Time: 75 minutes

- 1

Reread Evidence A and B, and label each one as an example.
- 2

Fill in the organizer: what billing access covers and what records access covers.
- 3

Note two exceptions from the Department of Education pages without deciding that either one applies to Rafa.
- 4

Draft the opening and the exceptions paragraph in the Your draft boxes.
- 5

Write three short questions and answers for families in the last box.
- 6

Finish the explainer on lined paper, 350 to 450 words.
- 7

Check your explainer with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Billing access covers

Records access covers

Two exceptions, stated generally

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

Opening: who holds the rights

The exceptions

In some situations, a college may share records without the student's consent, such as ____.

Three questions and answers

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 6 minutes.

Does your explainer say FERPA rights belong to the student at a school beyond high school?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it keep billing and records permissions separate?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it describe the exceptions accurately without saying that one applies to Rafa?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it label the form and notice as and the federal pages as real?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No source cited.	☐ Refers to “privacy law” generally.	☐ Cites the transfer rule and the separate-access guide.	☐ Cites both and notes that exceptions exist.
Reasoning	☐ States the rule backwards.	☐ Gets the transfer right but merges billing and grades.	☐ Separates paying from permission correctly.	☐ Explains why least access is a reasonable choice.
Audience & purpose	☐ Tells Rafa what to do.	☐ Gives advice without a next step.	☐ Leaves the decision with Rafa and names the records office.	☐ Respects Rafa’s family relationship while protecting his choice.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Fixes one fact.	☐ Fixes the rule and adds a next step.	☐ Explains why each correction matters for Rafa's decision.

I changed ___ because ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames below. About 8 minutes.

- 1** What is the smallest amount of access that would give Rafa the help he wants from his family?

- 2** Why might Rafa want to talk with his family before he checks the box for grades?

- 3** Someone says, “Parents can never see college records.” How would you revise that claim after reading this case?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

[illegible]

Talk about this case at home

Case 6: What can your family see in your college records?

In this case, Rafa's parents help pay his college bill, and a form asks if they should also see his grades. Your student read the form and a federal privacy rule, then explained how paying the bill differs from seeing grades.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Under the general rule, when do students start to control who sees their school records?
- 2 Why might a college form keep paying a bill separate from seeing grades?
- 3 Who at a college could answer a question about records?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 7: Did one complaint get the novel banned?

A group chat says one parent's complaint got a novel banned, so Mari and Gia check what the school library's notice says.

On your own Read What happened and underline the word in the group chat that may go too far. About 4 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who reads the library notice before anyone replies "banned." **New skill:** Find what stage a process has reached.



Gia, Mari and Sami talk around a table on a rooftop terrace at sunset.

What happened

On Thursday night, a message about a novel in the library at Anika's high school appears in a group chat. The message says one parent complained, so the novel is now banned and gone from the library. Gia replies that this is censorship.

On Friday, the school library posts a notice about the novel. Mari reads it and compares it with the group chat. Gia deletes her first reply, because she had not read the notice or the novel.

Mari works the counter at the neighborhood bookshop. She switches between print and audio, and she is halfway through the novel on audio. Gia is planning a discussion at the bookshop. First, both of them want to know what stage the library's process has reached.

Your question: Is the novel really banned, and what can people who care about it do next?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Challenge A challenge is a formal request to remove or restrict a book or other library material.

En español: impugnación

In this case: A parent's request about a novel at Anika's school started a review. The novel stays available while the committee reads it.

Reconsideration policy A reconsideration policy is a library's written process for reviewing a challenge to a book.

En español: política de reconsideración

In this case: The library's notice follows district policy: a committee review, the selection criteria, written input by the 15th and an appeal.

Selection criteria Selection criteria are the written standards a library uses to decide which materials to include.

En español: criterios de selección

In this case: The committee judges the whole novel against the district's selection criteria. The input form asks which criteria your comment addresses.

Who is involved



Mari

Works the bookshop counter

"The chat says the book is gone from the library. The notice says it stays available during the review. Those can't both be true."



Gia

Planning a book discussion at the bookshop

"I called it censorship before I'd read the notice. Now I'm planning a discussion at the bookshop, so I'd better get this right."

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think happened to the novel?

[illegible]

Reading passage

Challenges, process and the language of book bans

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Challenge:** A challenge is a formal request to remove or restrict a book or other library material.
- **Reconsideration policy:** A reconsideration policy is a library's written process for reviewing a challenge to a book.
- **Selection criteria:** Selection criteria are the written standards a library uses to decide which materials to include.
- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Correction:** A correction is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information.

The story: The speed of a word

A group chat claims that one parent's complaint got a novel "banned" from the library at Anika's high school. Gia replies, "censorship, full stop." The next day the school library posts a notice that contradicts the chat. The book remains available while a committee reviews it. Mari, who works the counter at the neighborhood bookshop and is halfway through the novel on audio, catches the contradiction. Gia deletes her reply and admits she had read neither the notice nor the book.

The case is a study in how a single word can outrun a process. "Banned" is vivid, shareable and morally clear. It also asserts a finished outcome. In practice, library disputes pass through stages, and people who want to influence the outcome need to know which stage they are in. Gia's turn is instructive. She plans a bookshop discussion aimed at getting people to the input form before the 15th, and she rules out attacks on the parent who filed the request, noting that the parent used the process too.

Your role is to read the library notice before anyone replies "banned."

- ❓ **Stop and think.** Why might advocates on either side prefer the word "banned" or the word "review"?

Mapping the process

The notice describes the procedure. A request for reconsideration has been received for one title. Under district policy, the title remains available during review. A committee will read the full work and evaluate it against the district's selection criteria. Written input may be submitted by the 15th, and the decision may be appealed.

A **challenge** is a formal request to remove or restrict a book or other library material. A **reconsideration policy** is a library's written process for reviewing a challenge to a book. **Selection criteria** are the written standards a library uses to decide which materials to include. These three terms separate what the chat merged: the complaint, the procedure that evaluates it and the standards the procedure applies. The chat's **claim** describes an outcome that the notice shows has not occurred.

The skill here, identifying the stage of a process, rests on two earlier ones. Case 1 sends you to the original source, and Case 3 defines a **correction** as a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information. A good correction in this case also respects the notice's silences. It does not name the book, the committee or the criteria, because the notice does not.

The input form reveals what the committee values. It asks for the respondent's role, whether they read the entire work and which selection criteria their comment addresses, within 300 words. Mari's plan fits that design. She will finish the book and then join her personal reasons for caring to the criteria the committee must apply.

 **Stop and think.** How does the input form's design shape who can take part effectively?

Guidance, law and contested terms

The American Library Association's toolkit models a formal reconsideration process in which a committee reads the whole work, and it offers guidance on selection criteria (American Library Association, updated January 2018). This guidance is professional, not legal, and districts adapt it. State legislatures are now writing the rules more directly. Colorado lawmakers advanced a bill requiring clear reconsideration policies (Chalkbeat Colorado, February 10, 2025). Reporting from Tennessee found that a stricter law altered the review steps and that some books quietly disappeared (Chalkbeat Tennessee, September 17, 2024). In Florida, the governor backed limits on repeated challenges (PBS NewsNight, February 23, 2024).

The constitutional status of removals is unsettled. A law-firm client alert explains that the Fifth Circuit applied the government speech doctrine to public library book removals, creating a split with the Eighth Circuit (Cahill Gordon and Reindel, September 22, 2025). National data complicates the picture further. ALA's annual list tracks how many challenges were filed, by whom and how many led to removals (American Library Association, April 20, 2026).

Guidance, law and contested terms, continued

The book connection offers a contrast. In Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988), Matilda's father tears pages out of her library copy of *The Red Pony* because he disapproves of her reading, and no one reviews his choice. A real school library is supposed to follow a written process instead. The novel does not set rules for real libraries, but it shows what a process is for.

Professional ethics names the values in tension. The ALA code commits librarians to “resist all efforts to censor library resources” (ALA Code of Ethics, 2021). The NEA code says educators “shall not unreasonably deny the student’s access to varying points of view” (NEA Code of Ethics, 1975). Using the right word for the stage is where fair advocacy starts.

 **Stop and think.** With federal courts split, what can local participation accomplish that litigation cannot?

Sources

Real source | American Library Association | January 2018

Selection and Reconsideration Policy Toolkit: formal reconsideration

Real source | American Library Association | January 2018

Selection and Reconsideration Policy Toolkit: selection criteria

Real source | Chalkbeat Colorado | February 10, 2025

Colorado bill to curb school library book challenges clears first legislative hurdle

Real source | Chalkbeat Tennessee | September 17, 2024

Under stricter Tennessee law, some school library books quietly disappear

Real source | PBS (NewsNight) | February 23, 2024

Tackling Frivolous Challenges to Books in Public Schools

Real source | Cahill Gordon & Reindel LLP (**law-firm** client alert) | September 22, 2025

Fifth Circuit Holds That Government Speech Doctrine Applies to Public Library Book Removals, Creating Circuit Split With Eighth Circuit

Real source | American Library Association | April 20, 2026

American Library Association releases 2025 Most Challenged Books List as National Library Week Begins

Real source | Penguin | June 24, 2026

Matilda by Roald Dahl: authorized extract

Real source | American Library Association (ALA) | 2021

ALA Code of Ethics

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read the notice and the input form, and fill in both boxes for each one. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Library notice

Reconsideration notice, posted Friday by the school library

A request for reconsideration has been received for one title in the library collection. Under district policy, the title remains available during the review. A review committee will read the full work and evaluate it against the district’s selection criteria. Written input may be submitted by the 15th. The committee’s decision may be appealed.

Look closely: Which sentence tells you where the book is right now? Underline it.

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Input form

Review committee input form, due the 15th

Name and role (student, parent, staff or community member). Have you read the entire work? Yes or No. Which selection criteria does your input address? Comments, 300 words maximum.

Look closely: Who can send input? What does the form ask before your comments?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Key idea: book challenges

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

A **challenge** is a formal request to remove or restrict a book or other library material. A challenge starts a review. On its own, it does not remove a book. A complaint, a temporary change and a final decision can happen at different times. Check which stage a process has reached before you repeat a claim.

A **reconsideration policy** is a library's written process for reviewing a challenge to a book. The American Library Association (ALA) recommends that libraries adopt one, and its example has a committee read the whole work. **Selection criteria** are the written standards a library uses to decide which materials to include. ALA's guidance is a professional recommendation, not a law. Each district's adopted policy and the applicable law govern its own process.

Whether removing a book breaks the law is a harder question. Federal courts disagree about how the First Amendment applies when a library removes a book. The answer can depend on where you live. Right now, the notice at Anika's school describes a review, and the novel is still available.

Professional standards

Real source | American Library Association (ALA)

ALA Code of Ethics: Principle 2 (of 9)

"We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources."

In plain words: Library workers who follow the ALA code support people's freedom to read and oppose censorship of library materials.

Question: The district notice says the title stays available during review. Does that match the group chat's claim that it's "gone"?

Your answer

The notice says ____, so ____.

A state debated requiring clear reconsideration policies, showing a challenge is a process, not an instant ban.



A state law changed the review steps, so you have to check which rules and stage actually applied.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Sort the evidence

On your own Fill in the diagram to show who decides at each stage, which rules apply and where input goes. About 8 minutes.

Replace “banned” with the real chain of decisions. Who decides at each stage, which rules bind them, and where can a student’s input land?

Keep, restrict or remove the novel after review

Who decides

The school review committee, which reads the whole work and votes
District-level appeal and, finally, the school board

Under which rule

District reconsideration policy and selection criteria
State law and unsettled First Amendment case law (Pico had no majority opinion)

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what to check first and explain why, then fix the two marked lines. About 5 minutes.

A group chat says, “One parent complained, so that novel is banned.” What should you check first?

- ☐ **A** Find the library’s policy and where the review stands.
- ☐ **B** Ask everyone in the chat whether they like the book.
- ☐ **C** Read the passage people are upset about, then decide.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student’s first draft

This is so messed up. One parent complains and ❶ now the whole school can’t read the book?? That’s literally censorship and it’s illegal because of the First Amendment. ❷ Whoever complained is a terrible person and should mind their own business. Everyone should go to the board meeting and yell at them until they put it back. Books like this are the only ones some of us actually finish. I read part of it last year and it was actually really good. I’m so done with this school honestly.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write an explainer for a public library newsletter or a campus newspaper on how a school library review works. Use the district’s reconsideration notice as the example. Separate the district’s adopted policy, the ALA’s guidance and what courts have and have not settled.

Use: Case documents: the group-chat claim, the reconsideration notice, the committee input form and Mari’s statement. Real sources: the ALA toolkit summary, Chalkbeat reports from Colorado (2025) and Tennessee (2024), a law-firm client alert (September 2025) and the ALA’s most-challenged books release (April 2026).

You’ll make: Explainer, 450—600 words, with a labeled source list

Time: 90 minutes

- 1 Reread Evidence A and mark the stage the novel is at now.
- 2 Fill in the chart: law, adopted policy and professional guidance.
- 3 Label each source by type: example, news report, secondary source or national data.
- 4 Draft the stage, rules and source-list sections in the Your draft boxes.
- 5 Finish the explainer on lined paper, 450 to 600 words, with a labeled source list.
- 6 Check your explainer with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

The novel’s stage

Your task, continued

Policy, guidance and courts

Policy: ____ Guidance: ____ Courts: ____.

Source labels

Notes

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 35 minutes.

How a review works

Policy, guidance and the courts

Labeled source list, first two entries

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 6 minutes.

Does your explainer state the novel's stage accurately?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it separate the district's policy, the ALA's guidance and court decisions?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it describe Pico as a decision with no majority opinion?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are your sources labeled by type, with no one named who filed a challenge or gave input?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Repeats "banned."	☐ Mentions a complaint without stage.	☐ States the current stage from the policy.	☐ States stage, next steps and input route.
Reasoning	☐ Declares a legal verdict.	☐ Treats outrage as the argument.	☐ Separates complaint, review and decision.	☐ Connects input to criteria and notes legal uncertainty.
Audience & purpose	☐ Attacks people.	☐ Rallies without direction.	☐ Gives a useful participation route.	☐ Invites participation while respecting other readers and the parent.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Tone only.	☐ Corrects the stage and removes attacks.	☐ Explains how each change helps the chat act accurately.

One change I made after feedback

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames below. About 8 minutes.

- 1** Whose reading experience is missing from the crew’s discussion of the novel?

- 2** Gia says nobody should go after the parent who asked for the review. Why might that matter for her bookshop discussion?

- 3** How does calling the same action a “review,” a “restriction” or a “ban” change what people think happened?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Talk about this case at home

Case 7: Did one complaint get the novel banned?

In this case, a group chat claims one parent's complaint got a novel banned from a school library. Your student compared that claim with the library's notice and learned how a book review works.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What is the difference between a book being reviewed and a book being removed?
- 2 Where could someone find out how a library decides which books to keep?
- 3 How can people disagree about a book without attacking each other?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 8: Is it a recommendation or an ad?

Gia loves a novel that a publisher sent her for free, and her video review does not mention the free copy yet.

On your own Read What happened. Underline what the publisher sent Gia and what it asked for. About 4 minutes.



Gia, Caio and Mari set up a camera in a bright studio.

Your role: You're the viewer with the sound off who checks the first three seconds. **New skill:** Spot and disclose a material connection.

What happened

At 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, Caio finishes editing Gia's short video review of a new novel. Gia made the review for BookTok, where people recommend books on TikTok. She stayed up until 2 a.m. to finish the novel, and she loves it.

Two weeks ago, the book's publisher emailed Gia. The publicity team offered her a free copy of its spring novel for review. The email said she did not have to post, but it asked for a tag if she did. In the first cut, Gia never says the book was free. The only sign of the publisher is a tag in the caption below the video.

Caio wants to watch the cut the way a stranger would, on a phone with the sound off. He wants to know whether the first three seconds say the book was free. Gia wants to keep her honest opinion in the video. She also wants viewers to know how she got the book.

Your question: Do Gia's viewers need to know the book was free, and how should she tell them?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 4 minutes.

Material connection A material connection is a relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that viewers might not expect.

En español: conexión material

In this case: The publisher sent Gia a free copy of its spring novel for review. That free copy is a material connection.

Disclosure A disclosure is a clear statement that tells people about a relationship or fact they would want to know.

En español: divulgación

In this case: Gia's first cut has no disclosure. The tag in the caption names the publisher but never says the book was free.

Endorsement An endorsement is a message that shares someone's opinion or experience of a product to promote it.

En español: respaldo

In this case: Gia's video review promotes the novel with her own opinion: she stayed up until 2 a.m. to finish it.

Who is involved



Gia

Made the video review

"I stayed up till 2 a.m. finishing it. That part's real. The publisher sending it free is also real, and right now it's nowhere in the video."



Caio

Editing Gia's video

"The publisher's email literally says 'free copy for review.' That's the sentence. It's just not in the video yet."

Before you look at the evidence, does Gia need to tell viewers the book was free?

[illegible]

Reading passage

Disclosure, trust and the creator economy

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Material connection:** A material connection is a relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that viewers might not expect.
- **Disclosure:** A disclosure is a clear statement that tells people about a relationship or fact they would want to know.
- **Endorsement:** An endorsement is a message that shares someone's opinion or experience of a product to promote it.
- **Framing:** Framing is choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward.

The story: A sincere review with a gap

Gia made a short BookTok review of a novel she genuinely loved. She stayed up until 2 a.m. to finish it. Caio edited the video and finished the cut at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday. The review omits one fact. The publisher's publicity team sent Gia a free copy two weeks earlier, with no obligation to post but a request for a tag if she did. The first cut's spoken opening is pure enthusiasm. The video has no on-screen text. The only reference to the publisher is a tag in the caption below it.

The case is designed around a common and understandable mistake. Gia is not trying to deceive anyone, and her opinion is not for sale. She believes the tag discloses the relationship. Caio, who edits freelance video projects, knows how people watch: quickly, on phones and often muted. His edit notes are blunt. Most viewers will not open the caption, and a tag names a brand without stating a relationship.

Your role is to be the viewer with the sound off who checks the first three seconds.

❓ **Stop and think.** Why does a disclosure placed in a caption function as no disclosure for many viewers?

The anatomy of an adequate disclosure

The analysis rests on three terms. An **endorsement** is a message that shares someone's opinion or experience of a product to promote it. A **material connection** is a relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that viewers might not expect.

The anatomy of an adequate disclosure, continued

A **disclosure** is a clear statement that tells people about a relationship or fact they would want to know. The case keeps two judgments apart. Whether Gia's opinion is honest is one question. Whether viewers can weigh it with full knowledge is another.

The Case 1 concept of **framing**, choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward, explains why placement matters as much as wording. A disclosure that exists but is not brought forward functions, for most viewers, as no disclosure. Caio's solution moves the relationship to the first three seconds, "Quick heads-up, the publisher sent me this free," spoken and on screen, and then lets Gia's hook run. He also builds in a validation step. Someone who did not work on the video watches once, muted, and answers whether the book was free. Hesitation counts as failure.

Gia's own revision shows the limit of disclosure. She drops a superlative she cannot support, the best book of the year, in favor of a claim she can: two nights, could not put it down. Disclosure addresses how the endorser got the product. It does not verify the endorser's claims about the product.

A viewer comment on another creator's review, "wait was this sponsored?? kind of feels like an ad now," shows the reputational logic. Late discovery damages trust more than early disclosure does. The case also carries a caution. That comment is about someone else, and there is no evidence that review was sponsored. Do not accuse real creators on a guess.

 **Stop and think.** Caio defines success as a stranger answering without hesitation. What are the strengths and limits of that test?

Law, enforcement and research

The FTC's Endorsement Guides, 16 CFR Part 255, apply federal law against deceptive practices to endorsements. Their current text states that material connections "can include monetary payment or the provision of free or discounted products ... to an endorser, regardless of whether the advertiser requires an endorsement in return." It defines "clear and conspicuous" as "difficult to miss (i.e., easily noticeable) and easily understandable by ordinary consumers" (16 CFR Part 255, as revised 2023). The FTC announced that update, which addresses free products and tags, in June 2023 (Federal Trade Commission, June 28, 2023).

Enforcement has targeted placement directly. In November 2023, the agency warned two trade associations and a dozen influencers over posts promoting aspartame or sugar, and it stated that disclosures must appear in the video rather than in a caption (Federal Trade Commission, November 14, 2023). Coverage emphasized that sponsors share responsibility (Food Dive, November 27, 2023).

Research supports the premise that disclosure changes perception. A study of 3,149 Taiwanese high school students found that full sponsorship disclosure helped them recognize posts as advertising (Lin et al., PLOS One, May 27, 2026).

Law, enforcement and research, continued

Earlier research examined age differences in how adolescents respond to disclosures in sponsored influencer videos (van Reijmersdal and van Dam, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, January 18, 2020).

Communicators have their own standard. The PRSA code asks practitioners to “preserve the free flow of unprejudiced information when giving or receiving gifts by ensuring that gifts are nominal, legal, and infrequent” (PRSA Code of Ethics, October 2000). Publishers who send review copies and creators who accept them both sit inside that principle.

 **Stop and think.** Should platforms be required to build disclosure tools into video apps? What would that change?

Sources

Real source | Federal Trade Commission (FTC) | 2023

FTC Endorsement Guides (16 CFR Part 255)

Real source | Federal Trade Commission | June 28, 2023

Federal Trade Commission Announces Updated Advertising Guides to Combat Deceptive Reviews and Endorsements

Real source | Federal Trade Commission | November 14, 2023

FTC Warns Two Trade Associations and a Dozen Influencers About Social Media Posts Promoting Consumption of Aspartame or Sugar

Real source | Food Dive | November 27, 2023

FTC crackdown could change influencer marketing for food and beverages

Real source | PLOS One (Lin et al.) | May 27, 2026

Effects of social media sponsorship disclosure on adolescents’ advertising literacy and purchase intention

Real source | *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (van Reijmersdal & van Dam) | January 18, 2020

How Age and Disclosures of Sponsored Influencer Videos Affect Adolescents’ Knowledge of Persuasion and Persuasion

Real source | Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) | 2000

PRSA Code of Ethics

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Email

The publisher’s email

“Hi Gia, we love your book reviews! We’d be glad to send you a free copy of our spring novel for review. There’s no obligation to post, but if you do, we’d appreciate a tag. Best, the publicity team”

Look closely: What did the publisher give, and what did it ask for?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Video script and caption

Gia’s first cut

Spoken: “You guys, I have to tell you about this book because I literally could not put it down!” On-screen text: none. Caption below the video: “@publisher #booktok

Look closely: Where in this video would a viewer learn about the free copy?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Edit notes

Caio’s edit notes

“Watch once as a stranger, phone on mute. 0:00—0:03: does anything say free copy? Caption sits below the video; most people won’t open it. Tag = brand name, not relationship.”

Look closely: What does Caio want to test before uploading, and why the first three seconds?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence D | Viewer comment

A comment on another creator’s review

wait was this sponsored?? kind of feels like an ad now

Look closely: When does this viewer start to wonder about a sponsorship?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Key idea: material connections

On your own Read the key idea and the FTC guide. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

An **endorsement** is a message that shares someone's opinion or experience of a product to promote it. Gia's video review is an endorsement, and her opinion in it is honest. A **material connection** is a relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that viewers might not expect. The free copy from the publisher is a material connection. Knowing about it gives viewers context, but it does not prove that Gia's opinion is false.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is a federal agency. Its Endorsement Guides explain how a federal law against deceptive practices applies to endorsements. A **disclosure** is a clear statement that tells people about a relationship or fact they would want to know. For a video, the FTC says the disclosure belongs in the video itself, ideally both spoken and on screen. A tag in the caption only names the brand, and it sits below the video.

A disclosure answers one question: how did Gia get the book? Viewers can still ask what supports her claims about the book itself. A clear disclosure does not make every claim in a review accurate. Do not accuse a real creator of hiding a sponsorship based on a guess.

Professional standards

Real source | Law or regulation | Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

FTC Endorsement Guides (16 CFR Part 255): § 255.5 Disclosure of material connections

"They can include monetary payment or the provision of free or discounted products ... to an endorser, regardless of whether the advertiser requires an endorsement in return."

In plain words: The FTC says a free product can be a connection that reviewers must clearly disclose, even if the brand asked for nothing in return.

Question: The publisher's email says there is "no obligation to post." Does that change whether Gia has a connection to disclose?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

The email's wording ___, because ___.

In the news



Real source | NBC News | November 15, 2023

Influencers warned by FTC over 'inadequate' disclosures of artificial sweetener promotions

Real creators were warned for not clearly saying they were paid, the exact question this case asks.



Real source | ABC News | November 6, 2019

Popular YouTuber chimes in on federal product disclosure guide for influencers

A creator reacts to the FTC's disclosure rules, showing how the guidance lands for people who actually post.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Follow each choice to its results. Then write whose view is missing. About 6 minutes.

Follow both choices forward. Which consequences can Gia control, which depend on viewers, and what test tells her the disclosure worked?

Post the first cut with only a brand tag in the caption

Sound-off viewers never learn the book was free

Who is affected

Disclose aloud and on screen in the first seconds

Viewers weigh the recommendation knowing the relationship

Who is affected

Some viewers may discount the review as an ad

Who is affected

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the change that makes the relationship clearest. Then fix the two marked phrases. About 6 minutes.

Gia loves the novel the publisher sent her for free. Which change to her video makes the relationship clearest to viewers?

- ☐ **A** Tag the publisher in the caption.
- ☐ **B** Say and show at the start of the video that the publisher sent her the book for free.
- ☐ **C** Leave the video as it is, since the email said there was no obligation to post.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Okay you guys, I have to tell you about this book because I literally could not put it down!! **1** #ad #booktok @publisher. The characters are so real and the ending destroyed me. I stayed up until 2 a.m. finishing it and then just sat there staring at the wall. Everyone needs to read this, trust me, **2** it's the best book of the year and you won't regret it. Link is in my bio, go get it before everyone else does!

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 15 minutes.

Write a social media disclosure policy for a student organization whose members post reviews, and a one-page training handout. Then use the policy to rewrite the first three seconds and the caption of Gia's review.

Use: Case documents: the publisher's email, Gia's first-cut script and caption, Caio's edit notes and the viewer comment. Real sources: the FTC's Disclosures 101 page, its Endorsement Guides questions and answers, and the Endorsement Guides sections on material connections and "clear and conspicuous" disclosures.

You'll make: Policy, 300—400 words, a one-page handout and a revised opening and caption

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 List every kind of connection your policy covers, starting with free and discounted products.
- 2 Decide where the disclosure goes: in the video itself, spoken and on screen.
- 3 Add Caio's sound-off check as a step before anyone posts.
- 4 Write how members answer a comment like "was this sponsored??"
- 5 Draft the policy core and the revised opening on the Your draft page.
- 6 Write the full policy of 300 to 400 words and a one-page handout.
- 7 State that the policy guides members and is not legal advice.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Connections the policy covers

Where the disclosure goes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

Revised first three seconds and caption

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your policy cover free and discounted products?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it require the disclosure in the video itself, spoken and on screen?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it include a sound-off check before posting?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your revised opening tell a viewer in three seconds that the book was free?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No disclosure or claim support.	☐ Tag only.	☐ Names the relationship clearly.	☐ Names the relationship and supports the product claim.
Reasoning	☐ Treats opinion as a substitute for disclosure.	☐ Discloses but can't explain why.	☐ Explains why placement and clarity matter.	☐ Distinguishes opinion, relationship and product claim.
Audience & purpose	☐ Ignores viewers.	☐ Assumes viewers read captions.	☐ Works for sound-off viewers.	☐ Works across channels with consistent wording.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Adds a hashtag.	☐ Adds spoken and on-screen disclosure.	☐ Explains each placement choice for different viewers.

One change I made after feedback

[illegible]

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

- 1** Would knowing the book was free change how much you trust Gia's review? Why or why not?

- 2** Some viewers may treat a review with a disclosure as just an ad. How could Gia keep their trust?

- 3** Who should make sure disclosures are clear: creators, brands or platforms?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

This image shows a single page from a notebook or ledger. The page is white with horizontal blue lines spaced evenly apart. There are no vertical margin lines, and the page is completely blank except for the ruling. The lines extend across the width of the page, leaving small gaps at the top and bottom edges.

Talk about this case at home

Case 8: Is it a recommendation or an ad?

In this case, a publisher sends Gia a free novel, and her video review does not say the book was free. Your student read the email and the video script, then rewrote the opening so viewers learn about the free copy.

Questions to talk about

- 1 How can you tell when a video review is also an ad?
- 2 Where in a video would you look for a note that a product was free?
- 3 Why might a review still be honest if the reviewer got the product for free?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

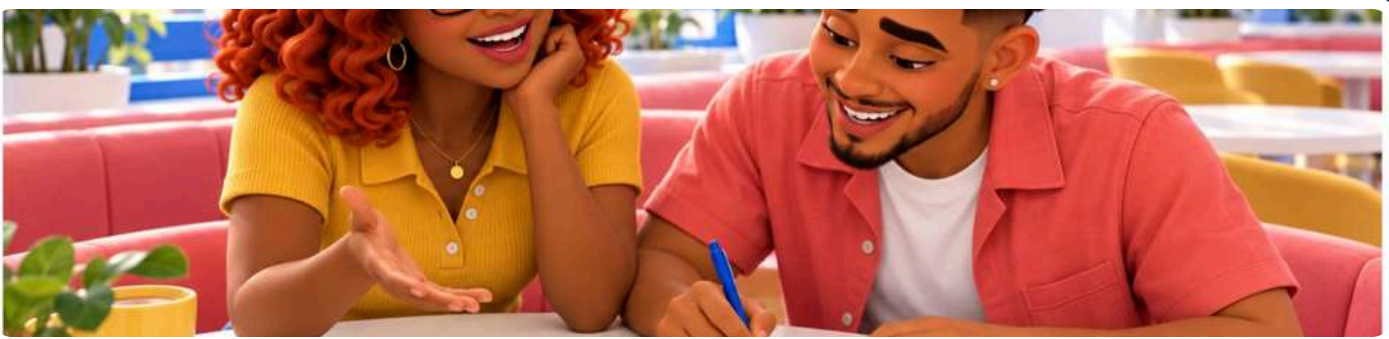
Case 9: What is on your ballot, and where do you check?

Dec turns 18 before the election on November 3, 2026, and his feed covers only one race on his ballot.

On your own Read What happened. Underline the contests Mateo finds below the big race. About 4 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who finds Dec's official sample ballot before anyone tells him how to vote.

New skill: Check an official source for your own area.



Mateo and Gia work in a notebook at a café table.

What happened

It is Sunday at the library desk. Dec turns 18 in October, before the general election on November 3, 2026. His feed is full of posts about one big race. Mateo and Gia are helping him find out what else is on his ballot.

They look at a sample ballot for the November election. The front shows the big race from Dec's feed. The second page has more: a school board race, a city council seat and Measure T, a transit bond. Mateo notices that nobody is posting about Measure T.

A creator's voter guide is also going around. It says registration closes "the 14th," but it never names a state. It also tells people how to vote on the school board race and Measure T. Gia is writing a reminder for the group chat.

Mateo has his own problem. He may still be registered at his mom's address in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Dec says he does not need anyone to pick for him. He needs to know what is on his ballot and whether he is registered in time.

Your question: What is on Dec's ballot, and where should he check his own information?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 4 minutes.

Sample ballot A sample ballot is a preview of the contests and measures that will appear on your ballot.

En español: boleta de muestra

In this case: Dec's sample ballot lists a school board race, a city council seat and Measure T below the big race from his feed.

Voter guide A voter guide is a document that explains or recommends choices in an election.

En español: guía para votantes

In this case: A creator's voter guide mixes one deadline with two picks: "vote Candidate B" and "Measure T: yes, obviously."

Registration Registration is signing up with your election office so that you are on the list of people who can vote.

En español: inscripción electoral

In this case: Dec turns 18 in October and needs to know whether he is registered in time. The guide's deadline names no state.

Jurisdiction A jurisdiction is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority.

En español: jurisdicción

In this case: Mateo may still be registered in New Bedford, Massachusetts. A different place can mean a different ballot and a different deadline.

Who is involved



Mateo

Helping Dec read the sample ballot

"Dec's feed is all the big race. Then you flip the sample ballot: school board, city council, a transit bond. Nobody's posting about Measure T."



Gia

Writing the group-chat reminder

"The creator's guide says 'registration closes the 14th.' Whose 14th? It doesn't even say which state."

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think is on Dec's ballot?

[illegible]

Reading passage

Jurisdiction, information and the first ballot

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Sample ballot:** A sample ballot is a preview of the contests and measures that will appear on your ballot.
- **Voter guide:** A voter guide is a document that explains or recommends choices in an election.
- **Registration:** Registration is signing up with your election office so that you are on the list of people who can vote.
- **Jurisdiction:** A jurisdiction is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority.
- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Material connection:** A material connection is a relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that viewers might not expect.

The story: Two first-time voters, two ballots

Dec turns 18 in October, before the general election on November 3, 2026. His feed has taught him that the election is about one race. At the library desk on Sunday, Mateo, 22, and Gia, 21, help him read a sample ballot that says otherwise. Beneath the federal race sit a state senate seat, a judicial retention, two school board seats, a city council seat and Measure T, a transit improvements bond. Mateo observes that no one is posting about Measure T.

A creator's voter guide circulates in the group chat. It combines one apparent fact, that registration closes "the 14th," with two unexplained recommendations: a school board candidate described as "the only one who cares about students" and "yes, obviously" on Measure T. Dec rejects the premise that he needs someone to choose for him. His questions are practical and prior to any choice. What is on his ballot, and is he registered in time?

Mateo's situation adds a complication many college students share. He moved from New Bedford, Massachusetts, for school and may still be registered at his mom's address. If so, his ballot, his deadline and even his election office differ from Dec's. He plans to check that night.

Your role is to find Dec's official sample ballot before anyone tells him how to vote.

❓ **Stop and think.** Is a voter guide with unlabeled recommendations misleading, or simply incomplete, and why?

Information versus recommendation

A **sample ballot** is a preview of the contests and measures that will appear on your ballot. A **voter guide** is a document that explains or recommends choices in an election. Treating the two as interchangeable is the core error the case targets. The sample ballot defines the decision set. A guide proposes a way through it.

The analysis draws on the ladder of earlier skills. Case 1 established that a **claim** must be checked against an original source. The guide's deadline fails that test because it lacks a jurisdiction, so it cannot be confirmed for any reader. Case 8 established the importance of a **material connection**, a relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that viewers might not expect. The guide omits its author and funding. That omission does not show bias, but it removes the information a reader needs to weigh its recommendations.

A **jurisdiction** is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority. Jurisdiction operates twice here. It determines which contests a voter sees, since ballots are assembled by address. It also determines which office can act on an issue. A voter concerned about transit needs to know which body runs the buses before evaluating Measure T or a council candidate.

Registration is signing up with your election office so that you are on the list of people who can vote. Gia's reminder models responsible civic communication under uncertainty. It gives no deadline, because none would be accurate for everyone. It points to Vote.gov for each person's own registration and ballot, and it asks people not to post their addresses in the chat.

❓ **Stop and think.** How does jurisdiction shape both what appears on a ballot and what a voter should research?

Rights, rules and professional norms

The Twenty-Sixth Amendment sets a national floor, protecting the vote for citizens 18 and older (National Constitution Center, no date listed). Its history is tied to the wartime argument "old enough to fight, old enough to vote" (The National WWII Museum, October 27, 2020). Implementation belongs largely to the states. Most allow preregistration, and some permit 17-year-olds to vote in primaries if they will be 18 by the general election (Ballotpedia News, September 26, 2025). States have pursued other measures to raise youth registration as well (NPR, August 6, 2023).

Participation is substantial and uneven. CIRCLE estimates that about 47 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds voted in 2024, with wide variation across states (CIRCLE, April 14, 2025).

Rights, rules and professional norms, continued

National Voter Registration Day coverage has emphasized registering people for elections “up and down the ballot” (PBS NewsHour, September 19, 2023).

Professional codes offer a template for a nonpartisan guide. The SPJ code instructs journalists to “label advocacy and commentary” (SPJ Code of Ethics, September 6, 2014). The RTDNA code holds that journalism “does not tell people what to believe or how to feel” (RTDNA Code of Ethics, June 11, 2015). The NCA credo endorses “sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant decisions, while also respecting privacy and confidentiality” (NCA Credo for Ethical Communication, 2024). Gia’s request that no one post an address applies that last clause to a group chat.

 **Stop and think.** What obligations, if any, should creators who publish voter guides have to disclose authorship and funding?

Sources

Real source | [Vote.gov](#) | No date listed

Your state or territory’s voting information

Real source | [National Constitution Center](#) | No date listed

The 26th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution

Real source | [The National WWII Museum](#) | October 27, 2020

“Old Enough to Fight, Old Enough to Vote”: The WWII Roots of the 26th Amendment

Real source | [Ballotpedia News](#) | September 26, 2025

Most states allow teenagers to pre-register to vote before turning 18, and some let them vote in primaries

Real source | [NPR](#) | August 6, 2023

Some states are trying to boost youth voter registration. Here's what they're doing

Real source | [CIRCLE \(Tufts University\)](#) | April 14, 2025

New Data: Nearly Half of Youth Voted in 2024

Real source | [PBS NewsHour](#) | September 19, 2023

New state and local efforts try get more people to vote

Real source | [Society of Professional Journalists \(SPJ\)](#) | 2014

SPJ Code of Ethics

Real source | [Radio Television Digital News Association \(RTDNA\)](#) | 2015

RTDNA Code of Ethics

Credo for Ethical Communication

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Sample ballot

Sample ballot for the November general election

Federal: U.S. Representative. State: State Senator; Superior Court judge (retention). Local: Board of Education, District 3 (vote for two); City Council, Ward 5. Measures: Measure T, transit improvements bond.

Look closely: Which contests sit below the big race, and which one touches Dec’s school?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Voter guide post

A creator’s voter guide

All you need for November!! Registration closes the 14th. School board: vote Candidate B, the only one who cares about students. Measure T: yes, obviously.

Look closely: Which line could you check, and which lines tell you how to vote?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Group-chat draft

Gia’s reminder

Check your registration and your own sample ballot at vote.gov. Deadlines depend on your state. Please don’t post your address here.

Look closely: What does Gia share, and what does she ask friends to keep private?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence D | Statement

What Dec needs

“I turn 18 in October. I don’t need someone picking for me. I need to know what’s on my ballot and whether I’m registered in time for November.”

Look closely: What two questions does Dec need answered, and which source answers each?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Key idea: sample ballots

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

A **sample ballot** is a preview of the contests and measures that will appear on your ballot. A measure is a question that voters decide directly, such as Measure T. A **voter guide** is a document that explains or recommends choices in an election. The two have different purposes. Start with the ballot for your address, and then check a guide's facts apart from its picks.

Your address decides which contests appear on your ballot. A **jurisdiction** is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority. A friend two districts over may see different local races. A school board and a city council have different jobs, so each one makes different decisions. Before you research candidates, find out which office has power over the issue you care about.

Registration is signing up with your election office so that you are on the list of people who can vote. Rules and deadlines vary by state, so do not copy a friend's deadline. The Twenty-Sixth Amendment protects the right to vote for citizens 18 and older. Most states let people preregister before they turn 18. Several states let 17-year-olds vote in a primary if they will be 18 by the general election.

Professional standards

Real source | Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)

SPJ Code of Ethics: Seek Truth and Report It

"Label advocacy and commentary."

In plain words: Journalists who follow the SPJ code mark opinions and recommendations so readers can tell them apart from facts.

Question: The creator's guide mixes a registration deadline with "vote Candidate B." Which lines are checkable facts, and which are picks?

Your answer

The checkable line is ____; the picks are ____.

Explains preregistration and other state steps that let teens sign up before they turn 18.



Rules differ by state, so where you live decides when you can register and what you vote on.

[illegible]

Sort the evidence

On your own Match each of Dec's questions to the rule or office that answers it. Then write whose view is missing. About 6 minutes.

Separate the two questions Dec has: what is on his ballot, and can he vote. Which rules and offices answer each, and which source should he check first?

Which contests and measures appear on Dec's ballot

Who decides

His address and district lines, drawn through redistricting

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whether Dec can register and vote in November

Who decides

Under which rule

Twenty-Sixth Amendment: the vote at 18 cannot be denied on account of age

State rules on preregistration, deadlines and 17-year-old primary voting

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

[illegible]

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what you would do with a friend's sample ballot. Then fix the two marked phrases. About 6 minutes.

You live at a new address. A friend sends their sample ballot and says, "Just use this one." What should you do?

- ☐ **A** Use it, because you and your friend live in the same state.
- ☐ **B** Check your registration and find the official sample ballot for your address.
- ☐ **C** Use a creator's voter guide instead, since it covers the whole election.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Guys the election is coming up and it's a big one!! **1** Registration closes on the 14th so do it now. Here's the voter guide I use, it tells you exactly who to vote for so you don't have to research. Also **2** drop your addresses and I'll check if you're registered for you. Only the big race really matters anyway, the rest is small stuff. My cousin in another state said the same deadline works for her too, so just use mine. Let's go vote!!

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 15 minutes.

Write a nonpartisan voting-information guide for a student organization’s social accounts or a campus library display. Add a short note explaining how the guide avoids the problems in the creator’s voter guide.

Use: Case documents: the sample ballot, the creator’s voter guide, Gia’s reminder draft and Dec’s and Mateo’s statements. Real sources: Vote.gov’s page for people 18 and under, the Twenty-Sixth Amendment, CIRCLE’s report on youth voting (April 14, 2025) and Ballotpedia’s report on preregistration (September 26, 2025).

You’ll make: Guide, 300—400 words, plus a note of about 100 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 List the official sources your guide will use: Vote.gov and each reader’s own election office.
- 2 Write down the facts you can state for every reader, from Vote.gov and the amendment.
- 3 Explain how a student away from home finds out where to register, using Mateo as the example.
- 4 Draft the guide on the Your draft page, with no picks.
- 5 Write a note of about 100 words on how your guide avoids the creator’s guide’s problems.
- 6 Finish the guide at 300 to 400 words for a social account or a library display.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Official sources the guide uses

Facts I can state for every reader

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does every rule in your guide come from an official source?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your guide say that rules vary by state?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it make no recommendation on any candidate or measure?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it tell readers not to post their address, birthdate or voter information?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Copies one person's deadlines.	☐ Mentions official sources vaguely.	☐ Points to official sources for each person's state.	☐ Points to official sources and explains why rules differ.
Reasoning	☐ Treats a guide as the ballot.	☐ Mentions the ballot but not local contests.	☐ Separates ballot, guide and registration.	☐ Explains why local offices matter to the audience.
Audience & purpose	☐ Collects private info.	☐ Generic hype.	☐ Useful, private, nonpartisan.	☐ Includes people not yet eligible.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Adds a link.	☐ Replaces copied deadlines with official routes.	☐ Explains how each change helps friends in different situations.

One change I made after feedback

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

1 Which contest on the sample ballot could affect Dec's school or his bus?

2 Mateo may still be registered in New Bedford. Why might his ballot differ from Dec's?

3 Anika is 16. How can she be part of this election before she can vote?

4 When could a voter guide that recommends choices help a first-time voter?

My take

My claim: ____.

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 9: What is on your ballot, and where do you check?

In this case, a teen about to turn 18 finds local races on his ballot that his feed never mentions. Your student compared a sample ballot with a voter guide, then wrote a guide that points to official sources without telling anyone how to vote.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What offices appear on a local ballot, besides the big races?
- 2 Where can someone find official information about registering to vote?
- 3 How can you tell a fact in a voter guide from a recommendation?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 10: Whose job is it to fix the blocked route?

A construction detour sends Sami toward stairs on her way to a city workshop, and her bus comes in 12 minutes.

On your own Read What happened. Underline where the detour sign points. About 4 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who writes down the corner, the time and the sign before Mateo posts. **New skill:** Report a problem to the office responsible.



Sami, Jordy and Mateo plan with picture cards on a whiteboard.

What happened

It is Tuesday, 4:05 p.m., at the corner of Elm Street and 4th Avenue. Sami is on her way to a free community workshop run by the city's parks department. It starts at 5. Sami uses a manual wheelchair, and her bus comes in 12 minutes. Mateo is with her.

The curb ramp on the northeast corner is blocked by construction fencing. A sign reads "SIDEWALK CLOSED AHEAD. PEDESTRIAN DETOUR." Its arrow points to a path that begins with a flight of stairs. That detour does not work for Sami.

Mateo already has the sign on video, and his first idea is to post it. Sami asks whether the video gets her on the bus. It does not, so Mateo puts the camera down. He checks the other corners for a ramp while Sami looks up the next bus stop.

Later, they want to report the corner to the city. Mateo wonders whether the city is breaking the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). First, they need to know what one video can show and which office is responsible.

Your question: Whose job is it to fix the blocked route, and what should Sami and Mateo tell the city?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 4 minutes.

Program access Program access is an ADA rule that a city's services, taken as a whole, must be usable by people with disabilities.

En español: acceso a los programas

In this case: The city runs the workshop. Program access asks whether Sami can reach and join the workshop, not only whether one ramp is open.

Barrier A barrier is something that blocks or limits a person from taking part.

En español: barrera

In this case: Fencing blocks the curb ramp at Elm Street and 4th Avenue, and the detour points to stairs. The flyer gives no way to request access.

ADA coordinator An ADA coordinator is the staff member a government names to handle disability access questions and complaints.

En español: coordinador de la ADA

In this case: Mateo plans to send the city's ADA coordinator the corner, the time, the sign and one question, if Sami agrees.

Who is involved



Sami

Trying to catch her bus to the workshop

"The sign says detour. The detour starts with stairs. So, no. Twelve minutes."



Mateo

Filmed the detour sign

"I had the sign on video before I even thought about it. Sami asked if that gets her on the bus. Fair. Camera down."

Before you look at the evidence, whose job do you think it is to fix Sami's route?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Program access and the ethics of reporting a barrier

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 6 minutes.

Words to know

- **Program access:** Program access is an ADA rule that a city's services, taken as a whole, must be usable by people with disabilities.
- **Barrier:** A barrier is something that blocks or limits a person from taking part.
- **ADA coordinator:** An ADA coordinator is the staff member a government names to handle disability access questions and complaints.
- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Jurisdiction:** A jurisdiction is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority.

The story: A detour that excludes

At 4:05 p.m. on a Tuesday, Sami, 23, and Mateo, 22, reach the corner of Elm Street and 4th Avenue on the way to a free parks department workshop that begins at 5. Sami uses a manual wheelchair. Her bus arrives in 12 minutes. The northeast curb ramp is fenced for construction, and the posted pedestrian detour begins with a flight of stairs.

The case opens with a small ethical sequence that many well-meaning allies get wrong. Mateo has already filmed the sign and offers to post it. Sami asks whether posting gets her on the bus. It does not. He stops filming, checks the other corners for a ramp and lets her look up the next stop. She is clear about consent. The ramp and the sign are fair to film. Filming her requires asking, and not in the middle of a missed bus. The advocacy can wait until the person most affected has what she needs.

Your role is to write down the corner, the time and the sign before anyone posts. That record is the raw material for everything that follows.

❓ Stop and think. Why is an answerable question often more effective than an accusation?

From observation to an answerable question

Mateo's instinct is to ask whether the city is breaking the Americans with Disabilities Act.

From observation to an answerable question, continued

Framed that way, the question is a **claim**, a statement that something is true that can be checked with evidence, and the evidence cannot carry it. One video establishes one fenced ramp and one sign on Tuesday at 4:05 p.m., posted since Monday. It does not establish whether an accessible alternative exists, how long the closure will last or how the city manages its program elsewhere. Mateo reaches that conclusion himself. He cannot call the whole route illegal from one corner.

The route map and flyer extend the analysis. Sami's trip has five stages, and the workshop entrance and room have not been checked. The flyer, "Free Community Workshop Series ... All welcome! Questions? Call the front desk," offers no information about accessible entrances or how to request access. A **barrier** is something that blocks or limits a person from taking part. The fence is a physical barrier, and the flyer's omission may be an informational one.

Program access is an ADA rule that a city's services, taken as a whole, must be usable by people with disabilities. The standard is structural rather than site-by-site. It generally does not require every older building to be accessible, and a city can meet it by relocating a service. Existing buildings and new construction are treated differently. What the standard does require is that the program, from information to arrival to participation, work for disabled residents.

The Case 9 concept of **jurisdiction**, the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority, identifies the responsible party. The city runs the workshop and controls the street. An **ADA coordinator** is the staff member a government names to handle disability access questions and complaints. Mateo's report is built to be answerable. It gives the corner, the time and the sign, then asks one question: is there an accessible detour, and how long will this stay blocked? It is sent only with Sami's agreement.

 **Stop and think.** How does program access differ from a rule that every building must be accessible, and why might the law choose that design?

Law, history and professional norms

The Department of Justice's guide for city governments explains Title II program access, curb ramps during street work and effective communication (U.S. Department of Justice, updated February 24, 2020). The law's history is inseparable from stairs. In the Capitol Crawl on March 12, 1990, activists climbed the Capitol steps to dramatize exclusion, and the ADA was signed that July (HISTORY, July 24, 2020). The protest was associated with ADAPT, which began as Americans Disabled for Accessible Public Transit (Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, March 1, 2015).

Implementation remains contested. Advocates continue to press the MTA over broken elevators that block subway routes (amNewYork, March 24, 2025). A North Bronx station is set to get elevators nearly a decade after an ADA lawsuit (THE CITY, October 3, 2025).

Law, history and professional norms, continued

A federal audit found that little was known about compliance in ADA paratransit services (GAO, November 15, 2012).

Professional codes frame the duties on each side. ASPA asks public administrators to “respect and assist all persons in their dealings with public organizations” (ASPA Code of Ethics, 2013). NPPA asks visual journalists to “be complete and provide context when photographing or recording subjects” (NPPA Code of Ethics, no date listed). For lawyers, the ABA’s model rules require a basis in law and fact before bringing a claim, and they call for learning the facts first (ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct, 1983, as amended). A report sized to its evidence meets all three standards.

 **Stop and think.** When does documenting a barrier become exploiting the person who faces it?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Department of Justice | February 24, 2020

The ADA and City Governments

Real source | HISTORY | July 24, 2020

When the ‘Capitol Crawl’ Dramatized the Need for Americans with Disabilities Act

Real source | Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities | March 1, 2015

The Capitol Crawl

Real source | amNewYork | March 24, 2025

Elevator advocates push for better subway accessibility

Real source | THE CITY | October 3, 2025

North Bronx Subway Station to Get Elevators, Nearly a Decade After ADA Lawsuit

Real source | U.S. Government Accountability Office | November 15, 2012

ADA Paratransit Services: Demand Has Increased, but Little Is Known About Compliance (GAO-13-17)

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) | 2013

ASPA Code of Ethics

Real source | National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) | No date listed

NPPA Code of Ethics for Visual Journalists

Real source | American Bar Association (ABA), Center for Professional Responsibility | No date listed

ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Construction sign

The detour sign

The sign reads “SIDEWALK CLOSED AHEAD. PEDESTRIAN DETOUR.” Its arrow points to a path that begins with a flight of stairs. The sign went up on Monday. Mateo recorded it on Tuesday at 4:05 p.m.

Look closely: Where does the arrow point? Who could not use that path?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Route map

Sami and Mateo’s route map

1. Home to the corner of Elm Street and 4th Avenue: sidewalk clear. 2. Northeast curb ramp: blocked by construction fencing. 3. Bus stop: next bus in 12 minutes. 4. Bus to the parks department building. 5. Workshop entrance and room: not yet checked.

Look closely: Which stage is blocked, and which stage has nobody checked?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Flyer

The workshop flyer

The flyer reads “Free Community Workshop Series. Tuesdays, 5—7 p.m., Parks Department Annex. All welcome! Questions? Call the front desk.” It gives no information about accessible entrances or how to request access.

Look closely: What does the flyer tell someone who needs to request access?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: program access

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

Program access is an ADA rule that a city's services, taken as a whole, must be usable by people with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Justice explains that Title II of the ADA covers state and local government programs and services. Program access generally does not require every older building to be accessible. For example, a city can relocate a service to an accessible place. Existing buildings and new construction have different requirements.

Access covers the whole visit: finding the information, getting there, going in, taking part and leaving. A **barrier** is something that blocks or limits a person from taking part. Sami meets one barrier at the curb ramp. The workshop flyer could be another, because it gives no way to request access. The Justice Department's guide for cities also covers curb ramps during street work.

One video of one corner cannot show whether a city is following the law. It can show what happened, where and when. An **ADA coordinator** is the staff member a government names to handle disability access questions and complaints. That office can say whether an accessible detour exists. Before you report a barrier someone else faces, ask them what they want said.

Professional standards

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)

ASPA Code of Ethics: 3. Promote democratic participation

“respect and assist all persons in their dealings with public organizations”

In plain words: ASPA members in public service agree to help every person use public programs and services.

Question: The parks flyer says “All welcome!” with no access information. What should it add so Sami can request access?

Your answer

The flyer should add ____, so that ____.

A throwback to March 12, 1990, when activists climbed the Capitol steps to show what stairs do to access. The ADA was signed that July.



A lawsuit pushed a transit agency to add elevators, showing how the ADA makes access a public duty.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook paper or a document template. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

Sort the evidence

On your own Mark whether each piece of evidence supports or narrows each claim. Then write whose view is missing. About 6 minutes.

Sort what the evidence supports. Which claim can you make today, which one needs more facts, and who can supply them?

Evidence	Claim 1 The city is breaking the ADA.	Claim 2 On Tuesday, the posted detour did not work for a wheelchair user.
1 Photo: the northeast curb ramp blocked by fencing on Tuesday at 4:05 p.m.		
2 Detour sign points to a path that starts with stairs		
3 DOJ: Title II requires program access, not every facility to be accessible		

Still open

- Is there another accessible route to the bus and the workshop? Ask the ADA coordinator.

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what Mateo should do and explain why. Then fix the two marked phrases. About 6 minutes.

Mateo wants people to know about the blocked corner. What should he do?

- ☐ **A** Post the video with a caption saying the city is breaking the ADA.
- ☐ **B** Send the ADA coordinator the corner, the time, the detour sign and one question, if Sami agrees.
- ☐ **C** Skip the report if Sami finds another bus stop that works today.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

1 The city is breaking the ADA. There is construction blocking the ramp and a wheelchair user I know couldn't get to the bus. We were standing there for like ten minutes trying to figure out another way and the sign just pointed to stairs. My friend almost missed her workshop because of it. This is discrimination and completely illegal. Nobody even cares about this. You need to **2** fix every ramp in the neighborhood right away or we will post the photos everywhere.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a memo to the parks department about its workshop series. Report what Sami’s trip showed, summarize what the Department of Justice Title II guide says a city program must do and recommend two changes. Add a revised flyer that tells people how to request access.

Use: Case documents: the detour sign, the route map, the workshop flyer and Sami’s and Mateo’s statements. Real sources: the Department of Justice guide “ADA Update: The ADA and City Governments.”

You’ll make: Memo, 300—400 words, plus a revised flyer of 60—100 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Complete a route audit of Sami’s trip: find, get there, enter, take part, leave.
- 2 Separate what the sign, the video and the map show from what they cannot show.
- 3 Summarize what the Department of Justice guide says a city program must do.
- 4 Choose two changes the parks department can make.
- 5 Write a memo of 300 to 400 words on the Your draft page.
- 6 Rewrite the flyer in 60 to 100 words so it says how to request access.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

What we observed

What the evidence cannot show

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Your draft, continued

Revised flyer, 60 to 100 words

Notes

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your memo report observations with the place and time and no legal conclusion?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does your summary match what the Department of Justice guide says?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Are both recommendations within the parks department's control?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does your revised flyer say how to request access and whom to contact?	☐ Yes	☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No location or time.	☐ General description.	☐ Specific location, time and observation.	☐ Specific observation plus what remains unknown.
Reasoning	☐ Declares a violation.	☐ Mixes observation and conclusion.	☐ Separates observation from legal question.	☐ Connects observation to program access and asks the right office.
Audience & purpose	☐ Threatening or vague.	☐ Polite but no clear request.	☐ Specific, answerable request to the right office.	☐ Request plus how to report future issues.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Tone only.	☐ Adds specifics and removes the legal conclusion.	☐ Explains how each change helps the city act and respects Sami.

I changed ___ because ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

1 Which barrier on Sami's trip would a photo miss?

2 What is the difference between recording a barrier and making Sami the content?

3 Construction is temporary, but the detour affects people now. What should a city do to keep routes usable during repairs?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

[illegible]

Talk about this case at home

Case 10: Whose job is it to fix the blocked route?

In this case, construction blocks a curb ramp on a young woman's route to a city workshop, and the detour points to stairs. Your student studied what one video can show, then wrote a question for the city office responsible for access.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Who in our town takes care of sidewalks and curb ramps?
- 2 What details make a report to the city easy to act on?
- 3 Why should you ask someone before you post a video of them?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 11: Why are Jordy and Gia paid different rates?

Jordy and Gia worked the same Saturday event, but Gia's pay rate is \$1.50 an hour higher, and Jordy wants to know why.

On your own Read What happened. Underline the two pay rates and the job title on the schedule. About 5 minutes.



Mateo attaches an arrival notice at the Common Room entrance. Gia points to the doorway, and Jordy checks what a visitor will see.

Your role: You're the one who lines up both shifts side by side before Jordy writes to Dana. **New skill:** Compare two cases on the same terms.

What happened

Jordy and Gia work event shifts for the same company. They both worked a Saturday event from 3 to 11 p.m. Both helped with setup and closing, and Jordy also ran the caption and audio check.

They were paid the following Friday. On Sunday afternoon, Jordy and Gia compare pay statements. Jordy's lists eight hours at \$16.50 an hour. Gia's lists \$18.00 an hour for the same event.

The crew schedule lists Gia as "shift lead," but it does not say what that job includes. That day, Gia opened up and handled one guest issue. She does not know if that explains the \$1.50 difference. Gia is fine with Jordy knowing her rate. But she does not want her statement posted.

Jordy wants to ask Dana, the supervisor, how rates are set. Jordy will not post anything before Dana answers.

Your question: Why is Gia paid more than Jordy for the same event, and how should Jordy ask about it?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess about the pay difference. About 5 minutes.

Compensation Compensation is all the pay and benefits a worker receives, including hourly rates, bonuses and overtime.

En español: compensación

In this case: Jordy's statement shows eight hours at \$16.50 an hour, and Gia's shows \$18.00. The statements show the rates but not how they were set.

Equal Pay Act The Equal Pay Act is a federal law from 1963 that requires equal pay for men and women who do equal work.

En español: Ley de Igualdad Salarial

In this case: The Equal Pay Act covers pay differences based on sex, not every difference. Different job duties, such as a real shift-lead role, can be a lawful reason.

Title VII Title VII is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It bans job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

En español: Título VII

In this case: Title VII covers pay decisions based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. No document shows how Jordy's rate was set.

Who is involved



Jordy

Worked setup through close

"Three to eleven, setup to close, and I ran the caption and audio check. \$16.50 an hour. Gia's says \$18.00."



Gia

Listed as shift lead

"I only found out I make more because Jordy showed me theirs. The schedule calls me shift lead. Nobody told me what that pays for."

Before you look at the evidence, why do you think Gia is paid more than Jordy?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Pay equity, comparators and the right to ask

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Compensation:** Compensation is all the pay and benefits a worker receives, including hourly rates, bonuses and overtime.
- **Equal Pay Act:** The Equal Pay Act is a federal law from 1963 that requires equal pay for men and women who do equal work.
- **Title VII:** Title VII is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It bans job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.
- **Gross pay:** Gross pay is the money you earn before any taxes or other deductions are taken out.

The story: Discovering a differential

Jordy and Gia work event shifts for the same company. On a Saturday, both worked from 3 to 11 p.m. and shared setup and closing. Jordy also ran the caption and audio check. The schedule named Gia “shift lead” without defining the role. On Sunday, comparing statements, they find a \$1.50 hourly difference: \$16.50 for Jordy and \$18.00 for Gia.

The case models how most workers actually discover pay differences, which is informally, through a coworker. Gia learns she is paid more only because Jordy shows her. Neither of them knows the policy behind the rates. Gia can describe what she did as lead, opening up and handling one guest issue, but not whether the company values that at \$1.50 an hour.

What follows is a careful sequence. The friends agree on the facts: same event, same hours, two rates. Gia consents to Jordy knowing her rate and withholds consent to posting her statement. Jordy chooses to ask Dana, the supervisor, how rates are set before posting anything, and keeps the decision about what to do next. Asked whether the gap is discrimination, Gia says she does not know. Maybe shift lead pays more. The first step is to ask what it covers.

Your role is to line up both shifts side by side before Jordy writes to Dana.

- ❓ **Stop and think.** How does the choice of comparator change the answer in both the soccer case and Jordy’s?

Constructing a fair comparison

The new skill is comparing two cases on the same terms before drawing a conclusion. It extends Case 5's line-by-line reading. Jordy's statement shows 8.0 hours at \$16.50, or \$132.00 in **gross pay**, the money earned before any taxes or other deductions are taken out.

In employment law, the person you compare yourself to is often called a comparator, and the choice of comparator shapes the result. Here the natural comparator is Gia, but the comparison only holds if the jobs are defined. **Compensation** is all the pay and benefits a worker receives, including hourly rates, bonuses and overtime. The evidence establishes identical hours and shared tasks. It also shows one technical task for Jordy and one title with modest added tasks for Gia. It leaves open what the title formally requires and how the employer sets rates. Legitimate explanations such as duties, title and experience are plausible. So is error. The documents cannot distinguish among them.

Case 10's skill, reporting to the office responsible, determines the next move. Dana sets rates, so Dana is asked. A strong message states the observation, lists the verified facts and asks one precise question about what shift lead includes and how rates are determined. It does not rely on Gia's statement, which respects her boundary and keeps the question about Jordy's pay.

 **Stop and think.** Which legitimate explanations for the \$1.50 are plausible, and what evidence would test each?

Law, litigation and professional standards

Federal law constrains pay-setting. The **Equal Pay Act** is a federal law from 1963 that requires equal pay for men and women who do equal work. **Title VII** is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It bans job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The EEOC enforces both and describes retaliation protections (EEOC, no date listed). Separately, the NLRB explains that most private-sector employees may discuss wages with coworkers, with or without a union (NLRB, no date listed). A right to discuss one's own pay is not a license to publish a colleague's records.

The women's national soccer team litigation illustrates the comparator problem at scale. In 2020, a federal judge dismissed the equal pay claim, emphasizing structural differences between the men's and women's contracts (NPR, May 2, 2020). The players appealed, arguing that rates of pay were the relevant comparison. The 2022 settlement, \$24 million with a commitment to equal pay rates, resolved the dispute without a finding (NPR, February 22, 2022). The terms were later formalized in signed agreements (PBS NewsHour, September 6, 2022).

Broader trends frame the stakes. Pew reports that the gender pay gap has narrowed only slightly over two decades and is smaller for workers ages 25 to 34 (Pew Research Center, March 4, 2025). Salary transparency laws that require posted ranges may make comparisons easier to start (NPR, January 3, 2023).

Law, litigation and professional standards, continued

Professional codes describe the employer's side of the conversation Jordy is starting. SHRM members commit to "take appropriate steps to ensure the accuracy and completeness of all communicated information about HR policies and practices" (SHRM Code of Ethics, April 24, 2023). IABC members pledge, "I protect confidential information while acting within the law" (IABC Code of Ethics, no date listed). Dana's answer should meet the first standard, and Jordy's message already meets the second.

 **Stop and think.** How should a worker balance the right to discuss pay with a coworker's wish to keep records private?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) | No date listed
Pay Discrimination

Real source | National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) | No date listed
Your Right to Discuss Wages

Real source | NPR | May 2, 2020
Federal Judge Dismisses U.S. Women's Soccer Team's Equal Pay Claim

Real source | NPR | February 22, 2022
The U.S. national women's soccer team wins \$24 million in equal pay settlement

Real source | PBS NewsHour (Associated Press) | September 6, 2022
U.S. men's and women's soccer teams formally sign equal pay agreements

Real source | Pew Research Center | March 4, 2025
Gender pay gap in U.S. has narrowed slightly over 2 decades

Real source | NPR | January 3, 2023
The impact that new salary transparency laws could have

Real source | Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) | 2023
SHRM Code of Ethics

Real source | International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) | No date listed
IABC Code of Ethics for Professional Communicators

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, fill in both boxes. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Pay statement

Jordy’s pay statement

Event crew, Saturday. Hours: 8.0 at \$16.50. Gross pay for the event: \$132.00.

Look closely: Multiply the hours by the rate. Does it match the gross pay?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Work schedule

The crew schedule

Saturday event, 3:00—11:00 p.m. Crew: Gia (shift lead), Jordy and two other crew members. Setup, 3:00—5:00: all crew. Caption and audio check: Jordy. Closing, 10:00—11:00: all crew.

Look closely: Circle “shift lead.” Does the schedule say what that job includes?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Text messages

Jordy and Gia compare notes

- Sunday, 1:15 p.m.
- Gia: I'm fine with you knowing my rate. I just don't want my statement posted anywhere.
- Jordy: Got it. Did you do anything different as shift lead?
- Gia: I opened up and handled one guest issue. Honestly, I don't know if that's why. Let's ask Dana.

Look closely: What does Gia agree to share, and what does she ask Jordy not to do?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Key idea: equal pay

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

Before you can say why Jordy is paid less, you need to know what each job included. **Compensation** is all the pay and benefits a worker receives, including hourly rates, bonuses and overtime. A job title, extra duties or more experience can explain a pay difference. So can a mistake. The pay statements show the rates, but they do not show how the rates were set.

Federal laws limit the reasons an employer can use to set pay. The **Equal Pay Act** is a federal law from 1963 that requires equal pay for men and women who do equal work. **Title VII** is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It bans job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Both laws apply to covered employers, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces them. A legitimate reason, such as different job duties, can lawfully explain a pay difference.

Talking about pay is protected too. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) says most private-sector workers have a right to discuss pay with coworkers. That right holds with or without a union. It does not make Gia's pay statement Jordy's to share. Jordy can ask Dana how rates are set without naming Gia's rate.

Professional standards

Real source | Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

SHRM Code of Ethics: Fairness and Justice

"Develop, administer, and advocate policies and procedures that foster fair, consistent and equitable treatment for all."

In plain words: HR professionals who belong to SHRM agree to use workplace policies that treat workers fairly and consistently.

Question: The schedule lists Gia as shift lead. What written policy would show whether that title explains the higher rate?

Your answer

A policy that answers this would state _____. Without it, _____.

A real 'same work, different pay' dispute that ended in a settlement and a promise of equal rates.



Why the claim was first dismissed: the judge compared how the contracts were structured. What you compare shapes the answer.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced, horizontal light blue lines running across the width of the page. The background is a clean, solid white color. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

Sort the evidence

On your own Line up the accounts in the diagram. Then name one view that is missing. About 6 minutes.

Line up the accounts. Where do they agree, where do they differ, and which difference could be a legitimate factor? What would you need to find out before calling it unfair?

Account 1
Jordy’s record: 8 hours, setup, caption and audio check, closing, \$16.50

Account 2
Gia’s account: same hours, setup and closing, opened up and handled one guest issue, \$18.00

Account 3
The schedule: Gia listed as shift lead, with no description of the role

Where they agree

Where they differ

Check: Ask the supervisor how rates are set and what the shift-lead role requires

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what Jordy should do first and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines.
About 5 minutes.

Jordy's statement shows \$16.50 an hour. Gia's shows \$18.00 for the same Saturday event, and the schedule lists her as "shift lead." What should Jordy do first?

- ☐ **A** Tell the rest of the crew that Gia is paid more for the same work.
- ☐ **B** Compare what each of them did, find out what "shift lead" means and ask Dana how rates are set.
- ☐ **C** Let it go, because an employer can set any pay rate it chooses.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Hi, I found out Gia makes more than me and we did the exact same work so **1** this is discrimination. I know it's because of who I am. I want the same rate as her starting now or I'm going to post about it everywhere so people know how this company treats workers. **2** I have her pay stub as proof. I've worked here longer than some people and I always show up on time. Let me know by tomorrow. Jordy

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 10 minutes.

Write Jordy's message to the supervisor and a one-page plan for the conversation. The plan lists the record Jordy brings, what Gia agreed to share, the questions to ask and Jordy's options after each kind of answer.

Use: Case documents: Jordy's pay statement, the crew schedule with job titles, Jordy and Gia's conversation and Jordy's statement. Real sources: the EEOC's Youth@Work page on pay discrimination and the NLRB page on the right to discuss wages.

You'll make: Message, 80–120 words, plus a one-page conversation plan

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Fill in the record sheet from Evidence A and B: date, hours, duties, title and rate.
- 2 Mark what Gia agreed to share in Evidence C, and with whom.
- 3 Write Jordy's message to Dana, 80 to 120 words, on the Your draft page.
- 4 Write the conversation plan: Jordy's next step after each kind of answer.
- 5 Note that formal complaints have deadlines. Say when Jordy should ask a qualified adviser.
- 6 Check your work with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Record sheet: date, hours, duties, title, rate

What Gia agreed to share

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 25 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 6 minutes.

Does your record match the documents exactly?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does your message use Gia’s rate only as she agreed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it ask what shift lead includes and how rates are set, without claiming discrimination?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does your plan separate a satisfying answer, a need for more facts and a possible legal issue?

☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Relies on assumption.	☐ Mentions the gap only.	☐ Cites duties, hours and rate.	☐ Cites records and acknowledges what isn’t known.
Reasoning	☐ Declares discrimination.	☐ Assumes the reason.	☐ Asks for criteria before concluding.	☐ Identifies possible legitimate factors to test.
Audience & purpose	☐ Threatens or exposes coworkers.	☐ Polite but vague.	☐ Specific question to the right person.	☐ Specific question that protects coworkers’ privacy.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Tone only.	☐ Replaces conclusion with a question.	☐ Explains how changes protect Jordy and get an answer.

I changed ___ because ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then complete each sentence frame below the questions. About 10 minutes.

- 1** What information could explain the \$1.50 difference, and what might challenge that explanation?

- 2** Whose choice is it to make Jordy's pay public, and why?

- 3** What answer from Dana would satisfy Jordy, and what answer would not?

- 4** In the soccer case, the judge looked at contract structures, and the players wanted him to compare rates of pay. Why does that choice matter?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 11: Why are Jordy and Gia paid different rates?

In this case, two friends who worked the same event find out one is paid \$1.50 more an hour. Your student compared their records and wrote a respectful message asking a supervisor how pay rates are set.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What questions could someone ask about pay when starting a new job?
- 2 Why might a person want to keep their pay private?
- 3 What makes a question to a boss sound respectful?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.

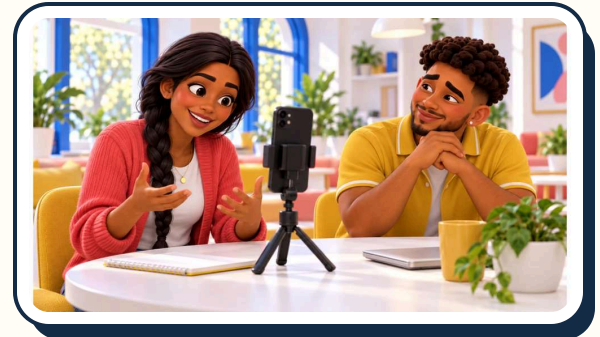


See the case online.

Case 12: When can a school limit what students say?

Anika's poster asks her school to keep the library open at lunch, and now someone in her group chat suggests a walkout.

On your own Read What happened. Underline each plan: the poster, wearing blue and the walkout. About 5 minutes.



Anika records a voice memo while Mateo listens beside a phone on a small tripod.

Your role: You're the one who compares Tinker with each action before anyone says "can't touch us."
New skill: Apply a precedent by comparing fact patterns.

What happened

Anika is a junior at a public high school. She wants the school library to stay open at lunch. On Tuesday afternoon, she prints a poster that says "KEEP OUR LIBRARY OPEN AT LUNCH. Wear blue Thursday."

Mateo did the photo and layout. He put a photo of the school's sign and logo across the top. The poster does not name Anika or any student group. The student handbook says posters need approval from the main office and the name of the student or group responsible.

On Wednesday night, someone in the group chat suggests a walkout if the school takes the poster down. The message says a 1969 Supreme Court case, *Tinker v. Des Moines*, means the school "can't touch us." Anika never suggested a walkout.

Your question: How far does Tinker cover the poster, the wear-blue plan and the walkout, and what facts are missing?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Precedent A precedent is an earlier court decision that judges use as a guide in similar later cases.

En español: precedente

In this case: Tinker v. Des Moines (1969) guides Anika's case only as far as the facts match: quiet expression at a public school.

Fact pattern A fact pattern is the specific set of facts in a situation that a rule is applied to.

En español: conjunto de hechos

In this case: Anika lists each plan's action, place, timing and rule: the poster on a school board, wearing blue on Thursday and leaving class.

Substantial disruption Substantial disruption is the standard from Tinker v. Des Moines: a public school may limit speech that would seriously disrupt school activities.

En español: alteración sustancial

In this case: Wearing blue on Thursday is quiet, like the armbands. Leaving class is conduct under the attendance rule, which Tinker does not settle.

Who is involved



Anika

Made the poster

"My poster says keep the library open at lunch, and wear blue Thursday. Now the chat says we walk out. I never said walk out."



Mateo

Did the photo and layout

"I put the school sign across the top because it looked good. Now it reads like the school is announcing it. It isn't."

Before you look at the evidence, can the school do anything about the poster or the walkout?

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Analogical reasoning and student expression

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Precedent:** A precedent is an earlier court decision that judges use as a guide in similar later cases.
- **Fact pattern:** A fact pattern is the specific set of facts in a situation that a rule is applied to.
- **Substantial disruption:** Substantial disruption is the standard from *Tinker v. Des Moines*: a public school may limit speech that would seriously disrupt school activities.
- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Framing:** Framing is choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward.

The story: A slogan outruns a poster

Anika, a public high school junior, prints a poster asking her school to keep the library open at lunch and inviting students to “Wear blue Thursday.” Mateo, 22, designed it and placed a photo of the school’s sign and logo across the top. The poster names no student or group. The next night, a group chat reframes the campaign. If the school removes the poster, students will walk out, and “Tinker says they can’t touch us.”

The case is useful precisely because the legal claim sounds informed. *Tinker v. Des Moines* is a real and important precedent, and many students have heard of it. What the chat gets wrong is scope. It treats a holding about a specific kind of expression as a guarantee covering any protest method. It also attaches a walkout to a campaign whose author never proposed one.

Both friends model professional self-correction. Anika separates her poster from the walkout and acknowledges that her poster lacks the name the handbook requires. Mateo recognizes that his design choice changed the poster’s apparent speaker and plans a new version with office approval, Anika’s name and no logo.

Your role is to compare Tinker with each action before anyone says “can’t touch us.”

❓ Stop and think. How does analogical reasoning differ from applying a rule mechanically?

Precedent as analogy

A **precedent** is an earlier court decision that judges use as a guide in similar later cases. In *Tinker* (1969), public-school students wore black armbands to protest the Vietnam War, were suspended and won at the Supreme Court. **Substantial disruption** is the standard from *Tinker v. Des Moines*: a public school may limit speech that would seriously disrupt school activities. The Court added that an undifferentiated fear of disruption is not enough.

Legal reasoning from precedent is analogical, and it requires disciplined description. A **fact pattern** is the specific set of facts in a situation that a rule is applied to. The skill here extends Case 11's method of comparing situations on the same terms. Three fact patterns emerge. The wear-blue plan is passive, symbolic and compatible with attending class, and it is the closest analogue to the armbands. The walkout is conduct as well as expression. Leaving class triggers an attendance rule that applies whatever the message. The poster raises a question outside *Tinker*'s core. Bearing the school's insignia and no student attribution, it risks being read as the school's own speech, over which schools have more control.

Case 1's concepts clarify the communication problem. The chat's slogan is a **claim**, a statement that can be checked with evidence, and the holding does not support it. The logo is **framing**, choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward. It foregrounds institutional authorship, and that changes the legal question as well as the audience's reading.

❓ **Stop and think.** The walkout involves both expression and conduct. Why does that distinction matter legally?

Doctrine, practice and professional norms

The *Tinker* opinion's best-known line holds that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate" (Legal Information Institute, 1969). The federal judiciary teaches the case alongside a walkout scenario that separates message from conduct and notes the usual attendance consequences (U.S. Courts, no date listed).

The Court's 2021 decision in *Mahanoy Area School District v. B. L.* extended the inquiry to off-campus speech. It ruled 8 to 1 for a student disciplined over a Snapchat post while preserving school authority over some off-campus speech, such as threats (Supreme Court of the United States, June 23, 2021; PBS NewsHour, June 23, 2021).

Current events test the walkout distinction. In early 2026, students in several states walked out to protest federal immigration enforcement. Indiana schools responded variously, with unexcused absences at some and one-day suspensions at one high school (Chalkbeat Indiana, February 11, 2026). Local reporting separated speech rights, attendance rules and discipline (WFYI, February 1, 2026). Advocacy groups publish their own guides.

Doctrine, practice and professional norms, continued

The ACLU's is a rights group's plain-language reading, and comparing it with court sources shows where law ends and advocacy begins (ACLU, February 27, 2018).

Two professional norms bear on the poster. The PRSA code asks communicators to "reveal the sponsors for causes and interests represented" (PRSA Code of Ethics, October 2000). The AIGA standards ask designers to avoid "false, misleading and deceptive promotion" (AIGA Standards of Professional Practice, no date listed). An unattributed poster under a school logo strains both.

? **Stop and think.** Compare the ACLU guide with the court sources. Where does legal description end and advocacy begin?

Sources

Real source | Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School | 1969

Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District, 393 U.S. 503 (1969)

Real source | U.S. Courts | No date listed

Fictional Scenario: Tinker v. Des Moines

Real source | Supreme Court of the United States | June 23, 2021

Mahanoy Area School District v. B. L. (opinion)

Real source | PBS NewsHour (Associated Press) | June 23, 2021

Supreme Court rules in favor of cheerleader who published critical social media post in First Amendment case

Real source | Chalkbeat Indiana | February 11, 2026

How schools in Marion County responded to anti-ICE student protests

Real source | WFYI Indianapolis Public Media | February 1, 2026

A guide to your rights at Indiana protests, in the streets, and at school

Real source | ACLU | February 27, 2018

Students' Rights: Speech, Walkouts, and Other Protests

Real source | Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) | 2000

PRSA Code of Ethics

Real source | AIGA, the professional association for design | No date listed

AIGA Standards of Professional Practice

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, fill in both boxes. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Poster

Anika’s poster, first version

Printed Tuesday, 3:15 p.m. The poster reads “KEEP OUR LIBRARY OPEN AT LUNCH. Wear blue Thursday.” A photo of the school’s sign and logo runs across the top. No student name or group appears anywhere on the poster.

Look closely: Cover the logo photo with your hand. Who seems to be speaking now?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Handbook policy

Student handbook, page 14

Students may post materials on the student bulletin boards outside the cafeteria and the library. Materials must be approved by the main office and must show the name of the student or group responsible.

Look closely: Underline the two requirements for every poster.

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Group chat

The walkout message

Wednesday, 9:02 p.m.

First message: “If they take the poster down we walk out Thursday. Tinker says they can’t touch us.

Reply: “Wait, wear blue AND walk out??

Look closely: Which part is a message, and which part is leaving class?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: precedent

On your own Read the key idea and the Professional standards card. Then answer the question in the box. About 12 minutes.

A **precedent** is an earlier court decision that judges use as a guide in similar later cases. In *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), public-school students wore black armbands to protest the Vietnam War. The school suspended them, and the Supreme Court ruled for the students. The Court wrote that students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” It also said a mere fear of disruption was not enough to limit their expression.

A precedent guides a new case only as far as the facts match. **Substantial disruption** is the standard from *Tinker v. Des Moines*: a public school may limit speech that would seriously disrupt school activities. Wearing blue on Thursday is quiet, like the armbands. A walkout is different, because students leave class. The school’s attendance rule covers that conduct, and *Tinker* does not settle it.

The poster raises another question. It shows the school’s sign and logo but no student name, so it may look like the school is speaking. Schools have more control over speech that looks like it comes from the school. A **fact pattern** is the specific set of facts in a situation that a rule is applied to. Write a fact pattern for each action before you decide whether *Tinker* fits it.

Professional standards

Adapted from a real source | American Bar Association (ABA), Center for Professional Responsibility

ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct: Rule 2.1 Advisor

Summary: Summary, not a quotation: in representing a client, a lawyer must use independent professional judgment and give candid advice. A lawyer may refer to moral, economic, social and political factors as well as the law.

In plain words: Lawyers must give their clients honest, independent advice, even when the client would rather hear something else.

Question: The chat says “*Tinker* says they can’t touch us.” What would candid advice say about the walkout and attendance policy?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

Candid advice would say ____, even if ____.

In the news



Real source | PBS NewsHour | April 28, 2021

Student free speech makes it to the Supreme Court in former high school cheerleader's case

Explains the Snapchat case the Court used to ask when a school can punish off-campus student speech.



Real source | PBS NewsHour (Associated Press) | June 23, 2021

Supreme Court rules in favor of cheerleader who published critical social media post in First Amendment case

The 8-1 ruling protected the student but said schools may still act on some off-campus speech, like threats.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Link each piece of evidence to the claim it supports or challenges. Then name one missing view. About 6 minutes.

Test the slogan against the facts. Which evidence supports each claim, which challenges it, and which fact would you still need?

Evidence	Claim 1 Tinker means nobody can face consequences for walking out.	Claim 2 The wear-blue plan closely matches Tinker’s facts.	Claim 3 The poster should carry a student byline instead of the school logo.
1 Tinker’s facts: silent armbands, no substantial disruption, a public school			
2 A walkout means leaving class, which falls under the attendance rule			
3 The logo photo makes the poster look like school-sponsored speech			

Still open

- What does the attendance policy say, and what process follows?

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the best reply to the group chat and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines.
About 5 minutes.

Someone in Anika's group chat says, "Tinker means nobody can get in trouble for walking out of class." How should you respond?

- ☐ **A** Agree, because Tinker protected students who protested at school.
- ☐ **B** Disagree, because schools can make any rule they want about student speech.
- ☐ **C** Say that the message and leaving class are separate questions, then check the attendance rule.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

No, the school can't take it down because of Tinker v. Des Moines. In that case **1** the Supreme Court said students have free speech at school. The poster is just saying the library should stay open at lunch which is not hurting anybody. We even used a nice photo of the school sign so it looks professional. The principal would be breaking the law if he took it down. This is America and students have rights. Everyone should wear blue Thursday and **2** walk out if they try.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 15 minutes.

Write a plain-language explainer on posters and walkouts at public schools for a library teen night or a youth program. Separate the speech question, the attendance rule and possible discipline, and use Anika’s case as the example.

Use: Case documents: Anika’s poster, the posting policy and the walkout chat. Real sources: the Tinker summary and opinion (1969), the Mahanoy opinion (2021), WFYI’s rights guide and Chalkbeat’s report (February 2026) and the ACLU guide (2018).

You’ll make: Explainer, 400—500 words, with a labeled source list

Time: 90 minutes

- 1

Sort the case facts into three columns: speech, attendance and discipline.
- 2

Label each source as a court opinion, a news report or an advocacy guide.
- 3

Write one plain sentence that states the Tinker ruling.
- 4

Draft your explainer on the Your draft page, using Anika’s case as the example.
- 5

Finish your 400- to 500-word explainer on lined paper, with a labeled source list.
- 6

End with a line that says the explainer gives general information, not legal advice.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Speech

Attendance

Discipline

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 35 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Do you state the Tinker ruling accurately and say it concerns public schools?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you separate the message from the act of leaving class?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you report the 2026 school responses without taking a side on the protests?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Is every source labeled as court, news or advocacy?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No case facts.	☐ Names Tinker without its rule.	☐ States Tinker's facts and substantial -disruption test.	☐ Adds a second precedent or the walkout exercise accurately.
Reasoning	☐ Treats a slogan as the answer.	☐ Applies Tinker to everything.	☐ Compares facts and separates speech from conduct.	☐ Varies facts to show where the precedent stops fitting.
Audience & purpose	☐ Tells others to break rules.	☐ Argues for one side only.	☐ Recommends a clear next question for the school.	☐ Balances effective expression with respect for process.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Softens tone only.	☐ Adds the rule's limit and removes a legal conclusion.	☐ Explains how each edit makes the argument more precise.

One change I made after feedback

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then complete each sentence frame below the questions. About 10 minutes.

1 Which changed fact would make Tinker a weaker comparison for the wear-blue plan?

2 Why might it matter whether a poster looks like it comes from the school?

3 If the poster had Anika's name and no school logo, what would change?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

My take, continued

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 12: When can a school limit what students say?

In this case, a student's poster asks her school to keep the library open at lunch, and someone in a group chat suggests a walkout. Your student compared a 1969 Supreme Court case with each plan and wrote a short analysis.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What rules do schools often have about posters or flyers?
- 2 Why might a school treat wearing a color differently from leaving class?
- 3 How can a reader tell who made a poster?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 13: Can the crew cut waste before it reaches the bin?

The last Common Room screening used about 120 cups the city won't recycle, and a box of parts arrived half full of packaging.

On your own Read What happened. Underline the number of cups and what the city list says about them. About 5 minutes.



Anika, Dec and Sami react to a round of their tabletop game.

Your role: You're the one who counts the cups before and after the change. **New skill:** Count a starting point before you claim a change works.

What happened

It is Tuesday in the theater shop. Dec opens a box of replacement parts. Three separate orders of small LED connectors and switches, placed over one week, arrived together. About half of the box is plastic air pillows and foam.

The supply list from last Friday's screening at the Common Room shows a second problem. The crew used about 120 single-use cups. The cups are plastic-lined paper and labeled "recyclable." But the city's recycling list does not take plastic-lined paper cups.

Dec wants to fix how they order parts before anyone redoes the recycling sign. Anika tracks the parts and the budget. She agrees with Dec, but she wants numbers before anyone says a change saves money. Some people need a disposable cup or a straw, so any plan has to work for them too.

Your question: What could the crew change before the next screening, and how would they know it worked?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Source reduction Source reduction is preventing waste before it is created, for example by buying less packaging.

En español: reducción en la fuente

In this case: Dec wants to combine the parts orders so less packaging arrives in the first place.

Reuse Reuse is using an item again instead of throwing it away after one use.

En español: reutilización

In this case: Borrowing washable cups from the bookshop is reuse. Washing uses water and someone's time.

Local acceptance Local acceptance is the list of materials that your own city's recycling or compost program actually takes.

En español: materiales aceptados en tu ciudad

In this case: The cups say "recyclable," but the crew's city does not accept plastic-lined paper cups.

Who is involved



Dec

Opened the parts order

"Three orders of tiny connectors in one week. One big box, and half of it's packaging."



Anika

Tracks the parts and the budget

"I'm in. But if anyone says it saves money, I want the numbers. Right now we have one box and a guess."

Before you look at the evidence, what is the best way for the crew to cut waste?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Measuring waste reduction without overclaiming

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Source reduction:** Source reduction is preventing waste before it is created, for example by buying less packaging.
- **Reuse:** Reuse is using an item again instead of throwing it away after one use.
- **Local acceptance:** Local acceptance is the list of materials that your own city's recycling or compost program actually takes.
- **Proposal:** A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.
- **Trade-off:** A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.

The story: Two data points and a guess

A box of replacement parts arrives at the theater shop half full of air pillows and foam. Three small orders placed over one week have shipped together. Separately, the supply list from the crew's last screening shows about 120 single-use cups, plastic-lined and labeled "recyclable," plus 80 paper plates, 150 flyers and 40 paper straws given out on request.

Dec, 17, a theater tech weighing an electrical apprenticeship, traces the waste upstream to purchasing decisions. Combine orders, and ask the supplier about packaging. Anika, 16, who tracks parts and budget, accepts the diagnosis but refuses to let it become a claim. Nobody should say a change saves money on the basis of one box and a guess. She also insists that any plan preserve disposable cups and straws for people who need them.

The case turns an environmental question into a method question. What would it take to know that a change worked, and how large a claim would that evidence support?

Your role is to count the cups before and after the change.

❓ Stop and think. What is the largest claim the crew could honestly make after one test screening?

Designing a small, honest test

Source reduction is preventing waste before it is created, for example by buying less packaging. **Reuse** is using an item again instead of throwing it away after one use. Both address waste upstream of disposal, which is where Dec wants to intervene.

The cups expose the gap between a label and a system. The city's list accepts metal cans, glass, rigid plastic containers and flattened cardboard. It excludes plastic-lined paper cups, plastic film, foam and items labeled compostable. **Local acceptance** is the list of materials that your own city's recycling or compost program actually takes. Case 9's skill, consulting the official source for your own jurisdiction, applies directly. A package's claim is not the city's rule. Anika's observation that compostable cups are also excluded prevents a substitution that would only look like progress.

The new skill is establishing a baseline before claiming an effect. The baseline is roughly 120 cups at one screening. The intervention is borrowed washable cups at the next. The measure includes cups used and unused, plus the resources reuse consumes, water and labor. Case 4 provides the terms for presenting it. The plan is a **proposal**, a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet, and it is a **trade-off**, a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up. The resulting claim should be scoped to one counted screening. That is modest by design, because a single comparison cannot establish a trend or a cost saving.

❓ **Stop and think.** How should an organization weigh environmental goals against access needs when they conflict?

Hierarchies, labels and the limits of bans

The EPA's hierarchy places source reduction and reuse above recycling and composting, which rank above energy recovery and disposal. It explicitly notes that no single approach suits every material or situation (EPA, updated December 19, 2025). An NPR investigation reported that less than 10 percent of plastic has ever been recycled, which helps explain why reduction ranks first (NPR, September 11, 2020). FRONTLINE and NPR's documentary examined why recycling alone has not solved plastic waste (FRONTLINE PBS, March 31, 2020).

Environmental marketing is regulated. The FTC's Green Guides state that a product or package "should not be marketed as recyclable unless it can be collected, separated, or otherwise recovered from the waste stream through an established recycling program" (16 CFR Part 260, 2012). The crew's cups, marketed as recyclable in a city that does not accept them, illustrate the problem the rule addresses.

The 2018 straw debate shows why access must be designed in. Starbucks projected that its lid could mean a billion fewer straws a year (NPR, July 9, 2018).

Hierarchies, labels and the limits of bans, continued

Disability advocates responded that some people need flexible plastic straws and that awareness of Seattle's exemption appeared low (NPR, July 11, 2018). Public institutions are adopting measurement. New York City's comptroller audited schools' food donation and composting efforts, showing how measurement changes what counts as success (Office of the New York City Comptroller, April 21, 2026). California schools use share tables so unopened food is shared instead of thrown away (California School Boards Association, October 13, 2023). Researchers have also studied which school and meal choices lead to more plate waste in K-12 cafeterias (Adjapong et al., PLOS ONE, December 27, 2024).

Professional ethics supports Anika's caution. The IABC code states, "I do not guarantee results that are beyond my power to deliver" (IABC Code of Ethics, no date listed).

? **Stop and think.** Why might a city's acceptance list matter more than a federal label standard for the crew's decision?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) | December 19, 2025

Sustainable Materials Management: Non-Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Hierarchy

Real source | NPR | September 11, 2020

How Big Oil Misled The Public Into Believing Plastic Would Be Recycled

Real source | FRONTLINE PBS (YouTube) | March 31, 2020

Plastic Wars (full documentary) | FRONTLINE

Real source | Federal Trade Commission (FTC) | 2012

FTC Green Guides (16 CFR Part 260)

Real source | NPR | July 9, 2018

Starbucks To Eliminate Plastic Straws In Its Stores By 2020

Real source | NPR | July 11, 2018

Why People With Disabilities Want Bans On Plastic Straws To Be More Flexible

Real source | Office of the New York City Comptroller | April 21, 2026

Review of Schools' Food Donation and Composting Efforts (MH25-077S)

Real source | California School Boards Association | October 13, 2023

Share tables reduce food waste

Real source | PLOS ONE (Adjapong et al.) | December 27, 2024

School and meal characteristics associated with plate waste in K-12 cafeterias in the United States

Real source | International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) | No date listed

IABC Code of Ethics for Professional Communicators

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, fill in both boxes. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Supply list

Screening supply list, last Friday

Single-use cups (plastic-lined paper, labeled “recyclable”): about 120. Paper plates: 80. Printed flyers: 150. Paper straws, on request: 40. Folding chairs: borrowed from the bookshop.

Look closely: Which item did the crew use the most? Could it be reused?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Delivery

The parts order

Delivered Tuesday to the theater shop. Three separate orders of small LED connectors and switches, placed over one week, arrived together. They came in one full box, about half of it plastic air pillows and foam around tiny parts.

Look closely: How many orders came in this one box? Why does that matter?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Sanitation guide

City recycling list

Accepted in recycling: metal cans, glass bottles and jars, rigid plastic bottles and containers, flattened cardboard. Not accepted: plastic-lined paper cups, plastic bags and film, foam, items labeled compostable.

Look closely: Find the plastic-lined paper cups. Which list are they on?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: source reduction

On your own Read the key idea and the Professional standards card. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

Source reduction is preventing waste before it is created, for example by buying less packaging. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ranks ways to handle waste. Source reduction and reuse come first. Recycling and composting come next, then energy recovery, then treatment and disposal. The EPA also notes that no single approach fits every item or situation.

Reuse is using an item again instead of throwing it away after one use. Borrowing washable cups from the bookshop is one example. Reuse has costs too. Washing takes water and someone's time, so a fair comparison counts those costs along with the cups.

A “recyclable” label does not tell you where an item will go. **Local acceptance** is the list of materials that your own city's recycling or compost program actually takes. The crew's cups say “recyclable,” but their city's list does not take plastic-lined paper cups. The list does not take items labeled compostable either. So the crew has to check the list before choosing any new cup.

Professional standards

Real source | Law or regulation | Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

FTC Green Guides (16 CFR Part 260): § 260.12 Recyclable claims

“A product or package should not be marketed as recyclable unless it can be collected, separated, or otherwise recovered from the waste stream through an established recycling program”

In plain words: FTC guidance says a company should call a product recyclable only when recycling programs can collect and process it.

Question: The crew's city rejects plastic-lined paper cups. What else must you know before saying the “recyclable” label breaks the guide?

Your answer

Before saying the label breaks the guide, I would need to know ____.

A throwback to a company cutting waste at the counter, before anything reached a bin.



Investigation finding less than 10% of plastic has ever been recycled, which is why reduction comes first.

[illegible]

Sort the evidence

On your own Follow each choice to its consequences in the diagram. Then name one view that is missing. About 6 minutes.

Follow each choice to its consequences, including new costs. Which consequence would you measure first, and what would count as success?

**Keep buying
“recyclable”
single-use cups**

About 120 cups go to the trash because the city does not accept them

Who is affected

**Borrow washable cups
and run a wash station**

Fewer cups in the trash, if people use the washable ones

Who is affected

Check: Count cups and bags after the next event and compare with last time

New costs: water, washing time and volunteers

Who is affected

Check: Count cups and bags after the next event and compare with last time

**Combine parts orders
into one shipment**

Less packaging arrives before anything reaches a bin

Who is affected

Notes

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the plan the crew should try and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines.
About 5 minutes.

The last screening used about 120 single-use cups, and the city’s recycling list does not take that type. Which plan should the crew try for the next screening?

☐ **A** Compare a washable-cup option, washing time, cost, access and the city list, then test one change.

☐ **B** Buy a different cup labeled “recyclable” and put up a clearer recycling sign.

☐ **C** Stop offering disposable cups and straws, and ask everyone to bring their own.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student’s first draft

We should make the screening zero waste. Everyone should bring their own cup and we’ll **1** ban all plastic. We can also put up posters that say “save the planet” so people remember to recycle. Recycling is the best thing you can do for the environment. This will be easy and **2** it will save money too. Last screening there were cups everywhere and the bins were overflowing by the end of the night. People will love it once they get used to it. Let’s start next week!

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a memo to a student government events committee proposing one purchasing change for campus or club events. Use the Common Room supply list as the model, and include a measurement plan that states its boundary.

Use: Case documents: the screening supply list, the parts order, the city’s accepted-materials list and Dec’s and Anika’s statements. Real sources: EPA’s waste management hierarchy, the FTC Green Guides section on recyclable claims and NPR’s report on disability and straw bans (July 11, 2018).

You’ll make: Memo, 300—400 words, with a materials table

Time: 75 minutes

- 1

Fill in the materials sheet from Evidence A: item, number used, reduction option, disposal rule, trade-off.
- 2

Choose one purchasing change high on the EPA hierarchy.
- 3

Write your boundary: what your comparison counts and what it leaves out.
- 4

Draft your memo of 300 to 400 words. Start on the Your draft page.
- 5

Add a line that keeps disposable items available for people who need them.
- 6

Check your memo with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Materials table, using the screening as a model

My purchasing change

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 25 minutes.

Your memo, first part, about 150 words

To: Events committee.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 6 minutes.

Do your counts match the supply list?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your change sit high on the EPA hierarchy, not only better sorting?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you state your boundary before any claim of savings?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you keep an option for people who need disposable items?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No data.	☐ General claims about recycling.	☐ Uses quantities and local rules.	☐ Uses quantities, local rules and a before/after plan.
Reasoning	☐ Treats one fix as solving everything.	☐ Ignores trade-offs.	☐ Applies the hierarchy and names a trade-off.	☐ Weighs trade-offs including access and cost with a measurement boundary.
Audience & purpose	☐ Commands people.	☐ Relies on slogans.	☐ Specific change organizers can do.	☐ Specific, inclusive change with roles assigned.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Wording only.	☐ Narrows to a measurable change.	☐ Explains how narrowing makes success testable.

One change I made after feedback

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then complete each sentence frame below the questions. About 8 minutes.

- 1** Could a change that reduces waste create an access problem for someone, and how would you find out?

- 2** How does “add more bins” define the problem differently from “order less packaging”?

- 3** What would the crew need to count before saying a change saves money?

My take

My claim: ____.

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 13: Can the crew cut waste before it reaches the bin?

In this case, a group of friends learns that the cups from their movie night can't be recycled in their city. Your student planned one change to cut waste before the next event and a way to count whether it worked.

Questions to talk about

- 1 How could someone find out what their city or town recycles?
- 2 What is one item people often throw away after a party or event?
- 3 Why might a rule to cut waste need an exception for some people?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 14: Does giving credit let the crew use the song?

Mateo wants to post the crew's film tonight and credit the song's artist, but Caio wants to check the license first.

On your own Read What happened and underline the two pieces of the film that the crew did not make. About 5 minutes.



Caio, Mateo and Rafa laugh as they look at photos on a small digital camera.

Your role: You're the one who fills in the rights log before the film goes up. **New skill:** Check permission, not just credit.

What happened

It is Friday night, and Caio, 24, is editing the crew's festival film. The film is a short recap made from crew footage and interviews. At 9:40 p.m., he saves a rough cut. For 20 seconds, a released song plays under the setup montage. Caio pitched the song up slightly, and the song sets the mood for the whole scene.

The cut borrows one more piece. From 1:40 to 1:46, it shows a six-second clip downloaded from a TikTok post. That post used Stitch, TikTok's remix tool. The crew did not make the song or the clip.

At 10:02 p.m., Mateo texts the crew chat: "We'll credit them in the caption. Post tonight?" He wants the film online tonight. Caio asks what the credit gets them, and Mateo does not have an answer. Caio wants to check the license before they post.

Your question: Does a credit give the crew permission to use the song, and what should they do before they post?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Attribution Attribution is naming the person who made a work, such as a song, a photo or a video.

En español: atribución

In this case: Mateo's plan, "We'll credit them in the caption," would name the artist. It answers who made the song, not whether the crew may use it.

License A license is permission from a rights holder to use a work under specific terms.

En español: licencia

In this case: The rights log says "permission unknown" for both borrowed pieces. A license from each owner would fill in that column.

Fair use Fair use is a part of U.S. copyright law that allows some uses without permission, judged case by case with four factors.

En español: uso justo

In this case: The crew would weigh the four factors for 20 seconds of a released song used as background mood. No number of seconds settles it.

Who is involved



Caio

Editing the crew's festival film

"Twenty seconds of that song carries the whole montage. That's exactly why I can't just borrow it and hope."



Mateo

Wanted the film online tonight

"I really texted 'we'll credit them, post tonight?' Then Caio asked what the credit gets us. I didn't have an answer."

Before you look at the evidence, do you think a credit in the caption lets the crew use the song?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Rights clearance for small productions

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 6 minutes.

Words to know

- **Attribution:** Attribution is naming the person who made a work, such as a song, a photo or a video.
- **License:** A license is permission from a rights holder to use a work under specific terms.
- **Fair use:** Fair use is a part of U.S. copyright law that allows some uses without permission, judged case by case with four factors.
- **Disclosure:** A disclosure is a clear statement that tells people about a relationship or fact they would want to know.

The story: Two borrowed elements

Caio, 24, is editing the crew's festival film, a short recap of footage and interviews. His Friday rough cut, saved at 9:40 p.m., includes two elements the crew did not create. The first is 20 seconds of a released song, pitched up slightly, running from 0:18 to 0:38 under the setup montage. It sets the tone for the scene. The second is a six-second clip, from 1:40 to 1:46, downloaded from a TikTok post that used Stitch, the platform's remix feature.

At 10:02 p.m., Mateo, 22, proposes a common solution. The crew will credit the artists in the caption and post that night. Caio responds with the question the case is built around. What does the credit get them? Mateo concedes he has no answer. By Saturday, he has revised his view on both elements. He recalls the 2024 TikTok music blackout, in which no one had failed to credit Taylor Swift, and he recognizes that an in-app remix permission may not extend to an off-platform screening. He moves both items to the rights log as unknowns.

Your role is to fill in the rights log before the film goes up.

? **Stop and think.** Why do people so often treat attribution as if it were permission?

Three concepts, three questions

Rights clearance begins by separating concepts that everyday language merges. **Attribution** is naming the person who made a work, such as a song, a photo or a video.

Three concepts, three questions, continued

A **license** is permission from a rights holder to use a work under specific terms. **Fair use** is a part of U.S. copyright law that allows some uses without permission, judged case by case with four factors. Attribution answers who made something. A license answers whether the owner agreed to this use. Fair use asks whether the law permits the use anyway.

The case builds on earlier skills. From Case 1, the rights log traces each element to its source, maker and permission status, with a date. From Case 8, a **disclosure**, a clear statement that tells people about a relationship or fact they would want to know, shows how honesty and authorization differ. Crediting an artist is a kind of disclosure, and it transfers no rights. From Case 12, the method of weighing facts against a legal standard applies to fair use, which works through factors rather than bright lines.

Applied to the song, the four factors are the purpose of the use, the nature of the original work, the amount used and the effect on the original's market. The purpose is atmosphere in a recap, the original is a creative recording, the amount is 20 seconds and the market effect is uncertain. A pitch shift does not change the purpose, and the Copyright Office is clear that no number of seconds is automatically safe. Even a short part can weigh against fair use if it is the most recognizable part of the work. The TikTok clip raises a separate question, the scope of the creator's consent. Stitch permission operates inside TikTok. Whether it reaches a downloaded clip in a film shown elsewhere is exactly what the rights log marks as unknown.

Caio's decision reflects professional practice. When clearance is uncertain and the deadline is soft, substitute. The crew can use a library track with clear license terms or a drum loop recorded by Dec that the crew owns, and publish Sunday.

 **Stop and think.** How did the Warhol decision change the weight of the purpose factor for creators who remix?

Markets, doctrine and codes

Platform licensing is contractual and can change without notice to users. When UMG's agreement with TikTok expired in February 2024, videos using its artists' recordings went silent (NPR, February 1, 2024). Coverage explained the licensing structure behind the songs creators use (Christian Science Monitor, February 6, 2024), and later research examined the effects of the roughly three-month blackout (Harvard Business School Working Knowledge, March 5, 2025).

The Supreme Court's decision in *Andy Warhol Foundation v. Goldsmith* emphasized the first factor. A new work used for substantially the same purpose as the original was not fair use, despite its artistic changes (NPR, May 18, 2023; U.S. Copyright Office summary, 2023). The Copyright Office's Fair Use Index notes that educational purpose does not make a use automatically fair (U.S.

Markets, doctrine and codes, continued

Copyright Office, updated July 2026). Its Circular 1 explains what copyright covers and who owns a song or a recording (U.S. Copyright Office, September 2021).

Professional codes align with the law. PRSA members commit to “preserve intellectual property rights in the marketplace” (PRSA Code of Ethics, October 2000). The AIGA standards bar designers from accepting instructions that involve “infringement of another person’s property rights without permission” (AIGA Standards of Professional Practice, no date listed). The RTDNA code calls use “without attribution or permission” plagiarism (RTDNA Code of Ethics, June 11, 2015). Note the “or.” Attribution and permission are separate obligations, which is the lesson Mateo learns.

 **Stop and think.** When a deadline is soft, why is substitution often better than a fair-use argument?

Sources

Real source | NPR | February 1, 2024

TikTok removes music from UMG artists, including Olivia Rodrigo and Taylor Swift

Real source | The Christian Science Monitor | February 6, 2024

How Universal’s licensing pullout is affecting music on TikTok

Real source | Harvard Business School Working Knowledge | March 5, 2025

What Happened When TikTok Songs Went Silent for Three Months

Real source | NPR | May 18, 2023

Supreme Court sides against Andy Warhol Foundation in copyright infringement case

Real source | U.S. Copyright Office | 2023

Andy Warhol Found. for the Visual Arts, Inc. v. Goldsmith (Fair Use Index summary)

Real source | U.S. Copyright Office | July 2026

Fair Use Index

Real source | U.S. Copyright Office | September 2021

Copyright Basics (Circular 1)

Real source | Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) | 2000

PRSA Code of Ethics

Real source | AIGA, the professional association for design | No date listed

AIGA Standards of Professional Practice

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document, then fill in both boxes under it. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Edit timeline

Caio’s rough cut, Friday, 9:40 p.m.
0:00—0:18 crew footage, no music. 0:18—0:38 sampled track, pitched up slightly, under the setup montage. 0:38—1:52 crew footage and interviews. 1:40—1:46 a 6-second clip downloaded from a stitched TikTok post.

Look closely: Which two parts of the cut did the crew not make?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Group-chat message

Mateo’s message, Friday, 10:02 p.m.
We’ll credit them in the caption. Post tonight?

Look closely: Which question does the caption answer? Which question does it skip?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Rights log

Rights log, started Saturday morning

Columns: element, who made it, where it came from, permission or license and date. Row 1: setup-montage music, the recording artist, a streaming download, permission unknown. Row 2: 6-second clip, a TikTok creator, downloaded from TikTok, permission unknown.

Look closely: Which column says “unknown” in both rows?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: fair use

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

Credit and permission answer different questions. **Attribution** is naming the person who made a work, such as a song, a photo or a video. It answers the question “Who made this?” A **license** is permission from a rights holder to use a work under specific terms. It answers another question: “Did the owner say yes to this use?” Mateo’s caption would give attribution. It would not give the crew a license.

Without a license, the crew could ask whether the use is fair use. **Fair use** is a part of U.S. copyright law that allows some uses without permission, judged case by case with four factors. The U.S. Copyright Office names the four factors. They are the purpose of the use, the nature of the original work, the amount used and the effect on the original’s market. No number of seconds is automatically safe. Even a short part can count against fair use if it is the most recognizable part of the song.

Platform tools come with their own limits. Stitch lets people remix another person’s video inside TikTok. That permission does not automatically cover a downloaded clip in a film shown somewhere else. Using music the crew records, or a track with a clear license, can avoid the fair-use question. Caio’s two backup plans follow this idea: a library track with clear terms, or a drum loop that Dec records.

Professional standards

Real source | AIGA, the professional association for design

AIGA Standards of Professional Practice: The designer’s responsibility to other designers

“A professional designer shall not accept instructions from a client that involve infringement of another person’s property rights without permission”

In plain words: Designers who belong to AIGA agree not to use other people’s creative work without permission, even when a client asks.

Question: The rights log says “permission unknown” for the track and the TikTok clip. What does Caio need for each row?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

Caio needs ____, because ____.

In the news



Real source | CrashCourse (YouTube) | May 7, 2015

Copyright, Exceptions, and Fair Use: Crash Course Intellectual Property #3

Explains why giving credit is not the same as permission, and how fair use is weighed.



Real source | NPR | May 18, 2023

Supreme Court sides against Andy Warhol Foundation in copyright infringement case

Even a famous artist's new version wasn't fair use when it served the same purpose as the original.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Match each piece of evidence to the claim it supports, challenges or narrows. About 8 minutes.

Test the crew’s two assumptions against the sources. Which evidence knocks each one down, and what single check could still make the plan work?

Evidence	Claim 1 Crediting the artist makes the use okay.	Claim 2 Twenty seconds is short enough to be fair use.
1 Credit names the creator but grants no permission		
2 Copyright Office: no formula makes a set amount safe; the heart of a work matters		
3 The sample is background mood, not commentary on the song		
4 Stitch permission applies inside TikTok, not to a downloaded clip in another film		

Still open

- Does any license cover this use? Check before posting.

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the plan you would pick and explain why, then fix the two marked lines. About 6 minutes.

Caio's cut uses about 20 seconds of a released song as background mood for the crew's festival film. Mateo texts, "We'll credit them in the caption. Post tonight?" Which plan should the crew choose?

- ☐ **A** Credit the artist in the caption and post tonight.
- ☐ **B** Pause the upload. Check the track's license, and swap in licensed or original music if the license does not cover this use.
- ☐ **C** Cut the song to ten seconds, since short clips are fair use.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

We're good to post! ① We only used like 20 seconds of the song and we're putting the artist's name in the caption so they get credit. Plus it's not like we're making money off it, it's just for our page. ② Everyone uses songs like this on TikTok anyway so it's fine. We even changed the pitch a little so it's basically our own version now, and the whole cut is under two minutes. If they don't like it they can just ask us to take it down.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 2

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 15 minutes.

Write a rights-clearance guide for a community film night or a student film club, using Caio’s rough cut as the worked example. The guide shows how to fill in a rights log, what a credit does and does not do, and where to get help.

Use: Case documents: Caio’s rough-cut timeline, Mateo’s message, Caio’s statement and the rights log template. Real sources: the Copyright Office’s Fair Use Index overview, its Warhol v. Goldsmith summary (2023), Copyright Basics (Circular 1) and NPR’s report on TikTok and UMG (February 2024).

You’ll make: Guide, 400—500 words, with a completed rights log for the rough cut

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Fill in the rights log for Caio’s rough cut, starting with the two rows in Evidence C.
- 2 Write one sentence on what a credit does and one on what it does not do.
- 3 Summarize the four fair-use factors from the Copyright Office page in your own words.
- 4 Draft the rights log and credit sections of your guide on the Your draft page.
- 5 List where readers can get help: a media teacher, a librarian or a copyright help page.
- 6 Finish a guide of 400 to 500 words on lined paper or in the online workspace.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Row 1: element, time and who made it

Row 1: source and permission

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your first draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners on the right side.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your rights log list both borrowed pieces, with permission marked unknown until confirmed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does your guide say what a credit does and does not do? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it describe the four factors as the Copyright Office does, with no safe number of seconds? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it offer an alternative and point readers to help, without promising a legal outcome? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Relies on myths.	☐ Cites credit as permission.	☐ Uses the four factors or license terms.	☐ Uses factors, license terms and platform differences.
Reasoning	☐ Assumes any use is fine.	☐ Applies one factor.	☐ Separates credit, permission and fair use.	☐ Weighs factors honestly and chooses a lower-risk path.
Audience & purpose	☐ Ignores the artist.	☐ Considers only the crew.	☐ Considers the artist and the audience.	☐ Balances creative goals with respect for the original creator.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Adds a credit.	☐ Replaces myths with a rights plan.	☐ Explains each step and a realistic alternative.

One change I made after feedback

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete each sentence frame. About 10 minutes.

- 1** Caio pitched the song up slightly. Does changing a song make it a new work? Why or why not?

- 2** Mateo says the TikTok clip goes in the rights log as “unknown.” What would the crew need to find out to fill in that row?

- 3** Suppose a student used the same song in a video for class. What changes if that video becomes a public post?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

[illegible]

Talk about this case at home

Case 14: Does giving credit let the crew use the song?

In this case, a group of friends wants to post a short film that uses 20 seconds of a released song. Your student compared giving credit with getting permission, then planned what the crew should do before posting.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What is the difference between giving credit and getting permission?
- 2 Why might a short part of a song still need permission?
- 3 Where could a student find music they have permission to use?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.

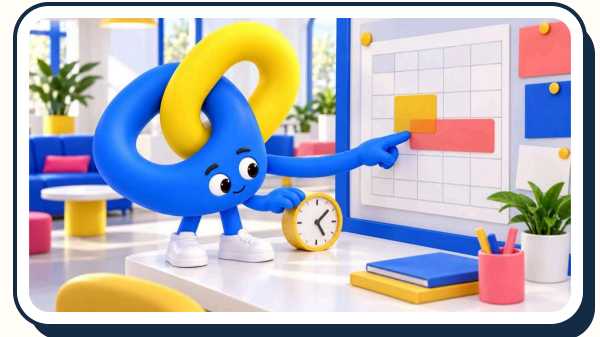


See the case online.

Case 15: Is Rafa's unpaid internship really a job?

A studio offers Rafa an unpaid summer internship running its customer inbox and says college credit makes it legal.

On your own Read What happened and underline what Rafa would do all summer. About 5 minutes.



Nexo, one of the crew's companions, points to where a meeting and a work shift overlap on a calendar. Rafa's internship would take time from his shifts at the family shop.

Your role: You're the one who checks each factor of the test before Rafa says yes. **New skill:** Apply a legal test factor by factor.

What happened

Rafa, 18, is a first-year college student who commutes to class and helps at his family's shop. In April, a studio posted a listing on the campus job board for a "Summer Editing Intern." The internship is unpaid. The listing says the intern will run the customer inbox all summer. Rafa reads it twice, looking for the editing.

On Tuesday at 11:20 a.m., the studio answers Rafa's message. The email says college credit makes it "totally legal" not to pay him. It also asks him to start right after finals.

At lunch, Rafa talks it over with Gia, who fits café shifts around her classes. Gia asks whether the studio paid someone to run the inbox last year. Rafa says the studio's assistant ran it. Taking the internship would also cost Rafa paid shifts at the shop. He has not said yes yet.

Your question: Is the internship mainly training for Rafa or unpaid work for the studio, and what should he ask before he decides?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Primary beneficiary test The primary beneficiary test is how the U.S. Department of Labor decides whether an intern at a for-profit company is an employee.

En español: prueba del beneficiario principal

In this case: The studio gets its customer inbox answered all summer. Rafa asks what he would learn and who would train him.

Fair Labor Standards Act The Fair Labor Standards Act is a federal law that sets minimum wage and overtime rules for most workers.

En español: Ley de Normas Justas de Trabajo

In this case: If Rafa counts as an employee under this law, the studio must pay him at least the minimum wage.

Academic credit Academic credit is credit toward a degree that a school gives for approved work, such as an internship.

En español: créditos académicos

In this case: The studio says credit makes the unpaid role “totally legal.” Credit is one factor out of seven.

Who is involved



Rafa

Offered an unpaid summer internship

“The listing says ‘Summer Editing Intern.’ Then it says I’d run the customer inbox all summer. I read it twice looking for the editing.”



Gia

Talking the offer over with Rafa

“I almost said ‘take it, it’ll look good.’ Easy for me to say. I’m not the one giving up a summer.”

Before you look at the evidence, is Rafa's offer more like training or more like a job?

[illegible]

Reading passage

Unpaid internships and the primary beneficiary test

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 6 minutes.

Words to know

- **Primary beneficiary test:** The primary beneficiary test is how the U.S. Department of Labor decides whether an intern at a for-profit company is an employee.
- **Fair Labor Standards Act:** The Fair Labor Standards Act is a federal law that sets minimum wage and overtime rules for most workers.
- **Academic credit:** Academic credit is credit toward a degree that a school gives for approved work, such as an internship.
- **Compensation:** Compensation is all the pay and benefits a worker receives, including hourly rates, bonuses and overtime.

The story: A legal conclusion in a recruiting email

A studio posts a “Summer Editing Intern (unpaid)” listing on a campus job board. The advertised benefits are exposure to the industry and available college credit. The listed duties are running the customer inbox all summer and helping with client files. Rafa, 18, a first-year commuter who works at his family's shop, reads it twice and cannot find the editing.

The studio's reply to his inquiry contains a legal conclusion: because interns receive college credit, it is “totally legal” not to pay. The case invites students to treat that sentence the way a lawyer or a careful journalist would. It is a claim, offered by an interested party, about a test the studio does not name.

Rafa's research on the train reveals that credit is one factor among seven. A conversation with Gia adds a decisive fact. The inbox was run last year by a paid assistant. Gia also models two useful disciplines. She counts the costs of the offer, lost shifts, commuting and a summer without income. And she declines to overstate. She cannot say the internship is illegal. She can say which questions remain unanswered.

Your role is to check each factor of the test before Rafa says yes.

? **Stop and think.** Why is “this internship is illegal” as unsupported as “this internship is totally legal”?

Applying a flexible standard

The **primary beneficiary test** is how the U.S. Department of Labor decides whether an intern at a for-profit company is an employee. It asks whether the intern or the employer is the primary beneficiary of the relationship. An intern who is an employee must be paid under the **Fair Labor Standards Act**, a federal law that sets minimum wage and overtime rules for most workers. The Department's seven factors include educational training and ties to coursework or **academic credit**. They also include accommodation of the academic calendar, a limited duration tied to learning and whether the work complements or displaces paid employees. Academic credit is credit toward a degree that a school gives for approved work, such as an internship.

The new skill is applying a multi-factor test one factor at a time. It extends Case 12's analogical reasoning from precedent and Case 11's discipline of comparing like with like. Applied here, the analysis separates evidence from gaps. On displacement, the assistant's paid role last year is strong evidence. On academic credit, availability is asserted but unconfirmed. On training and supervision, the record is silent. On duration and calendar, the start date is known, but hours are not. Because the test is holistic and no factor controls, the defensible conclusion is limited. The studio's claim that credit makes nonpayment "totally legal" is unsupported. Whether Rafa would be an employee cannot be decided without more facts. The framework applies to for-profit employers, and state rules may differ.

Case 11's concept of **compensation**, all the pay and benefits a worker receives, frames the economics. The offer's compensation is zero, and Rafa would give up paid shifts. His written request for facts, covering training, a typical week, weekly hours and whether he would be doing the assistant's former job, is both prudent and the only way to apply the test.

❓ Stop and think. How does a flexible, multi-factor test shift power between employers and interns compared with a bright-line rule?

Litigation, inequity and professional ethics

The Second Circuit's decision in *Glatt v. Fox Searchlight Pictures* anchors the modern test. Interns on the 2010 film *Black Swan* performed tasks the opinion lists, including answering phones, taking lunch orders, making coffee, photocopying and filing (U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, 2016). The court's 2015 ruling adopted the primary beneficiary question (LAist, July 2, 2015), and the Department of Labor now uses that test (U.S. Department of Labor, Fact Sheet #71, updated January 2018). Legal scholars have analyzed the test in detail (Harvard Law Review, February 9, 2016).

The policy stakes include access. Nearly half of U.S. interns were unpaid in 2022 (PBS NewsHour, August 26, 2023). NACE reports persistent inequity in who receives paid internships (National Association of Colleges and Employers, August 8, 2023). Earlier NACE data found that paid interns received more job offers than unpaid classmates (National Association of Colleges and Employers, March 23, 2016).

Litigation, inequity and professional ethics, continued

On Capitol Hill, most summer interns have gone unpaid, which limits who can pursue those careers (NPR, July 25, 2017).

Professional standards apply to the studio's email. NACE asks employers to comply with laws "associated with local, state, and federal entities" (NACE Principles for Ethical Professional Practice, 2025). The ABA's model rules bar lawyers from knowingly making a false statement of material fact or law to a third person (ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct, 1983, as amended). A recruiting email is not legal advice, and Rafa is right to treat it as a claim.

 **Stop and think.** NACE data link paid internships to more job offers. What does that suggest about who benefits from unpaid ones?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, via Justia | 2016

Glatt v. Fox Searchlight Pictures

Real source | LAist (AirTalk) | July 2, 2015

Appeals court reverses 'Black Swan' interns' victory over Fox

Real source | U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division | January 2018

Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs Under the Fair Labor Standards Act

Real source | Harvard Law Review | February 9, 2016

Glatt v. Fox Searchlight Pictures, Inc.

Real source | PBS NewsHour (YouTube) | August 26, 2023

Why unpaid internships still exist despite hardships for young workers

Real source | National Association of Colleges and Employers | August 8, 2023

The Class of 2023: Inequity Continues to Underpin Internship Participation and Pay Status

Real source | National Association of Colleges and Employers | March 23, 2016

Paid Interns/Co-ops See Greater Offer Rates and Salary Offers Than Their Unpaid Classmates

Real source | NPR | July 25, 2017

On Capitol Hill, Most Summer Interns Still Go Unpaid

Real source | National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) | 2025

NACE Principles for Ethical Professional Practice

Real source | American Bar Association (ABA), Center for Professional Responsibility | No date listed

ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document, then fill in both boxes under it. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Job listing

Studio listing on the campus job board, April

“Summer Editing Intern (unpaid). Join our fast-paced studio! You’ll run the customer inbox all summer, help with client files and get great exposure to the industry. College credit available.”

Look closely: Which words describe learning? Which words describe work?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Email

Studio reply to Rafa, Tuesday, 11:20 a.m.

“Thanks for your interest, Rafa! Since interns get college credit, it’s totally legal for us not to pay. We’d love for you to start right after finals.”

Look closely: Is credit one factor or the whole test? What does the email skip?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Chat

Gia and Rafa, Tuesday lunch

- Gia: Didn’t they pay someone to do the inbox last year?
- Rafa: Yeah, their assistant.
- Gia: And it’s your summer, not theirs. What about your shifts at the shop?

Look closely: Who ran the customer inbox last year? Was that person paid?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: the primary beneficiary test

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

A job title does not show how the work is arranged. The **primary beneficiary test** is how the U.S. Department of Labor decides whether an intern at a for-profit company is an employee. It asks whether the intern or the employer mainly benefits from an unpaid internship. An intern who counts as an employee must be paid under the **Fair Labor Standards Act**. The Fair Labor Standards Act is a federal law that sets minimum wage and overtime rules for most workers.

The Department of Labor's Fact Sheet #71 lists seven factors. They include training, links to coursework or **academic credit**, the school calendar and how long the learning lasts. Academic credit is credit toward a degree that a school gives for approved work, such as an internship. Another factor is whether the intern's work adds to paid employees' work or replaces it. The test is flexible, and no single factor decides it.

So the studio's email does not settle the question. Calling a job an internship does not decide it. Neither does college credit, or an intern agreeing to work for no pay. The test also has limits. It applies to for-profit employers, and state rules may differ. To apply the test, you need facts about the duties, training, supervision and hours.

Professional standards

Real source | National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)

NACE Principles for Ethical Professional Practice: 4. Comply with laws

"Comply with laws ... associated with local, state, and federal entities"

In plain words: Career offices and employer recruiters who belong to NACE agree to follow federal, state and local laws.

Question: The campus job board lists the internship. What should the career office ask the studio about the seven DOL factors?

Your answer

Before posting, the career office should ask ____, because ____.

Reports that nearly half of U.S. interns were unpaid in 2022 and who can afford to take those jobs.



Explains when an unpaid internship can break wage law, using the 'Black Swan' intern lawsuit.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 horizontal blue lines spaced evenly across the page, typical of notebook paper. The lines are thin and light blue, set against a plain white background. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

Sort the evidence

On your own Match each piece of evidence to the claim it supports or challenges, and mark what is still unknown. About 8 minutes.

Test the studio’s claim against the factor list. Which evidence points toward training, which toward a job, and what is still unknown?

Evidence	Claim 1 College credit makes the unpaid internship legal.	Claim 2 The role looks more like a job than training.
1 DOL: credit is one of seven factors, and no single factor decides		
2 The listing: Rafa runs the customer inbox all summer		
3 A paid assistant ran the inbox last year		
4 The role is openly unpaid and offers credit (factors 1 and 3)		

Still open

- Is there a learning plan, and who supervises?

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what Rafa should do next and explain why, then fix the two marked lines. About 6 minutes.

The studio's unpaid internship has Rafa running its customer inbox all summer, the job a paid assistant did last year. The studio says college credit makes it legal. What should Rafa do next?

- ☐ **A** Accept the studio's answer, since college credit settles the question.
- ☐ **B** Ask for the learning plan, supervision, schedule and how the role relates to paid employees' work.
- ☐ **C** Tell the studio that unpaid internships are against the law.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Hi, thanks so much for the offer! I'm really excited about this opportunity and I know it will look great on my résumé. I just wanted to ask **1** if this is legal since it's unpaid? My friend said unpaid internships aren't allowed. Also how many hours is it? **2** I can start whenever you need me. I really want to get into editing and this seems like a good way in. Let me know! Thank you again for thinking of me, Rafa

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 15 minutes.

Write a memo to the campus career center about unpaid internship listings on its job board, using the studio’s listing as the example. Add a one-page checklist students can use before they accept an unpaid offer.

Use: Case documents: the studio listing and reply, Gia and Rafa’s conversation and Rafa’s statement. Real sources: the Department of Labor’s Fact Sheet #71, NACE’s principle on complying with laws and NACE’s internship reports (2016 and 2023).

You’ll make: Memo, 300—400 words, plus a one-page checklist

Time: 75 minutes

- 1

Fill in the factor chart: a question for the employer and what the listing says.
- 2

Mark the displacement evidence: a paid assistant ran the inbox last year.
- 3

Write the questions the career center can ask employers before posting a listing.
- 4

Draft the example and questions sections of your memo on the Your draft page.
- 5

Finish a memo of 300 to 400 words on lined paper or in the online workspace.
- 6

Add a one-page checklist students can use before they accept an unpaid offer.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Training: question for the employer

Credit: what the listing says

Displacement: what the case shows

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your first draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

[illegible]

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your memo apply the factors to the listing and reply accurately?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it flag the displacement evidence?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it recommend questions, not legal rulings?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your checklist include opportunity cost?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Relies on rumor.	☐ Mentions pay only.	☐ Asks about several factors.	☐ Asks about factors and notes what the credit claim doesn't settle.
Reasoning	☐ Declares legal or illegal.	☐ Asks for a verdict.	☐ Gathers facts before deciding.	☐ Connects each question to a reason it matters.
Audience & purpose	☐ Gives away leverage or accuses.	☐ Polite but vague.	☐ Specific, respectful questions.	☐ Specific questions plus Rafa's own constraints.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Tone only.	☐ Replaces rumor with factor-based questions.	☐ Explains how each question helps Rafa decide.

One change I made after feedback

[illegible]

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete each sentence frame. About 10 minutes.

- 1** What would count as evidence that the promised training is happening?

- 2** Unpaid summers are easier for people who do not need a paycheck. Who might an unpaid internship leave out?

- 3** If Rafa's school grants credit, does that settle whether the studio should pay him? Why or why not?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

This image shows a single page from a notebook or ledger. The page is white with horizontal blue lines spaced evenly apart. There are no vertical margin lines, and the page is completely blank except for the ruling.

Talk about this case at home

Case 15: Is Rafa's unpaid internship really a job?

In this case, a college student is offered an unpaid summer internship, and the studio says college credit makes that legal. Your student compared the offer with a federal test and wrote questions to ask before saying yes.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What questions would you ask before accepting an unpaid internship?
- 2 How can someone tell whether a role is mostly learning or mostly work?
- 3 Who can help a student check a job or internship offer?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 16: Who wrote the new building rule?

An unsigned notice says the building's only step-free door locks at 8 p.m., and Sami's workshop runs later.

On your own Read What happened and underline the two changes the notice announces. About 5 minutes.



Mari hands a yellow sheet to Sami across a white table while Caio listens. This scene comes from Case 4.

Your role: You're the one who photographs the notice and writes down when and where it was found.
New skill: Find who has the authority to make a rule.

What happened

It is Monday morning in Sami's apartment building. A new notice is posted beside the common-room door. It says the rear door will be locked at 8:00 p.m. every night. It also says the common room is "for resident social use only," with "NO BUSINESS USE" in capital letters. The notice has no name, no date and no contact.

That rear door matters to Sami, who lives in apartment 3B and uses a manual wheelchair. It is the building's only step-free entrance. The front entrance has four steps and no ramp. Sami also runs a workshop in the common room, and it goes past 8 p.m.

Caio reads last year's house rules beside the notice. Those rules let residents reserve the common room for classes and resident-run workshops. The new notice does not say whether it replaces them. Before anyone starts arguing, Sami photographs the notice and writes down when and where she found it.

Your question: Who has the authority behind this notice, and what should Sami ask the building manager?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Authority Authority is the power a person or group has to make or change a particular rule or decision.

En español: autoridad

In this case: The notice uses bold type and capital letters but names no issuer. Sami has to find out who has the power to make this rule.

Reasonable accommodation A reasonable accommodation is a change to a rule or practice that gives a person with a disability equal use of a place.

En español: acomodo razonable

In this case: Sami could ask the building for a key fob for the rear door, so she can get in after 8 p.m.

Documentation Documentation is a record, such as a photo, a note or an email, that shows what was said or done and when.

En español: documentación

In this case: Sami photographs the notice and writes down when and where she found it, before anyone argues about what it said.

Who is involved



Sami

Lives in 3B and runs a workshop in the common room

“Rear door locked at 8. That’s the only door I can get through. My workshop runs later. So, questions. Plural.”



Caio

Reading last year’s house rules beside the notice

“All caps, bold, no name, no date. Somebody made it look official. I still don’t know who.”

Before you look at the evidence, should Sami follow the new notice?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Authority, accommodation and the paper trail

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 6 minutes.

Words to know

- **Authority:** Authority is the power a person or group has to make or change a particular rule or decision.
- **Reasonable accommodation:** A reasonable accommodation is a change to a rule or practice that gives a person with a disability equal use of a place.
- **Documentation:** Documentation is a record, such as a photo, a note or an email, that shows what was said or done and when.
- **Decision-maker:** A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.
- **Barrier:** A barrier is something that blocks or limits a person from taking part.

The story: A rule without an author

An unsigned notice appears beside the common-room door of Sami's apartment building. It declares that, effective immediately, the rear door will be locked at 8:00 p.m. nightly and the common room is for resident social use only, with "NO BUSINESS USE." It has no author, date or contact.

For Sami, 23, a design student who uses a manual wheelchair and lives in 3B, the stakes are concrete. The building's entrance plan shows four steps and no ramp at the front, a service-only side door and a step-free rear door to the elevator hallway. The notice would close her only accessible entrance each evening. It would also cast doubt on the workshop she runs in the common room, which runs past 8.

Her first action is documentary rather than rhetorical. She photographs the notice and records when and where she found it. Caio, 24, reads last year's house rules, distributed at lease signing, beside the new text. He resists both easy responses. The notice should not be ignored, because if it is real the door is locked tonight. It should not be broadcast to the building either, until they know who wrote it.

Your role is to help Sami keep a clean record of the notice before anyone starts arguing.

? Stop and think. Why is it important to separate the authority question from the access question?

Separating authority from access

Authority is the power a person or group has to make or change a particular rule or decision. The notice performs authority through typography and the phrase “effective immediately.” It does not establish it. The analytical task, and the new skill in this case, is locating the source of a rule: who issued it, under what power and in relation to which prior rule.

The skill draws on the ladder of earlier cases. From Case 1, the prior house rules serve as the original document. They permit reserving the room for “gatherings, classes and resident-run workshops” through the building office. From Case 4, the **decision-maker**, the person or group with the power to make a particular choice, is the unknown to be identified. From Case 7, the question of stage applies. The notice may be final, provisional or unauthorized. From Case 10, the question goes to the office positioned to answer it, the building manager.

Caio’s textual comparison surfaces the ambiguity that matters most. The old rules protect resident-run workshops. The new text bans undefined “business use” and does not say whether it supersedes the old rules. Until those gaps close, no one can say whether Sami’s workshop is affected.

Sami deliberately separates two questions that a less careful response would merge. The authority question asks who made the rule. The access question asks how she enters after 8. A **barrier**, the Case 10 term for something that blocks or limits a person from taking part, describes the locked door whatever its author’s intent. A **reasonable accommodation** is a change to a rule or practice that gives a person with a disability equal use of a place. A fob for the rear door is a concrete request that could preserve security and access together. **Documentation** is a record, such as a photo, a note or an email, that shows what was said or done and when. It preserves Sami’s ability to rely on the facts later.

 **Stop and think.** How did state approval requirements give the Atlantic Plaza tenants leverage, and what would give Sami similar leverage?

Law, guidance and tenant process

HUD explains that the Fair Housing Act bars housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status or disability, with coverage of most housing and some exceptions (HUD, no date listed). HUD has also explained how people with disabilities can request exceptions to rules (HUD, January 31, 2014). Enforcement is real. The Justice Department announced a \$750,000 settlement with a property management company in a disability discrimination case in 2026 (U.S. Department of Justice, April 30, 2026). Paired-testing research found that renters with disabilities were told about fewer options (Urban Institute, July 2, 2015). The source of a rule matters in law too. In 2025, HUD withdrew fair housing guidance documents without any change to the Act (National Association of Realtors, October 7, 2025).

Law, guidance and tenant process, continued

Procedural leverage can be decisive. At Atlantic Plaza Towers in Brownsville, Brooklyn, tenants opposed a landlord's application to install facial-recognition entry, which required state agency approval (Legal Services NYC, May 1, 2019). The landlord withdrew the plan in November 2019 (Gothamist, November 21, 2019). That outcome depended on New York's rent-stabilization rules and may not transfer to Sami's building.

The ABA's model rules require a basis in law and fact before a lawyer brings a claim, and they call for learning the facts and the applicable law first (ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct, 1983, as amended). Sami and Caio follow the same order, and they hold their conclusions until the facts arrive.

 **Stop and think.** What does the HUD guidance withdrawal teach about the difference between a rule and guidance about a rule?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) | No date listed

Fair Housing Act overview

Real source | HUD (YouTube) | January 31, 2014

The Federal Fair Housing Act and Reasonable Accommodations

Real source | U.S. Department of Justice | April 30, 2026

Justice Department Settles Disability Discrimination Case Against Property Management Company for \$750,000

Real source | Urban Institute | July 2, 2015

Restricted Options: evidence on housing discrimination against people with disabilities

Real source | National Association of Realtors (Washington Report) | October 7, 2025

HUD Withdraws Fair Housing Guidance Documents

Real source | Legal Services NYC | May 1, 2019

Brooklyn tenants file legal opposition to landlord's application to install facial recognition entry system in building

Real source | Gothamist | November 21, 2019

Brooklyn Landlord Does An About Face On Facial Recognition Plan

Real source | American Bar Association (ABA), Center for Professional Responsibility | No date listed

ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document, then fill in both boxes under it. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Posted notice

Unsigned notice by the common-room door, found Monday morning

NOTICE TO ALL RESIDENTS. Effective immediately, the rear door will be locked at 8:00 p.m. nightly. The common room is for resident social use only. NO BUSINESS USE.

Look closely: Which features give the notice an official look? What is missing?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | House rules (excerpt)

Last year’s house rules, given out at lease signing

“Residents may reserve the common room for gatherings, classes and resident-run workshops. Reservations are made through the building office.”

Look closely: What did last year’s rules allow in the common room?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Entrance plan

Building entrance plan from the lobby directory

Front entrance: four steps, no ramp. Rear door: step-free, opens to the elevator hallway. Side door: service use only.

Look closely: Which entrance is step-free? What happens to it after 8 p.m.?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: authority

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

A building rule should name who made it, give a date and list a contact. This notice has none of them.

Authority is the power a person or group has to make or change a particular rule or decision. Bold type and capital letters do not show who has that power. An unsigned notice is not automatically invalid, either. Sami has to find out who issued it and which document it claims to change.

A landlord's policy and the law are different sources of rules. The Fair Housing Act is a federal law. HUD, the federal housing department, says it bars housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status or disability. It covers most housing, with some exceptions. Under the Act, a person with a disability can ask a building for a **reasonable accommodation**. A reasonable accommodation is a change to a rule or practice that gives a person with a disability equal use of a place. For Sami, that could be a key fob for the rear door.

Sami cannot yet say the notice breaks the law. She does not know who wrote it, whether it replaces the house rules or how the building handles access requests. Whether a building grants an accommodation also depends on the facts. **Documentation** helps her keep those facts straight. Documentation is a record, such as a photo, a note or an email, that shows what was said or done and when. Her photo of the notice, with the date and place she found it, is documentation.

Professional standards

Adapted from a real source | American Bar Association (ABA), Center for Professional Responsibility

ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct: Rule 3.1 Meritorious Claims and Contentions

Summary: Summary, not a quotation: a lawyer may not bring or defend a proceeding, or argue an issue in it, without a basis in law and fact that is not frivolous. The ABA comment says lawyers must first learn the facts and the applicable law.

In plain words: Before lawyers bring a claim, they must have facts and law that support it.

Question: Before claiming a Fair Housing Act violation, what should Sami learn about the notice's author and the building's access process?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

Sami first needs ____, because ____.

In the news



Real source | Gothamist | November 21, 2019

Brooklyn Landlord Does An About Face On Facial Recognition Plan

A throwback about a door rule: the landlord needed state permission to change how tenants got in, and tenants used that process to object.



Real source | HUD (YouTube) | January 31, 2014

The Federal Fair Housing Act and Reasonable Accommodations

HUD explains how a person with a disability can ask for an exception to a building rule.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Fill in each box of the map: who decides, which rules apply, who is affected and where to ask. About 8 minutes.

Map who made this rule, which rules it has to fit, who it affects and where residents can take a question. Which box is still empty?

Lock the rear door at 8 p.m. and ban business use of the common room

Who decides

Unknown issuer: the owner, the manager or someone else?

Under which rule

Last year's house rules allowed resident-run workshops

Fair Housing Act: disability is a protected characteristic

Who lives with it

Sami and other residents who need the only step-free entrance

Your way in

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what Sami should do first and explain why, then fix the two marked lines. About 6 minutes.

The notice says the rear door, the building's only step-free entrance, locks at 8 p.m. It also bans "business use" of the common room. It has no name, no date and no contact. What should Sami do first?

- ☐ **A** Ignore it until someone signs it, since an unsigned notice may not be official.
- ☐ **B** Photograph it, compare it with last year's house rules and ask the manager who issued it and how residents get in after 8.
- ☐ **C** Post online that the building is breaking disability law.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Hi, I saw the notice about the common room and rear door. **1** This is illegal and discriminatory against disabled people like me. You can't just make rules like this without asking. Nobody signed it and nobody told us it was coming, so I don't even know if it's real. I'm going to keep using the room for my workshop because the old rules said I could. A lot of neighbors are upset too. **2** Please take the notice down. Sami, 3B

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

A blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines, resembling notebook paper. The paper has rounded corners and a dark blue border. There are seven visible horizontal lines spaced evenly down the page.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 15 minutes.

Design a notice template that a building office could use for any rule change. Rewrite the rear-door notice with it, and write a short memo to the building office that explains each element.

Use: Case documents: the unsigned notice, last year's house rules, the entrance plan and Sami's and Caio's statements. Real sources: HUD's Fair Housing Act overview and HUD's video on reasonable accommodations (January 31, 2014).

You'll make: Notice template, a rewritten notice of 60–120 words and a memo of about 150 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 List the elements every building notice should have, using the checklist on the task page.
- 2 Build a template with a line for each element.
- 3 Rewrite the rear-door notice with your template in 60 to 120 words.
- 4 Add a line that tells residents who need the step-free rear door whom to contact.
- 5 Write a memo of about 150 words that explains each element to the building office.
- 6 Check that no real resident's name, unit or situation appears.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Template elements

What changed from last year's house rules

[illegible][illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your first draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your template require an issuer, a date and a contact?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your rewritten notice say what changed from last year's house rules?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it tell residents who need the step-free rear door whom to contact?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your memo keep legal points as questions, with no real resident's details?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No specifics from the notice.	☐ Mentions the notice generally.	☐ Quotes the notice and older rule.	☐ Quotes both and names what is still unknown.
Reasoning	☐ Declares a legal violation.	☐ Complains without a clear need.	☐ Connects the rule to a concrete effect.	☐ Separates the communication problem from the legal question.
Audience & purpose	☐ Hostile or vague.	☐ Polite but no request.	☐ Specific request the manager can act on.	☐ Specific request plus questions that clarify authority.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Tone edits only.	☐ Replaces the conclusion with a question and request.	☐ Explains how each change makes a yes more likely.

One change I made after feedback

[illegible]

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete each sentence frame. About 10 minutes.

1 Which missing fact would most change how you see the notice?

2 The notice bans “business use” without saying what that means. What would you need to know to decide whether Sami’s workshop counts?

3 A building may want a door locked at night. How could it keep that door secure and still let Sami in?

My take

My claim: ____.

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 16: Who wrote the new building rule?

In this case, an unsigned notice in an apartment building says the only step-free door will lock at 8 p.m. Your student compared the notice with last year's building rules and practiced asking who made the new rule.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What should a clear building or school notice include?
- 2 Whom can people ask when a posted rule is unclear?
- 3 Why might someone keep a photo of a notice with the date?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 17: How should the crew give out ten free seats?

Thirty people want ten free workshop seats, and the crew must choose a fair way to decide who gets them.

On your own Read What happened and underline the sentence that tells how many people want a seat. About 4 minutes.



Duda holds up a phone and points at a blank card on a bulletin board.

Your role: You're the one who writes down the rule before the crew picks the ten names. **New skill:** Set fair criteria before choosing.

What happened

The crew has ten free seats for a workshop, and thirty people want one. The crew opened a sign-up sheet on Monday at 9 a.m. Twenty-two names were on it before 10 a.m. By Wednesday, the sheet has thirty names.

The sheet says only "How seats will be chosen: to be announced." The crew has argued about the rule since dinner on Sunday. Gia is running the sign-up. She wants to give the seats to the first ten names, because that is simple and fast. Mateo suggests a lottery instead.

Anika, 16, is at rehearsal most days, and she checks her phone after rehearsal ends. Under first-come, she would see the message after the seats were gone. A third option on the crew's whiteboard would give seats to people who cannot afford the paid version of the workshop. That option would ask people for personal information.

Every method seats exactly ten people. The crew has to decide which ten, and then explain the rule to all thirty.

Your question: How should the crew choose who gets the ten seats, and how should they explain the choice to all thirty people?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 4 minutes.

Criteria Criteria are the standards or reasons a group uses to make a decision.

En español: criterios

In this case: The sheet says “How seats will be chosen: to be announced.” Twenty-two names arrived before 10 a.m. Monday, before the crew stated any criteria.

Trade-off A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.

En español: compensación entre opciones

In this case: First-come is fast for Gia to run but favors whoever sees the message first. A lottery gives everyone the same chance but needs a sign-up window and a drawing.

Equity Equity is a way of sharing that adjusts for different needs so everyone gets a fair chance.

En español: equidad

In this case: Option C would give seats to people who cannot afford the paid version of the workshop. It would also ask applicants for personal information.

Who is involved



Gia

Running the sign-up

“First ten to reply get a seat. It’s simple, I can post it tonight, and I have a shift at seven.”



Anika

Checks her phone
after rehearsal

“By the time I see the message, ten people will have answered. I don’t even need a seat. I just want to know how you’re picking.”

Before you look at the evidence, how do you think the crew should choose who gets the ten seats?

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Allocating scarce goods fairly

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Criteria:** Criteria are the standards or reasons a group uses to make a decision.
- **Trade-off:** A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.
- **Equity:** Equity is a way of sharing that adjusts for different needs so everyone gets a fair chance.
- **Consent:** Consent is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person.

The story: Thirty applicants, ten places

The crew has ten free seats in a workshop and thirty people who want them. A sign-up sheet opened Monday at 9 a.m. with no stated selection method. Twenty-two names arrived within the first hour, and the list reached thirty by Wednesday. The crew's whiteboard lists three methods, each with its benefit and cost. First come, first served is fast but favors whoever sees it first. A lottery after a three-day window gives equal chances but requires a window and a drawing. A needs-based rubric prioritizes those who cannot afford the paid version but requires personal information and a judge.

The crew members' positions are candid. Gia, who runs the sign-up and has a shift at seven, prefers first-come because it is simple. She later admits she mostly wanted the task off her list. Mateo proposes a lottery. Anika, 16, who checks her phone only after rehearsal, would be excluded by first-come. She explicitly declines to make the decision about herself. She does not need a seat. She wants a stated method and an honest account of who loses.

The case asks students to treat a small allocation as a serious ethical problem, because the same structure governs school admissions, housing lotteries and medical triage.

Your role is to write down the rule before the crew picks the ten names.

? **Stop and think.** Why might a procedurally fair rule be accepted even by people it excludes?

Procedure, criteria and consent

Criteria are the standards or reasons a group uses to make a decision. The new skill is setting fair criteria before choosing and disclosing who each rule disadvantages. Case 4's **trade-off**, a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up, is unavoidable here. Every method seats ten and excludes twenty. Choosing among them means choosing which cost to accept and defend.

Each method encodes a principle. First-come rewards speed and availability, which correlate with flexible schedules rather than need or merit. A lottery embodies equal chance and treats applicants as interchangeable. A needs-based rubric pursues **equity**, a way of sharing that adjusts for different needs so everyone gets a fair chance. It also shifts costs onto applicants, who must disclose personal information. Case 6's **consent**, permission a person gives for something specific, frames that cost. Any data collection should be minimal, voluntary and limited to people who need to see it.

Procedure carries independent moral weight. The sheet shows that most names arrived before any rule was posted, so a rule adopted now will be applied to a known list. That invites the suspicion that it was chosen to produce a result. Announcing criteria before selection is a form of procedural fairness that can secure acceptance from those who lose. A decision note should therefore state the method and the reason for it, name the strongest objection and offer one mitigation for those who miss out.

Anika's proposed framing, comparing which option helps the most people and whether the method is fair to everyone, separates outcome-based and fairness-based reasoning. Holding both keeps the crew from mistaking an efficient rule for a just one.

 **Stop and think.** How should the crew weigh equity against the privacy cost of a needs-based rubric?

Frameworks and real-world allocation

The Markkula Center's framework examines decisions through lenses of consequences, rights, fairness, the common good, character and care. It explains that ethics and law are different questions (Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, revised November 5, 2021). The Belmont Report treats justice as fairness in distribution and names five accepted bases: equal share, need, effort, societal contribution and merit. It also holds that "respect for persons requires that subjects, to the degree that they are capable, be given the opportunity to choose what shall or shall not happen to them" (Belmont Report, April 18, 1979). That principle bears directly on a rubric that asks for personal information.

High-stakes allocation debates mirror the crew's options. Emanuel and colleagues argued that first-come, first-served is a poor way to allocate scarce medical resources (New England Journal of Medicine, May 21, 2020). Commentators laid out competing vaccine criteria such as risk, fairness and benefit (Scientific American, September 3, 2020).

Frameworks and real-world allocation, continued

New York City uses random lottery numbers for some school admissions (Chalkbeat New York, October 1, 2024). Consumer markets make similar choices. For the Eras Tour presale, more than 3.5 million people registered, about 1.5 million received codes and 2 million were waitlisted (Ticketmaster, November 19, 2022).

For public servants, ASPA asks members to “treat all persons with fairness, justice, and equality and respect individual differences, rights, and freedoms” (ASPA Code of Ethics, 2013).

? **Stop and think.** Emanuel and colleagues reject first-come in medicine. Does their reasoning apply to the crew’s workshop? Why or why not?

Sources

Real source | Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University | November 5, 2021

A Framework for Ethical Decision Making

Real source

| National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research; published by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
| 1979

The Belmont Report

Real source | New England Journal of Medicine (Emanuel et al.) | May 21, 2020

Fair Allocation of Scarce Medical Resources in the Time of Covid-19

Real source | Scientific American | September 3, 2020

How to Decide Who Should Get a COVID-19 Vaccine First

Real source | Chalkbeat New York | October 1, 2024

What your ‘lottery’ number for middle and high school applications means

Real source | Ticketmaster | November 19, 2022

The Eras Tour onsale explained

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) | 2013

ASPA Code of Ethics

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document and write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | **Sign-up** sheet

The workshop sign-up sheet

“Free workshop: 10 seats. Add your name to show interest. How seats will be chosen: to be announced.” The sheet opened Monday at 9 a.m. By Wednesday it had thirty names. The first 22 names were added before 10 a.m. on Monday.

Look closely: When did most names arrive, and what rule was posted then?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | **Group-chat** thread

The crew’s thread, Sunday at 8:30 p.m.

- Gia: first come is easiest to run, we just take the top ten.
- Anika: I’m at rehearsal most days, I’d see it after it’s full.
- Mateo: lottery?
- Gia: then we need a sign-up window and someone to run the drawing.

Look closely: Which cost does each person name? Which cost does nobody name?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Whiteboard

Three options on the whiteboard

A. First come, first served: fast to run; favors whoever sees it first. B. Lottery after a three-day sign-up: equal chance for everyone; needs a sign-up window and a drawing. C. Needs-based rubric: prioritizes people who can't afford the paid version; needs personal information and someone to judge it.

Look closely: Underline the cost the crew wrote for each option.

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: fair criteria

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 12 minutes.

Any way of giving out ten seats to thirty people leaves twenty people without one. A **trade-off** is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up. First-come is fast, but it favors people who see the message first. A lottery gives everyone the same chance, but it does not consider need. A needs-based rubric aims at equity by helping people who cannot afford the paid version, but applicants must share personal information. Each option has a cost, so the crew has to choose which cost to accept.

Criteria are the standards or reasons a group uses to make a decision. When the crew states its criteria early, everyone knows the rule before anyone is chosen. Even people who do not get a seat may accept the result if the rule was clear in advance. If the crew picks a rule after seeing the names, people may wonder whether it was chosen to favor someone.

The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University suggests looking at a decision through several ethical lenses. They include consequences, rights, fairness, the common good, character and care. The lenses can point toward different options, and they do not add up to one automatic score. A strong decision explains which concern matters most in this case, who carries the cost and what could reduce it.

Professional standards

Adapted from a real source

| National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research; published by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

The Belmont Report: B. Basic Ethical Principles: 3. Justice

Summary: Summary, not a quotation: the report treats justice as fairness in distribution and lists five widely accepted ways to share benefits and burdens: an equal share, individual need, individual effort, societal contribution and merit.

In plain words: The Belmont Report, written for research with people, lists several fair ways to share limited benefits, such as equal shares or need.

Question: Which whiteboard option comes closest to “an equal share,” and which comes closest to “individual need”?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

Option ___ matches an equal share and option ___ matches individual need. The limit is ___.

In the news



Real source | NPR | December 20, 2020

The Ethics Of Who Gets The COVID-19 Vaccine And When

A bioethicist explains how leaders chose who went first when there wasn't enough for everyone.



Real source | Scientific American | September 3, 2020

How to Decide Who Should Get a COVID-19 Vaccine First

Lays out competing criteria such as risk, fairness and benefit, the same lenses the crew uses.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Follow each option to its effects and write who carries the cost in each box. About 8 minutes.

Follow each method to its consequences. Who carries the cost under each one, and what makes the chosen process legitimate to the twenty who lose?

First come, first served

The ten fastest responders get seats; people at rehearsal or work see the sign-up late

Who is affected

Lottery after a three-day sign-up

Each of the thirty has the same chance, and need is not considered

Who is affected

Needs-based rubric

Those with the greatest need are prioritized; applicants must share personal information

Who is affected

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the note you would send, explain why and fix the two marked phrases. About 5 minutes.

Gia is drafting a note to the thirty people on the sign-up sheet. Which sentence could the crew defend?

- ☐ A “We picked the fairest method, so nobody loses out.”
- ☐ B “We’re holding a lottery so everyone has the same chance. A lottery doesn’t favor people with the most need, so we’re looking into a second session.”
- ☐ C “Seats go to the first ten names on the sheet, because those people wanted it most.”

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student’s first draft

We should do first come first served because ① it’s the most fair. Everyone has the same chance to sign up and if you really want it you’ll sign up fast. It’s simple and ② nobody can complain because they had the same opportunity as everyone else. Also it’s way less work for us than reading thirty applications or doing some random drawing. The people who don’t get in can just come to the next workshop whenever we have one. This is obviously the best way.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a memo to a student government committee recommending how to give out ten free workshop seats among thirty applicants. Then draft the announcement that publishes the method before sign-ups open.

Use: Case documents: the sign-up sheet, the crew’s debate thread, the three options on the whiteboard and Anika’s statement. Real sources: the Markkula Center framework, the Belmont Report’s principles of justice and informed consent and ASPA’s principle on social equity.

You’ll make: Memo, 350—450 words, plus an announcement of 80—120 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Fill in the options matrix: who gains, who carries the cost and what information each option needs.
- 2 Apply two ethical lenses, including one that challenges your choice.
- 3 Draft the memo’s recommendation section on the Your draft page.
- 4 Finish the memo, 350 to 450 words, on lined paper or in the online workspace.
- 5 Write an announcement of 80 to 120 words that publishes the method.
- 6 Add how people who do not get a seat will be told.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Options matrix

Two lenses, one that challenges my choice

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your memo compare all three options using the sign-up evidence?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does the announcement publish the method before sign-ups open?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Is any personal information protected?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it say how people who do not get a seat are told?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No reference to who is affected.	☐ Mentions people vaguely.	☐ Names specific people and effects from the case.	☐ Uses case facts to show who gains and who pays.
Reasoning	☐ Claims an option is obviously best.	☐ Gives one reason only.	☐ Uses a lens and names the strongest objection.	☐ Uses two lenses and proposes a revision tied to the objection.
Audience & purpose	☐ Ignores the twenty who miss out.	☐ Mentions them briefly.	☐ Explains the process to all applicants.	☐ Builds legitimacy by publishing criteria and a remedy.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Wording only.	☐ Adds a named cost and revision.	☐ Explains how the revision addresses the objection.

One change I made after feedback

[illegible]

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames. About 10 minutes.

1 Whose view would most challenge the option you prefer?

2 Anika says she does not need a seat. What is she asking the crew for?

3 Option C would help people who cannot afford the paid workshop. What would applicants give up to be chosen that way?

4 What would make the twenty people without seats accept the result as fair?

My take

My claim: ____.

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 17: How should the crew give out ten free seats?

In this case, a group of friends has ten free workshop seats and thirty people who want one. Your student compared three ways to choose and wrote a note that explains the choice and who carries its cost.

Questions to talk about

- 1 When something is limited, like tickets or seats, what makes a way of choosing feel fair?
- 2 Why might it help to announce a rule before anyone signs up?
- 3 What is one kind way to tell people they were not picked?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 18: Why is the theater curtain still falling apart?

The district's proposed budget is \$48 million, the school theater curtain won't close, and Dec wants to ask the school board about it.

On your own Read What happened and underline the three dollar amounts. About 4 minutes.



Anika, Dec and Mari test a small light circuit in a theater workshop, with Pauta beside them.

Your role: You're the one who works out the per-student number before anyone repeats the post. **New skill:** Compare numbers on the same scale.

What happened

The curtain in the school theater is torn, and it no longer closes all the way. Dec, 17, pulls that curtain at every show. He and Anika, 16, are on the theater crew. The facilities office gave the theater advisor a quote to replace the curtain: \$6,800.

Mari, 19, is helping them prepare a question for the school board. They find the district's proposed budget for next school year. The total is \$48 million for a projected 3,200 students. One line sets aside \$310,000 for building repairs at all schools. A note says the figures may change before the board adopts the budget.

On Tuesday at 6:10 p.m., a post starts going around. It compares the district's \$48 million with another district, Westbrook, at \$21,000 per student. "And they can't fix ONE curtain??" it asks. Dec has a photo of the torn curtain. He wants to be the one who asks the board about it.

Your question: What can the \$48 million total tell Dec about the curtain, and what should he ask the school board?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 4 minutes.

Revenue Revenue is money that comes into a government or an organization, such as taxes and grants.

En español: ingresos

In this case: NCES reports that public schools get revenue from federal, state and local sources. That national data cannot show what Dec's district spends on a curtain.

Expenditure An expenditure is money that a government or an organization spends.

En español: gasto

In this case: The \$48 million is a proposed plan for next school year. It lists planned expenditures, but none of that money has been spent yet.

Per-pupil amount A per-pupil amount is a total divided by the number of students, so that districts of different sizes can be compared.

En español: monto por estudiante

In this case: $\$48,000,000 \div 3,200 \text{ students} = \$15,000 \text{ per student}$. Westbrook's \$21,000 is already per student, but its year and stage are unknown.

Who is involved



Mari

Helping the theater crew with a budget question

"Forty-eight million dollars, and the curtain still won't close. Ay, bendito. Before we get mad at the big number, which line is supposed to fix it?"



Dec

Pulls the curtain at every show

"I pull that curtain every show. It doesn't close all the way anymore. That part I can show you."

Before you look at the evidence, why do you think the theater curtain is still not fixed?

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Budget literacy and the politics of a number

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Revenue:** Revenue is money that comes into a government or an organization, such as taxes and grants.
- **Expenditure:** An expenditure is money that a government or an organization spends.
- **Per-pupil amount:** A per-pupil amount is a total divided by the number of students, so that districts of different sizes can be compared.
- **Proposal:** A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.
- **Decision-maker:** A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.

The story: A local need and a viral comparison

A high school's stage curtain is torn and no longer closes. Dec, 17, pulls it at every performance. Facilities has priced a replacement at \$6,800. With Anika, 16, and Mari, 19, Dec plans to raise it with the school board, and he insists on asking in person.

The district's proposed budget for next year lists \$48,000,000 for a projected 3,200 students and \$310,000 for building repairs across all schools. It notes that the figures may change before adoption. Then a post circulates on Tuesday evening. It pairs the district's \$48 million with a neighboring district's \$21,000 per student and asks why one curtain cannot be fixed.

The post is persuasive because its underlying grievance is real. The curtain is broken. Its numbers, however, are incommensurable. Mari's response models budget literacy. She reads the labels before reacting to the magnitude. "Proposed" means next year's plan, not this year's spending. The units must be checked. And she asks which line could plausibly fund a curtain at all.

Your role is to work out the per-student number before anyone repeats the post.

❓ Stop and think. Why is a per-pupil figure a measure of resources rather than adequacy?

Commensurability and the chain of decisions

Comparisons require commensurable figures, meaning the same year, the same stage and the same unit. A **per-pupil amount** is a total divided by the number of students, so that districts of different sizes can be compared. The district's proposed per-pupil figure is \$15,000, which is \$48,000,000 divided by 3,200. Only after that conversion does a comparison with Westbrook become possible, and it remains incomplete while Westbrook's year and stage are unknown. Even a perfect comparison would measure resources, not adequacy. A per-pupil figure cannot say whether students' needs are met.

The case's vocabulary distinguishes flows from plans. **Revenue** is money that comes into a government or an organization, such as taxes and grants. An **expenditure** is money that a government or an organization spends. The document at hand is a **proposal**, a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet, in Case 4's terms. It is distinct from the adopted budget and from actual spending.

The case also completes a sequence of numerical skills. Case 5 introduced line-by-line reading of a financial document. Case 11 required comparing situations on the same terms. Case 13 required keeping a claim as small as the evidence. Here, Mari applies the first two to the budget, and Dec applies the third to his own evidence. His photo establishes the tear. It says nothing about where funds went, so he declines to speculate.

Case 4's **decision-maker**, the person or group with the power to make a particular choice, locates authority. The school board adopts the budget within state and federal rules, so it, not the principal, is the right audience. An effective question names a line, a need and a procedural moment: which line covers stage equipment, what the \$6,800 request would require and when the board hears requests before adoption.

 **Stop and think.** How should an advocate handle a viral claim that supports their cause but uses bad numbers?

Finance, evidence and professional duty

School revenue combines federal, state and local sources in proportions that vary by state (NCES, May 2024). NCES publishes state-by-state revenue with per-pupil amounts for 2022–23 (NCES Digest table 235.20, March 2026). Those figures give context and cannot stand in for a district's own adopted budget. Local property-tax reliance produces large disparities (NPR, April 18, 2016). The trade-off between local control and equity is itself a policy debate (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, October 10, 2024).

Budgets also change with circumstances. The expiration of federal pandemic relief created a funding cliff for many districts (Chalkbeat, September 13, 2023). By 2026, many districts were cutting programs and staff because of inflation and falling enrollment (Chalkbeat, May 28, 2026).

Finance, evidence and professional duty, continued

The stakes are measurable. Jackson, Johnson and Persico found that increases in per-pupil spending from school finance reforms raised educational attainment and adult earnings, particularly for low-income students (Quarterly Journal of Economics, October 1, 2015).

Professional codes apply to both sides of Dec's question. ASPA asks public administrators to give governing boards "accurate, honest, comprehensive, and timely information and advice" (ASPA Code of Ethics, 2013). The NCA credo holds "truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason" to be "essential to the integrity of communication" (NCA Credo for Ethical Communication, 2024). The TV connection adds a cultural lens. In Abbott Elementary's pilot, a principal spends money on a sign while teachers need supplies (ABC, December 7, 2021). A TV show cannot settle a real budget, but its question is the case's question: which line, and who decided?

? **Stop and think.** What procedural knowledge does Dec need to turn a grievance into a question the board must answer?

Sources

Real source | National Center for Education Statistics | May 2024

Public School Revenue Sources (Condition of Education)

Real source | National Center for Education Statistics | March 2026

Revenue sources for public schools by state, 2022–23 (Digest table 235.20)

Real source | NPR | April 18, 2016

Why America's Schools Have A Money Problem

Real source | Lincoln Institute of Land Policy | October 10, 2024

Balancing Act: The Property Tax—School Funding Dilemma

Real source | Chalkbeat | September 13, 2023

Schools face a funding cliff. How bad will the fall be?

Real source | Chalkbeat | May 28, 2026

A financial reckoning is hitting America's public schools

Real source | The Quarterly Journal of Economics (Jackson, Johnson & Persico) | October 1, 2015

The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes: Evidence from School Finance Reforms

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) | 2013

ASPA Code of Ethics

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document and write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Budget excerpt

The proposed budget for next school year

PROPOSED BUDGET, NEXT SCHOOL YEAR. Total proposed budget: \$48,000,000. Projected enrollment: 3,200 students. Facilities, building repairs (all schools): \$310,000. Note: figures are proposed and may change before the board adopts the budget.

Look closely: Circle the year, the stage and the unit for each number.

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Social media post

A post shared Tuesday at 6:10 p.m.

Our district: \$48 MILLION. Westbrook: \$21,000 per student. And they can't fix ONE curtain?? Where is the money going?

Look closely: Which number is a total, and which is per student?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Repair quote

The facilities quote for a new curtain

Stage curtain replacement, main auditorium: remove the torn curtain, supply and install a flame-retardant replacement. Total: \$6,800.

Look closely: What does the quote confirm, and who received it?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: per-pupil amounts

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 12 minutes.

Before you compare two budget numbers, check three labels: the year, the stage and the unit. An **expenditure** is money that a government or an organization spends. A proposed budget is a plan for expenditures. An adopted budget is the plan the board approves. Actual spending is what the district really spent. The \$48 million is a proposed total for the whole district. The Westbrook figure is an amount per student.

A **per-pupil amount** is a total divided by the number of students, so that districts of different sizes can be compared. Dec's district proposes \$48,000,000 for a projected 3,200 students. That works out to \$15,000 per student. The comparison is still not complete, because Westbrook's budget year and stage are unknown. A per-pupil figure also cannot show whether either district has enough for its students' needs.

Revenue is money that comes into a government or an organization, such as taxes and grants. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that public schools get revenue from federal, state and local sources. The mix differs from state to state. National data like this gives context, but it cannot say what one district spends on a curtain. In most states, an elected local school board adopts the budget within state and federal rules. That is why Dec's question should name one budget line, one need and the board's next chance to hear requests.

Professional standards

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)

ASPA Code of Ethics: 5. Fully Inform and Advise

"Provide accurate, honest, comprehensive, and timely information and advice to elected and appointed officials and governing board members"

In plain words: ASPA members agree to give decision-makers, such as school board members, accurate and complete information.

Question: The \$6,800 curtain quote went to the theater advisor. What should the board see to rank that repair?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

The board needs _____. Without it, _____.

In the news



Real source | NPR | April 18, 2016

Why America's Schools Have A Money Problem

Explains how local property taxes make school budgets very different from one district to the next.



Real source | Chalkbeat | May 28, 2026

A financial reckoning is hitting America's public schools

Big districts are making cuts, showing how a huge budget can still leave little for extras like a stage curtain.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Trace the curtain request from the photo to the vote and fill in each box. About 8 minutes.

Trace the curtain request from the photo to the vote. Who ranks it, who adopts the budget, which rules limit them, and where can students speak?

Fund the \$6,800 curtain replacement next year

Who decides

The elected local school board, which adopts the budget

The facilities office, which ranks repair requests (how is still unknown)

Under which rule

State and federal rules and funding streams set limits on district budgets

Proposed building-repairs line: \$310,000 for all schools

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what the crew should do first, explain why and fix the two marked phrases.
About 5 minutes.

A post compares the district's \$48 million total with Westbrook's \$21,000 per student. Someone reposts it and adds "we get way less." What should the crew do first?

- ☐ A Share it. Both figures are in dollars, and the curtain really is torn.
- ☐ B Check that both figures use the same year, budget stage and units before comparing them.
- ☐ C Divide \$48 million by 3,200 students, and post that the district is underfunded.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Our district has a ① \$48 million budget but our theater curtain is ripped and gross. That's so much money and they can't even fix one curtain? It has been like this since before any of us joined the crew and it keeps getting worse every show. Where is all the money going? Other districts get way more. I saw a post that said so. We deserve better and ② the board needs to explain themselves. We are honestly tired of waiting for this.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a fact-check of the viral post for a local news site or a campus newspaper. Correct the comparison, show the math and say what the proposed budget can and cannot tell readers about the curtain.

Use: Case documents: the proposed-budget excerpt, the social post, the \$6,800 repair quote and Dec’s and Mari’s statements. Real sources: the NCES page on public school revenue sources, NPR’s explainer on school funding (April 18, 2016) and Chalkbeat’s report on budget cuts (May 28, 2026).

You’ll make: Fact-check, 350—450 words, with a worked calculation

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Label each figure in Evidence A and B with its year, stage and units.
- 2 Calculate $\$48,000,000 \div 3,200$ students and label the result.
- 3 Note what the post leaves out about Westbrook’s \$21,000.
- 4 Draft the claim and the unknowns sections on the Your draft page.
- 5 Finish the fact-check, 350 to 450 words, on lined paper or in the online workspace.
- 6 Finish with one question readers can bring to the school board.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Labels for each figure

My calculation

$\div$

$=$

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners on the right side.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners on the right side.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Is your calculation correct and labeled as proposed?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you note that the post gives no year or stage for Westbrook?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you explain what the \$310,000 line cannot show?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you end with a question for the school board?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Uses an unlabeled total.	☐ Uses a figure without year or stage.	☐ Labels year, stage and line and cites the need.	☐ Adds a repair quote and notes what the figures can't show.
Reasoning	☐ Assumes waste or theft.	☐ Compares mismatched numbers.	☐ Links the need to a specific budget line.	☐ Explains process questions: ranking, timing, decision-maker.
Audience & purpose	☐ Accuses the board.	☐ Complains without a request.	☐ Asks a question the board can answer.	☐ Asks a question and offers a concrete way for students to contribute.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Removes insults only.	☐ Adds labels and a specific line.	☐ Explains how each change makes an answer more likely.

I changed ___ because ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames. About 10 minutes.

1 What could make spending rise without the service getting better?

2 Dec wants to ask the board himself. Why might it matter who brings the question?

3 What else would you want to know before saying one district gets less than another?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 18: Why is the theater curtain still falling apart?

In this case, a group of friends reads a school district budget to find out why a torn theater curtain has not been fixed. Your student checked what the numbers mean and wrote a clear question for the school board.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Where do you think a school's money comes from?
- 2 Why can it be misleading to compare a total with an amount per person?
- 3 Who would you ask if something at school needed fixing?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 19: What should Gia say in her two-minute comment?

Gia has two minutes to speak to the parks committee about the court lights, but her draft is three pages long.

On your own Read What happened and underline the sentence that says what item 4 proposes. About 4 minutes.



Gia and Mateo sit on a front stoop, each holding pages of notes.

Your role: You're the one holding the timer and listening for the request. **New skill:** Fit a request to the body's remit and time limit.

What happened

It is Tuesday, 5:40 p.m. The parks committee meets at 6. Item 4 on its agenda is a proposal to turn off the park's court lights at 8 p.m. The reason given is complaints about evening noise from nearby residents.

Gia, 21, wants to speak against item 4. It is her first time speaking at a public meeting. Each speaker gets two minutes. On Monday night, Gia wrote a three-page draft. When she reads page one out loud, it takes two minutes and forty seconds.

Mateo, 22, is timing her from a bench. He follows every word, but he cannot tell what she wants the committee to do. The draft also mentions a friend's private situation, and page two is about the bus. Everything Gia says will become part of the public record, along with her name.

Your question: What should Gia keep in her two-minute comment, and what should she cut?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 4 minutes.

Agenda item An agenda item is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business.

En español: punto del orden del día

In this case: Item 4, "Evening court hours," proposes turning off the court lights at 8:00 p.m. Its action is a committee recommendation to the full council.

Remit A remit is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on.

En español: competencia

In this case: The parks committee can recommend court hours. It cannot change bus routes, so page two of Gia's draft belongs with a different body.

Public record A public record is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments.

En español: registro público

In this case: Comments and speakers' names become part of the public record. That is why Gia leaves her friend's private situation out of her comment.

Who is involved



Gia

Speaking at a public meeting for the first time

"I timed page one out loud. Two minutes forty. There are three pages."



Mateo

Timing Gia's practice run from a bench

"I followed all of it. I still couldn't tell you what she wants them to do."

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think Gia should say in her two minutes?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Public comment as civic craft

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 6 minutes.

Words to know

- **Agenda item:** An agenda item is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business.
- **Remit:** A remit is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on.
- **Public record:** A public record is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments.
- **Proposal:** A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.
- **Decision-maker:** A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.

The story: A comment built for its audience

Gia, 21, plans to speak against a parks committee proposal. Item 4 would turn off the park's court lights and close the lighted courts at 8 p.m., citing residents' complaints about evening noise. The agenda frames the action as a committee recommendation to the full council. Speakers sign up by 5 p.m., get two minutes each and become part of the public record by name. Written comments are accepted in advance.

Gia's draft reflects a common first-time pattern. It is three pages long, with page one alone at two minutes and forty seconds. It centers on a request no one can grant, "Please don't close the park," when the item concerns lights and hours. It spends a page on the bus, a real issue outside the committee's authority. It includes a friend's private circumstances. It also addresses the committee as "you guys" who "never listen to young people."

Mateo, 22, times a practice run from a bench and listens as a committee member would. His diagnosis is that the comment contains no request he could repeat back. His intervention is a question rather than an edit: if the committee remembers one sentence, what is it? The answer becomes the opening line.

Your role is to hold the timer and listen for the request.

❓ **Stop and think.** Why might an unrepresentative pool of commenters make Gia's comment more valuable, not less?

Remit, sequence and the public record

An **agenda item** is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business. A **remit** is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on. Effective participation depends on matching the request to both. Item 4 is about lighting and hours, and the committee's remit extends to recommending court hours. The bus is out of scope, so under Case 10's principle of routing problems to the responsible office, it goes elsewhere.

The case assembles earlier skills into a single practical sequence. Case 4 introduced the **proposal**, a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet, and the **decision-maker**, the person or group with the power to make a particular choice. The agenda reveals a two-step structure. The committee recommends, and the council decides. That tells Gia both what to ask for and that later chances to speak may exist.

Her revised comment follows a four-part structure that works in many settings. It identifies the item, reports an observation, explains its significance and makes a single actionable request. She counted twenty or thirty people on the courts between 8 and 9, many of whom work late, and she asks for lights until 9 on weekdays this summer. The request also engages the opposing written comment, from a resident who likes the courts but hears late noise at home and has children with school in the morning. A 9 p.m. compromise gives the committee a way to act on both concerns.

The last revision concerns privacy. A **public record** is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments. Speaking publicly means accepting that one's own words become part of that record. It does not license publishing someone else's private situation.

❓ **Stop and think.** How does the committee's role as a recommending body change Gia's strategy?

Participation, representation and professional ethics

Public comment procedures are local. Seattle City Council, for example, accepts spoken comment in person or by phone and written comment by email, with up to two minutes per speaker (Seattle City Council, no date listed). The U.S. Department of Labor advises federal rulemaking commenters that comments become public and work best with specific experience and data (U.S. Department of Labor, no date listed).

Political scientists have studied who participates. Einstein, Palmer and Glick found from meeting minutes that local commenters are often unrepresentative of the broader community (Perspectives on Politics, October 14, 2018).

Participation, representation and professional ethics, continued

Sahn examined whether and how public comment connects to policy outcomes (American Journal of Political Science, August 31, 2024). Together, these studies suggest both the limits of comment and the value of new voices. Student groups in Newark and Philadelphia have brought their own research and district data to school boards (Chalkbeat Newark, November 26, 2025; Chalkbeat Philadelphia, April 3, 2026).

The pop-culture version is instructive by contrast. In the first episode of Parks and Recreation (NBC, April 9, 2009), Ann Perkins complains at a public forum about a construction pit, and Leslie Knope promises on the spot to build a park. In our reading, real meetings run on agendas, time limits and bodies that can decide only some things.

Professional codes describe both sides of the exchange. ASPA asks public servants to “inform the public and encourage active engagement in governance” (ASPA Code of Ethics, 2013). The NCA credo endorses “freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and acknowledgement of dissent” (NCA Credo for Ethical Communication, 2024).

 **Stop and think.** Where is the line between sharing lived experience and exposing someone else’s private life?

Sources

Real source | Seattle City Council | No date listed

Public Comment

Real source | U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division | No date listed

How to Comment on a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)

Real source | Perspectives on Politics (Einstein, Palmer & Glick) | October 14, 2018

Who Participates in Local Government? Evidence from Meeting Minutes

Real source | American Journal of Political Science (Sahn) | August 31, 2024

Public comment and public policy

Real source | Chalkbeat Newark | November 26, 2025

How a Newark student coalition is using its own research to press for change in schools

Real source | Chalkbeat Philadelphia | April 3, 2026

‘Not what democracy is all about’: Philly students slam school leaders’ approach to school closures

Real source | Peacock | 2009

Parks and Recreation

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document and write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 7 minutes.

Evidence A | Meeting agenda

Item 4 on the parks committee agenda

Item 4. Evening court hours. Proposal to turn off the court lights and close the lighted courts at 8:00 p.m. Background: complaints about evening noise from nearby residents. Action: committee recommendation to the full council.

Look closely: Circle the item number, the proposed time and the action.

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Comment rules

How to comment at the meeting

Sign up to speak by 5:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Each speaker has 2 minutes. Written comments may be submitted before the meeting. Comments and speakers' names become part of the public record.

Look closely: Underline the deadline, the time limit and what becomes public.

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Draft

Gia’s three-page draft (excerpt)

“The park is really important to everyone and closing it is a terrible idea. I go there all the time with my friends... You guys never listen to young people. Please don’t close the park.”

Look closely: Find the request. Does it match what item 4 proposes?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence D | Written comment

A comment from a nearby resident

The courts are good for the neighborhood, but the noise late in the evening carries into our apartment. We have kids with school in the morning.

Look closely: What does this resident like, and what is the problem?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Key idea: remit

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

A **remit** is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on. The parks committee can make a recommendation about court hours. It cannot change bus routes. That is why Gia's comment should ask for something the parks committee can do.

An **agenda item** is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business. Each committee, council or board sets its own rules for who can speak, when and for how long. Seattle City Council is one real example. Its public comment page describes speaking in person or by phone and signing up before the meeting. Each speaker gets up to two minutes, and written comments can be sent by email.

A short comment can do four jobs. It names the agenda item, shares something the speaker observed, says why it matters and ends with a clear request. Before adding personal details, check whether comments become public. A **public record** is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments. At Gia's meeting, comments and speakers' names become part of the public record.

Professional standards

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)

ASPA Code of Ethics: 3. Promote democratic participation

"Inform the public and encourage active engagement in governance. Be open, transparent and responsive, and respect and assist all persons in their dealings with public organizations."

In plain words: ASPA's code asks people in public service to make it easy for every affected person to take part in decisions.

Question: The instructions allow written comments in advance. How does that help court users who cannot come at 6 p.m.?

Your answer

The written route _____. It still _____.

'Not what democracy is all about': Philly students slam school leaders' approach to school closures

Students testified at board meetings and used district data, real public comment with a clear destination.



How a Newark student coalition is using its own research to press for change in schools

Teens brought evidence and specific requests to their school board, the formula this case teaches.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Sort the evidence

On your own Follow a comment from the speaker to the final decision and fill in each box. About 6 minutes.

Follow a comment from the speaker to the final decision. Which body hears it, which body decides, and whose concerns reach the room?

Turn off the court lights at 8 p.m.?

Who decides

Full council: takes the final action

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the best opening sentence, explain why and fix the two marked phrases. About 5 minutes.

Gia has two minutes on item 4. Which opening sentence gives the committee the most to work with?

- ☐ A “The park is really important to everyone, and closing it is a terrible idea.”
- ☐ B “Good evening. I’m Gia, and I’m commenting on item 4, the proposal to turn off the court lights at 8 p.m.”
- ☐ C “You guys never listen to young people, so I hope tonight is different.”

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student’s first draft

Hi, my name is Gia and I have lived in this neighborhood my whole life. The park is really important to everyone and closing it is a terrible idea. I go there all the time with my friends and it’s one of the only free things to do around here. My friend works late and this is the only time she can play and **1** she’s been going through a lot at home. You guys never listen to young people. **2** Please don’t close the park.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Prepare the crew’s input on item 4 as a small community group. Write a two-minute spoken comment for the parks committee and a follow-up email to the full council, which receives the committee’s recommendation.

Use: Case documents: the parks committee agenda, the comment instructions, Gia’s three-page draft, the nearby resident’s comment and Mateo’s question. Real sources: the Seattle City Council public-comment page and research on who speaks at local meetings (Einstein, Palmer and Glick, 2018).

You’ll make: Spoken comment, 2 minutes (about 260 words), plus a follow-up email of 120—180 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Reread Evidence A and B. Note the item, the time limit and who decides after the committee.
- 2 Reread the resident’s comment in Evidence D. Plan one request that answers it.
- 3 Outline the comment: item, who you are, what you saw, why it matters and the request.
- 4 Write a spoken comment of two minutes or less on the Your draft page.
- 5 Read it aloud with a partner and a timer. Cut until it fits.
- 6 Start the follow-up email on the Your draft page. Finish it, 120 to 180 words, on lined paper.
- 7 Check both texts against the public-record checklist.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Who hears it, and who decides

Comment outline

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 25 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your comment name item 4 and fit in two minutes when read aloud?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your request respond to the resident's noise concern?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Is your email addressed to the full council, the body that decides?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Did you leave out addresses, phone numbers and anyone else's private story?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No facts.	☐ General claim about importance.	☐ One specific observation tied to the item.	☐ Observation plus acknowledgment of another perspective.
Reasoning	☐ Attacks the body.	☐ States a feeling only.	☐ Explains why the change matters.	☐ Weighs the concern and offers a middle path.
Audience & purpose	☐ Wrong body or no request.	☐ Request is vague.	☐ Names the item and a specific request.	☐ Request fits the body's remit and includes a follow-up.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Shortens only.	☐ Removes private details and adds a request.	☐ Explains each cut in terms of time, privacy and purpose.

One change I made after the timed reading

[illegible]

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames. About 10 minutes.

- 1** The parks committee cannot fix the bus problem. Who should get that question instead?

- 2** How could Gia's comment respond to the resident's concern about noise?

- 3** What does Gia get from speaking, even if the committee recommends turning off the lights?

- 4** Court users who work late may miss a 6 p.m. meeting. How could their views reach the committee?

My take

My claim: ____.

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 19: What should Gia say in her two-minute comment?

In this case, Gia gets two minutes at a parks committee meeting to speak about a plan to turn off the court lights. Your student helped cut her three-page draft into a short comment with one clear request.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Who makes decisions about parks and other public spaces in a town or city?
- 2 What makes a short request easy for a listener to remember?
- 3 Why might someone leave a friend's story out of a public comment?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 20: Can the crew post this image as true?

A realistic image says the campus courtyard flooded today, and Jordy must decide what the six o'clock recap can say about it.

On your own Read What happened and underline the caption's claim. About 4 minutes.



Lupa holds a cropped photo of a courtyard next to the full photo pinned on a board. The full photo also shows a blue doorway.

Your role: You're the one who writes the verification note Jordy posts at six. **New skill:** Confirm an image with independent sources.

What happened

It is Wednesday, 3:10 p.m. For twenty minutes, an image has been going around the group chat. It looks like a photo of the campus courtyard, with water over the paving and benches. The caption says, "Courtyard flooded today, stay away." It showed up at 2:48 p.m. with no link, no date and no name.

Jordy is putting together the crew's recap, which goes out at six. Sami has zoomed in on a hand in the picture, and the fingers seem to merge at the knuckles. Someone ran the image through a free online detector. It reported "12% likely AI-generated."

A reply in the chat says the writer's roommate's friend saw water near the library. Jordy checks the campus facilities alerts page. It shows no active alerts, but its last update was Monday morning.

Your question: Did the courtyard flood today, and what should the recap say about the image?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 4 minutes.

Provenance Provenance is information about where an image or a document came from and how it has been handled.

En español: procedencia

In this case: The courtyard image arrived at 2:48 p.m. with no link, no date and no named poster. Its provenance is unknown.

Corroboration Corroboration is support for a claim from an independent source.

En español: corroboración

In this case: A campus alert or someone's dated photo of the courtyard could corroborate the flood. A roommate's friend's report of water near the library cannot.

Verification note A verification note is a short record of what you checked, what you found and what is still unknown.

En español: nota de verificación

In this case: Instead of posting the image, the recap says what the crew checked, what it found and what is still unknown.

Who is involved



Sami

Checking where the image came from

"Everyone's zooming in on the hand. I did too, and it's weird. But I still don't know who posted this."



Jordy

Putting the six o'clock recap together

"The recap goes out at six. Right now I have an image with no source, a strange hand and an alerts page that hasn't updated since Monday."

Before you look at the evidence, do you think the courtyard flooded today?

[illegible]

Reading passage

Verification under deadline

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Provenance:** Provenance is information about where an image or a document came from and how it has been handled.
- **Corroboration:** Corroboration is support for a claim from an independent source.
- **Verification note:** A verification note is a short record of what you checked, what you found and what is still unknown.
- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Holding statement:** A holding statement is a short update that says what is known, what is still being checked and when people will hear more.
- **Correction:** A correction is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information.

The story: Four clues and no source

The casebook closes where it opened, with a piece of media in a group chat and a group deciding what to tell people. At 2:48 p.m. on a Wednesday, an image of the campus courtyard under water appears with the caption “Courtyard flooded today, stay away.” It carries no link, no date and no original poster. Jordy has until six to decide what the crew’s recap will say.

By 3:10, four signals have accumulated. Sami’s zoom shows a hand whose fingers seem to merge at the knuckles. A free detector reports “12% likely AI-generated.” A secondhand message says someone’s roommate’s friend saw water near the library. The campus facilities alerts page shows no active alerts, with a last update on Monday at 9:15 a.m.

The case is designed so that none of these signals resolves the question, and several tempt overinterpretation. Sami models the necessary shift. She acknowledges the anomaly she found and then sets it aside in favor of provenance. Who posted the image first, and when? Jordy models the editorial decision. Wanting a clean answer is not a reason to publish one. The recap will say what was checked and leave the image out.

Your role is to write the verification note Jordy posts at six.

❓ **Stop and think.** How does the absence of provenance change what the other clues can prove?

An evidentiary standard for images

Provenance is information about where an image or a document came from and how it has been handled. For images that claim to show a news event, provenance is the primary question, and it applies the Case 1 skill of finding the original source. Its absence here shifts the burden to corroboration.

The caption asserts a **claim**, a statement that something is true that can be checked with evidence. The available signals differ in kind. The hand anomaly is diagnostic of nothing on its own, since generated images can look natural and genuine photos can look odd. The detector's output lacks the error rates that would make it interpretable, and it addresses whether the image is synthetic rather than whether the event occurred. The secondhand report is attenuated in source and mismatched in location.

Corroboration is support for a claim from an independent source. The official source, Case 9's habit, is the alerts page, and its staleness means its silence is weak evidence. An independent, dated image or a same-day official notice would be probative.

The case's new skill is confirming an image with independent sources and publishing only what was verified. The chosen output is a **verification note**, a short record of what you checked, what you found and what is still unknown. It is the structural descendant of Case 1's **holding statement**, which says what is known, what is still being checked and when people will hear more. It commits the crew to Case 3's duty of **correction**, a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information, if later evidence changes the picture. Jordy's refusal to post the image "with a question mark" reflects a practical insight. Hedging language does not travel with an image, and the image is what spreads.

❓ **Stop and think.** Why does hedging language fail to travel with an image?

Technical limits and professional norms

NIST's overview of synthetic-content transparency surveys provenance metadata, labeling, watermarking and detection, and it emphasizes that each has technical limits (NIST, November 20, 2024). Perception offers no backstop. Nightingale and Farid found that people could not reliably distinguish AI-synthesized faces from real ones and rated synthetic faces as more trustworthy (PNAS, February 14, 2022).

Recent cases show the costs of skipping provenance.

Technical limits and professional norms, continued

The Hurricane Helene “girl and puppy” image had no identifiable photographer or outlet, and forensic analysis found inconsistencies such as a boat floor with impossible perspective (UC Berkeley School of Information, October 4, 2024). Local reporting documented how emotion outran verification (KPRC Click2Houston, October 9, 2024). In 2023, a fabricated image of an explosion near the Pentagon spread through verified accounts and briefly moved markets (NPR, May 22, 2023; CNN, May 22, 2023). Critics now warn that AI content is spreading confusion across feeds (PBS NewsHour, October 22, 2025).

Professional codes treat verification and transparency about uncertainty as obligations. RTDNA says journalism “acknowledges the absence of important additional information” (RTDNA Code of Ethics, June 11, 2015). SPJ holds that the public “is entitled to as much information as possible to judge the reliability and motivations of sources” (SPJ Code of Ethics, September 6, 2014). PRSA asks practitioners to “investigate the truthfulness and accuracy of information released on behalf of those represented” (PRSA Code of Ethics, October 2000). A verification note meets all three standards, even when its conclusion is “we cannot confirm this yet.”

❓ Stop and think. Across twenty cases, which earlier skill mattered most in this one, and why?

Sources

Real source | National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) | November 20, 2024

Reducing Risks Posed by Synthetic Content: An Overview of Technical Approaches to Digital Content Transparency

Real source | PNAS (Nightingale & Farid) | February 14, 2022

AI-synthesized faces are indistinguishable from real faces and more trustworthy

Real source | UC Berkeley School of Information | October 4, 2024

Hany Farid breaks down the viral Helene image

Real source | KPRC Click2Houston | October 9, 2024

Houstonians learn the cons of a viral AI-generated photo after Hurricane Helene

Real source | NPR | May 22, 2023

Fake viral images of an explosion at the Pentagon were probably created by AI

Real source | CNN | May 22, 2023

‘Verified’ Twitter accounts share fake image of ‘explosion’ near Pentagon, causing confusion

Real source | PBS NewsHour | October 22, 2025

AI content spreads confusion and misinformation, critics say

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document and write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 7 minutes.

Evidence A | **Group-chat post**

The courtyard image and its caption

Image, described: a photo-like view of the campus courtyard with water over the paving and benches. A person in the foreground holds up a phone. Caption: “Courtyard flooded today, stay away.” Shared Wednesday at 2:48 p.m. with no link, no date on the image and no original poster named.

Look closely: Underline what the caption claims. Circle what the post is missing.

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | **Screenshot**

Sami’s zoom-in on the hand

Zoomed screenshot of the foreground hand: the fingers seem to merge at the knuckles. Sami posted it in the crew chat on Wednesday at 3:02 p.m.

Look closely: What does the odd hand tell you? What can it not tell you?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Detector result

A score from a free online detector

“12% likely AI-generated.”

Look closely: What did the tool measure? Does it say anything about the flood?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence D | Web page

The campus facilities alerts page, checked at 3:10 p.m.

“No active alerts. Last update: Monday, 9:15 a.m. Scheduled elevator maintenance in Science Hall, completed.”

Look closely: When was this page last updated? Compare that with the caption’s claim.

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Key idea: provenance

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

Provenance is information about where an image or a document came from and how it has been handled. Check it first when an image claims to show a news event. An image can look polished and still be generated, edited, old or shared with the wrong caption. The courtyard image arrived with no link, no date and no named poster, so its provenance is unknown.

A detail or a tool can give a clue, but it cannot settle the question. An odd-looking hand is a reason to look closer. A natural-looking hand does not prove that an image is real, either. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) describes several ways to track, label, watermark and detect synthetic content, such as AI-generated images. NIST explains that each approach has technical limits.

For a claim about a real event, look for the earliest post, its date and place, and corroboration.

Corroboration is support for a claim from an independent source. Here, that could be a campus alert or someone's dated photo of the courtyard. If you cannot confirm the claim, write a verification note. A **verification note** is a short record of what you checked, what you found and what is still unknown.

Professional standards

Real source | Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA)

RTDNA Code of Ethics: Truth and accuracy above all

"Journalism verifies, provides relevant context, tells the rest of the story and acknowledges the absence of important additional information."

In plain words: The RTDNA code asks news staff to say what they checked and to admit what they still do not know.

Question: The facilities page shows no active alerts but was last updated Monday. What should Jordy's note say is still unknown?

Your answer

Still unknown: ____, because ____.

Real source | NPR | May 22, 2023

Fake viral images of an explosion at the Pentagon were probably created by AI

A realistic fake image spread fast and briefly moved markets before officials confirmed nothing happened.

Real source | CNN | May 22, 2023

‘Verified’ Twitter accounts share fake image of ‘explosion’ near Pentagon, causing confusion

A blue check was not proof: accounts that looked trustworthy still shared an image with no real source.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Sort the evidence

On your own Sort each piece of evidence under the claim it bears on and fill in each box. About 6 minutes.

Two claims are in play: the flood and the image. Sort each piece of evidence under the claim it actually bears on. What would settle either one?

Evidence	Claim 1 The courtyard flooded today.	Claim 2 The image was generated by AI.
1 The image shows water in a courtyard, with no date or source		
2 Facilities alerts page at 3:10 p.m.: no active alerts		
3 Secondhand report of water near the library		
4 An odd hand and a 12% detector score		

Still open

- The image’s earliest source and date

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what Jordy should do, explain why and fix the two marked phrases. About 5 minutes.

The recap goes out at six. What should Jordy do about the courtyard image?

- ☐ **A** Post the image with a question: “Is the courtyard flooded?”
- ☐ **B** Say the image is fake, because the hand looks wrong.
- ☐ **C** Leave the image out, report what the crew checked and say the flood is not confirmed.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Heads up everyone!! **1** The courtyard flooded today so don't go over there. Some people are saying the picture is AI because the hand looks weird but I ran it through a detector and it said 12% AI so it's basically real. My roommate also said her friend saw water near the library earlier, so that pretty much confirms it. Stay safe and **2** tell your friends, we don't want anyone getting hurt or ruining their shoes lol. We'll post more if we hear anything else about it.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write the verification note the crew posts instead of the image. Then write a memo recommending two changes to the campus facilities alerts page that would help students check rumors.

Use: Case documents: the courtyard image and caption, Sami’s zoom-in, the secondhand reply, the detector result and the campus facilities alerts page. Real sources: NIST’s overview of synthetic content and the News Literacy Project’s RumorGuard check, a model verification note.

You’ll make: Verification note, 50—80 words, plus a memo of 250—350 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1

Fill in the chain chart for the courtyard image: claim, earliest source, date, corroboration.
- 2

Write the verification note, 50 to 80 words, on the Your draft page.
- 3

List what the alerts page could not tell the crew on Wednesday.
- 4

Plan two changes the office that runs the page could make.
- 5

Draft the memo’s recommendations on the Your draft page.
- 6

Finish the memo, 250 to 350 words, on lined paper or in the online workspace.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Chain chart

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 25 minutes.

Verification note, 50 to 80 words

Memo: the two recommendations

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your note say what was checked and what is still open?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you treat the 12% score and the odd hand as clues, not proof?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your memo note the Monday 9:15 a.m. update?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Could the office make both changes you recommend?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Treats the image as proof.	☐ Cites a detector or a detail as a verdict.	☐ Checks the earliest source and an independent record.	☐ Checks several sources and names what each can't show.
Reasoning	☐ Declares real or fake with no basis.	☐ Hedges without explaining why.	☐ Matches confidence to evidence.	☐ Separates authenticity of the file from truth of the event.
Audience & purpose	☐ Urges spreading.	☐ Warns without guidance.	☐ Gives followers a safe next step.	☐ Gives a next step, a follow-up time and a way to contribute evidence.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Softens words only.	☐ Replaces the verdict with a verification note.	☐ Explains how each change protects followers and credibility.

I changed ___ because ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin dark border around the edges.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames. About 10 minutes.

1 What would you need beyond the image to support the caption's claim?

2 Do you agree with Jordy's choice to leave the image out of the recap, and why?

3 Who could be harmed if the crew called a real photo fake?

4 The alerts page shows nothing new since Monday. Does that prove the courtyard did not flood?

My take

My claim: ____.

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 20: Can the crew post this image as true?

In this case, a realistic image in a group chat claims that a campus courtyard flooded today. Your student checked where the image came from and wrote a short note that says what is known and what is not.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What would you check before you share a picture of breaking news?
- 2 Where does your town or school post official alerts?
- 3 Why can saying you are not sure yet be better than guessing?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Key terms

Academic credit Academic credit is credit toward a degree that a school gives for approved work, such as an internship.

En español: créditos académicos

Accountability Accountability is owning a mistake and doing what you said you would do to fix it.

En español: rendición de cuentas

ADA coordinator An ADA coordinator is the staff member a government names to handle disability access questions and complaints.

En español: coordinador de la ADA

Agenda item An agenda item is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business.

En español: punto del orden del día

Attribution Attribution is naming the person who made a work, such as a song, a photo or a video.

En español: atribución

Authority Authority is the power a person or group has to make or change a particular rule or decision.

En español: autoridad

Barrier A barrier is something that blocks or limits a person from taking part.

En español: barrera

Challenge A challenge is a formal request to remove or restrict a book or other library material.

En español: impugnación

Claim A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.

En español: afirmación

Compensation Compensation is all the pay and benefits a worker receives, including hourly rates, bonuses and overtime.

En español: compensación

Consent Consent is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person.

En español: consentimiento

Context Context is the information around an event or a quote that you need to understand what it means.

En español: contexto

Correction A correction is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information.

En español: corrección

Corroboration Corroboration is support for a claim from an independent source.

En español: corroboración

Criteria Criteria are the standards or reasons a group uses to make a decision.

En español: criterios

Decision-maker A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.

En español: quien toma la decisión

Disclosure A disclosure is a clear statement that tells people about a relationship or fact they would want to know.

En español: divulgación

Key terms, continued

Documentation Documentation is a record, such as a photo, a note or an email, that shows what was said or done and when.

En español: documentación

Education record An education record is a record directly about a student that a school or college keeps.

En español: expediente educativo

Eligibility Eligibility is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program.

En español: elegibilidad

Endorsement An endorsement is a message that shares someone's opinion or experience of a product to promote it.

En español: respaldo

Equal Pay Act The Equal Pay Act is a federal law from 1963 that requires equal pay for men and women who do equal work.

En español: Ley de Igualdad Salarial

Equity Equity is a way of sharing that adjusts for different needs so everyone gets a fair chance.

En español: equidad

Evaluation An evaluation is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure.

En español: evaluación

Expenditure An expenditure is money that a government or an organization spends.

En español: gasto

Fact pattern A fact pattern is the specific set of facts in a situation that a rule is applied to.

En español: conjunto de hechos

Fair Labor Standards Act The Fair Labor Standards Act is a federal law that sets minimum wage and overtime rules for most workers.

En español: Ley de Normas Justas de Trabajo

Fair use Fair use is a part of U.S. copyright law that allows some uses without permission, judged case by case with four factors.

En español: uso justo

FERPA FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, is a federal law about who can see student education records.

En español: FERPA (Ley de Derechos Educativos y Privacidad de la Familia)

FICA FICA is the federal payroll tax that funds Social Security and Medicare.

En español: FICA (Seguro Social y Medicare)

Framing Framing is choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward.

En español: encuadre

Gross pay Gross pay is the money you earn before any taxes or other deductions are taken out.

En español: salario bruto

Holding statement A holding statement is a short update that says what is known, what is still being checked and when people will hear more.

En español: comunicado provisional

Jurisdiction A jurisdiction is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority.

En español: jurisdicción

Key terms, continued

Learning goal A learning goal is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show.

En español: meta de aprendizaje

License A license is permission from a rights holder to use a work under specific terms.

En español: licencia

Local acceptance Local acceptance is the list of materials that your own city's recycling or compost program actually takes.

En español: materiales aceptados en tu ciudad

Material connection A material connection is a relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that viewers might not expect.

En español: conexión material

Net pay Net pay is the money left after taxes and other deductions, often called take-home pay.

En español: salario neto

Per-pupil amount A per-pupil amount is a total divided by the number of students, so that districts of different sizes can be compared.

En español: monto por estudiante

Precedent A precedent is an earlier court decision that judges use as a guide in similar later cases.

En español: precedente

Primary beneficiary test The primary beneficiary test is how the U.S. Department of Labor decides whether an intern at a for-profit company is an employee.

En español: prueba del beneficiario principal

Program access Program access is an ADA rule that a city's services, taken as a whole, must be usable by people with disabilities.

En español: acceso a los programas

Proposal A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.

En español: propuesta

Provenance Provenance is information about where an image or a document came from and how it has been handled.

En español: procedencia

Public record A public record is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments.

En español: registro público

Reasonable accommodation A reasonable accommodation is a change to a rule or practice that gives a person with a disability equal use of a place.

En español: acomodo razonable

Reconsideration policy A reconsideration policy is a library's written process for reviewing a challenge to a book.

En español: política de reconsideración

Registration Registration is signing up with your election office so that you are on the list of people who can vote.

En español: inscripción electoral

Remit A remit is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on.

En español: competencia

Key terms, continued

Reuse Reuse is using an item again instead of throwing it away after one use.

En español: reutilización

Revenue Revenue is money that comes into a government or an organization, such as taxes and grants.

En español: ingresos

Sample ballot A sample ballot is a preview of the contests and measures that will appear on your ballot.

En español: boleta de muestra

Selection criteria Selection criteria are the written standards a library uses to decide which materials to include.

En español: criterios de selección

Source reduction Source reduction is preventing waste before it is created, for example by buying less packaging.

En español: reducción en la fuente

Substantial disruption Substantial disruption is the standard from *Tinker v. Des Moines*: a public school may limit speech that would seriously disrupt school activities.

En español: alteración sustancial

Title VII Title VII is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It bans job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

En español: Título VII

Trade-off A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.

En español: compensación entre opciones

Verification note A verification note is a short record of what you checked, what you found and what is still unknown.

En español: nota de verificación

Voter guide A voter guide is a document that explains or recommends choices in an election.

En español: guía para votantes

Withholding Withholding is money an employer takes out of each paycheck to pay taxes or other costs for the worker.

En español: retención

My progress

After each case, write the date and your level for each skill: Beginning, Developing, Proficient or Advanced.

Case	Date	Evidence	Reasoning	Audience and purpose	Revision
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					

My progress, continued

Case	Date	Evidence	Reasoning	Audience and purpose	Revision
18					
19					
20					