

THE WHY FILES

Student reader

Follow twenty everyday situations through the evidence, the institution, and the question that still needs answering.

20 cases / 5 units

The Why Files · Case Notes · The Receipts · Save This · Make It · What Changed? · Behind the Case

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How to read a case

Begin with what you think is happening. Open the matching source set in The Receipts. Use Case Notes to record what the records change. The stories and practice documents are original fictional situations; external connections are labeled separately.

You do not need to agree with a rule to describe it accurately. You do not need to be certain about everything to identify a useful next question.

01 The clip cuts off right there

UNIT 1 / Before you run with it

The question underneath: source tracing and context

Malik opens a group-chat message about Friday's school dance. Above a seven-second clip, someone has written "Dance canceled??" The assistant principal can be heard beginning an announcement about canceling access, but the clip stops before explaining access to what. That unfinished sentence could affect rides, evening plans, and whether students decide to attend.

The screenshot proves that a cancellation claim is moving through the school community. It does not finish the speaker's sentence. Malik needs the full announcement before turning the caption into advice. Even a video of an actual speaker can leave out the words that make the speaker's meaning clear.

The principal's office announcement, dated September 18, says the east gym doors will be unavailable while their lock is repaired. It also says the dance remains scheduled for 7-10 p.m. and directs students to the main entrance. The activities office's calendar, updated that day, lists the same time, gym location, and entrance.

Those records answer the immediate planning question, but they leave other questions open. They do not reveal who cropped the clip, why it was cropped, or who has seen the correction. Malik's useful update should lead with the dance's status, include the entrance change, and identify the records classmates can check. A printed announcement can carry the same correction for students outside the chat.

Words in the case

Context

Information around a statement that helps show what it means.

Corroborate

Support a detail by checking it against another relevant record.

Scope

The particular people, events, or claims that evidence can address.

Read the evidence

Source A is evidence of a circulating claim, including the seven-second cutoff. Source B supplies the missing context and comes from the principal's office responsible for the announcement. The object of "canceling access" is the east gym doors, not the dance. That distinction changes the action students should take.

Source C corroborates the event time and main entrance in a separate activities-office record. Agreement strengthens the update, although the records may reflect the same underlying decision. Neither B nor C explains the edit in A. A correction should report what the school says, without accusing an unidentified person of deliberately misleading classmates.

Your next move

Write the update you would send before anyone changes plans. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

A cropped announcement says a tournament is “moving.” What original details would you need before telling a family to change travel plans?

02 Who made the dress-code rule?

UNIT 1 / Before you run with it

The question underneath: rule type and authority

Paloma has been told that her sweatshirt violates a school rule, but the adults explaining the rule do not give the same account. Before deciding which explanation applies, she needs to identify the written rule and who is allowed to make it. An adult's job title alone does not identify the source of a requirement.

The district handbook prohibits clothing displaying threats, targeted harassment, or content that materially disrupts instruction. It also permits principals to issue consistent school procedures. This creates a relationship between two levels of rules: a school procedure can explain local practice, while still having to fit the district policy.

The other two receipts concern hats, not Paloma's sweatshirt. The principal's procedure allows hats except during laboratory safety activities or when a teacher identifies a safety need. A classroom slide simply says no hats. Read together, these records raise a specific question: does the classroom expectation reflect an identified safety need, or is it broader than the school procedure?

The hat example helps Paloma map authority, but it cannot settle her sweatshirt situation. The receipts do not describe the sweatshirt's content or the reason it was challenged. Her map should show district policy, delegated principal procedures, and classroom implementation, with an unanswered question beside the teacher's blanket wording. Asking for clarification is more precise than declaring every adult right or every classroom expectation invalid.

Words in the case

Policy

A governing rule that sets requirements for an institution.

Delegated authority

Permission given by one decision-maker for another to make specified decisions.

Procedure

Directions for applying a policy in a particular setting.

Read the evidence

Source A establishes the district policy and delegates procedure-making to principals. Source B is the principal's school procedure within that arrangement. Its safety exceptions matter: a laboratory restriction and an all-day classroom ban do not automatically describe the same situation. Neither source is presented as state law.

Source C records a teacher's expectation, but supplies no safety explanation. That gap warrants a question, not a verdict about the teacher's authority. The original sweatshirt concern remains unresolved because the packet's detailed school and classroom rules address hats. A strong map separates what the documents authorize from what still needs case-specific facts.

Your next move

Build a Who Decides? map for the rule. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

If a club adviser sets a phone rule, which documents would help distinguish district requirements, school procedures, and club expectations?

03 Is “late” the same as “missing”?

UNIT 1 / Before you run with it

The question underneath: policy vs classroom rule

Students notice that two teachers handle late work differently. Soon, one classroom's practice is being described as the school's policy. That claim reaches beyond what anyone has shown. To check it, the class examines one essay's submission record, the relevant course syllabus, and the gradebook status rather than relying on comparisons between teachers.

The assignment log says the essay was due September 9 and submitted September 10 at 7:42 a.m. It also says the file opens successfully. These details support a narrow finding: an accessible file was submitted after the listed due date. They do not say what grade the essay deserves or whether the teacher has reviewed it.

The course syllabus says work submitted within 48 hours may receive feedback and up to full credit unless a specific deadline is marked final. “May” and “up to” matter. The rule creates an opportunity under stated conditions; it does not promise full credit for every late essay. The final-deadline exception also needs checking.

Meanwhile, the gradebook says “Missing” and has no score. The label and log may reflect different moments in a workflow. The class should sort the syllabus statement as a course rule, mark schoolwide claims as unestablished, and treat the record mismatch as a question for the teacher. A saved log or printed submission receipt can support that question without demanding an unsupported grade.

Words in the case

Timestamp

A recorded date and time attached to an event.

Exception

A stated condition under which a general rule works differently.

Status label

A system category describing a record at a particular moment.

Read the evidence

Source A provides a date, time, and working file; Source C provides the current gradebook label. The two records create a mismatch worth investigating, not proof that no work exists or that someone intentionally ignored it. A blank score also cannot be treated as a stated zero.

Source B supplies the grading rule for this course, subject to the final-deadline exception. Nothing in the packet establishes a schoolwide late-work policy. The due date and next-morning submission

are consistent with the 48-hour window, but students should still check the assignment's specific deadline conditions before claiming the general course provision controls the outcome.

Your next move

Sort each statement as course rule, school policy, or unknown. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

An upload receipt exists, but a club application still says incomplete. Which records would distinguish a missing file from an unmet application requirement?

04 Why did the absence become a problem?

UNIT 1 / Before you run with it

The question underneath: process and records

Jordan's family sends an email at 7:12 a.m. explaining that Jordan will miss school for a medical appointment. Later, the attendance portal still shows an unexcused absence. From the family's point of view, the school was notified before the school day. From the portal's point of view, a required report has not arrived.

The school attendance procedure names two reporting routes: an attendance form or a phone line, both with a 10 a.m. deadline. An email can contain accurate information and still arrive outside the workflow the attendance office checks. The packet does not identify the email's recipient or show whether anyone redirected it to the attendance process.

At 3:30 p.m., the portal includes a reason for the unexcused code: no attendance-line report was received. That note helps locate the break in the paper trail. It does not establish that the appointment was invented, that the family made no effort, or that the code can never change.

Tracing the problem means preserving the original email, checking where it went, and contacting the attendance office about the correction route. The procedure says supporting documentation may be requested for specified categories, so the family needs to ask what is required here. A paper timeline can record times, destinations, and responses. The goal is an accurate record, with confirmation that any accepted correction reached the portal.

Words in the case

Reporting channel

The designated route for sending a particular kind of information.

Documentation

Records used to support a request or establish an event.

Correction

A change that makes an existing record reflect an accepted finding.

Read the evidence

Source A establishes early notification by a family member but not completion of the required channel. Source B names the attendance form or phone line and the 10 a.m. timing. Comparing them reveals the relevant process question: where did the email go, and does that route satisfy or reach the attendance procedure?

Source C explains the current code at 3:30 p.m. Its wording is evidence about the attendance record, not about Jordan's character or the truth of the appointment. The packet does not specify

late-correction rules or guarantee acceptance of email. The attendance office must explain the available correction process and any applicable documentation requirement.

Your next move

Trace the paper trail from absence to correction. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

How would this method help when a permission form was sent but a team's participation list still says it is missing?

05 The ramp is open. Is the event accessible?

UNIT 2 / Read the fine print

The question underneath: access and barriers

An event can have a ramp and still be hard to reach. The opening situation includes an upstairs activity and elevator locked after 5. The practice receipts examine another part of that same access problem: whether an advertised entrance leads to a usable route inside a community center.

The flyer announces an open mic on Friday at 6 p.m. and identifies an accessible entrance on Oak Street. It does not tell them how the interior doors work, where the activity takes place, or whether every necessary part of the route remains available during the event.

At 5:35 p.m. on Friday, the route observation finds the Oak Street ramp clear. Beyond it, an interior door needs a 12-pound pull and has no automatic opener. That is a specific barrier a participant could encounter after successfully reaching the ramp. The observation does not establish that a staff arrangement or another route has been checked.

The center's notice names the event desk and accessibility coordinator as contacts for modifications or communication support. Revised arrival instructions should use those contacts to verify the whole trip, including any floor change relevant to the opening scenario. Until an arrangement is confirmed, the class should identify the unresolved barrier rather than promise assistance. A useful flyer explains the route and responsible contact; it does not make participants guess what “accessible” includes.

Words in the case

Access barrier

A feature or condition that makes participation harder or prevents it.

Route observation

A recorded check of conditions along a path at a stated time.

Modification

A change to an arrangement intended to make participation workable.

Read the evidence

Source A establishes the advertised entrance and event time. Source B tests one part of the route shortly before the event and documents a door barrier beyond a clear ramp. Their comparison shows why an entrance claim and a complete arrival experience are different. The observation does not verify elevator access or an alternative route.

Source C identifies responsible contacts but makes no promise about a particular accommodation already being arranged. Students can name the event desk or accessibility coordinator in revised

directions and ask for confirmation. They should not convert a contact notice into evidence that the door will be staffed, automatically opened, or bypassed at 6 p.m.

Your next move

Redesign the arrival instructions so they work for more people. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

What would you check along the full route before advertising a museum trip as accessible, from the drop-off point through the activity space?

06 Can everyone see my school records?

UNIT 2 / Read the fine print

The question underneath: privacy and education records

A family member asks to see a student's grades and discipline notes. The student looks at the portal and assumes that its permission settings settle every question about access. The receipts show why portal settings, privacy notices, and consent forms must be read separately.

The practice district notice describes general parent or guardian inspection rights for students who are not yet eligible students. It also says rights transfer at age 18 or attendance at postsecondary education, subject to FERPA. Applying that notice requires facts the scenario does not supply, including the student's status and the family member's relationship to the student.

The portal shows emergency-contact and attendance-alert permissions, but no grade-portal access. That screen records what the digital system is configured to allow. It is not a complete statement of all possible rights or release procedures. Being an emergency contact does not, from this screen alone, establish permission to open grades or discipline notes.

The optional consent form is blank and unchecked. Its text would authorize release of grades and attendance to the named person through June 30, 2027, if validly completed. It does not name discipline records. Mark those boundaries without deciding the family's actual access rights. Questions about a real request belong with the district's records or privacy contact, using the relevant student and requester information.

Words in the case

Consent

Permission for a stated action, within the conditions that accompany it.

Portal permission

A setting that controls what someone can access in a digital system.

Education record

A school-held record about a student, as described by the applicable rules.

Read the evidence

Source A describes a general rights framework with conditions. Source B describes configured portal access, while Source C describes one optional release with named categories and an end date. These are different records answering different questions. A portal denial alone does not determine what Source A might permit through another process.

Because Source C is blank and unchecked, it establishes no consent through this particular form. Even if completed, its wording covers grades and attendance, not every school record. The receipts

do not establish the requester's parent or guardian status or the student's eligibility status. Students should mark those gaps and ask the district records contact to apply the appropriate process.

Your next move

Mark what the provided form actually authorizes. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

A permission form allows sharing a club attendance list through December. What extra authorization would you need before sharing members' contact details in January?

07 The screenshot left the chat

UNIT 2 / Read the fine print

The question underneath: digital consent and documentation

A private joke has traveled beyond the group where it was shared. Students disagree about what “private” should have protected: who could see the original, who could save a copy, and who could send that copy elsewhere. The group description answers only part of those questions.

The club chat says it is for planning and tells members not to repost messages outside the chat without permission. That is an explicit group expectation. It gives members a basis for asking others to stop forwarding. It does not create a technical barrier that keeps a phone from taking a screenshot.

The screenshot record gives two times: a copy was created at 8:41 p.m., and a repost appeared in another group at 8:47 p.m. The six-minute sequence can help describe what happened. It does not identify the person who created or forwarded the image without additional device or account evidence. Naming a suspect from timing alone would add a new unsupported claim.

The school reporting page accepts reports of targeted harassment, threats, or repeated unwanted digital conduct. Whether this incident fits a category requires more context. A before-you-forward card should encourage checking permission and possible harm, avoiding unnecessary new copies, and using the student support route when appropriate. Saving the minimum relevant evidence for a report serves a different purpose from sending the joke to more classmates. Explain that distinction without promising absolute privacy.

Words in the case

Repost

Share content again, often with a different audience.

Metadata

Information about a digital item, such as its creation time.

Attribution

Connecting an action or statement to a particular source or person.

Read the evidence

Source A establishes a club rule about permission to repost, not a technical guarantee or legal judgment. Source B establishes sequence: creation at 8:41 and a different-group repost at 8:47. Timing is useful evidence, but it cannot by itself connect the screenshot to a particular student or prove motive.

Source C identifies a school reporting pathway and conduct categories. It does not declare that this joke meets any category. A careful decision card can use A for the forwarding choice and C for a support option, while keeping B's limits visible. A report should distinguish observed events, available records, and questions needing review.

Your next move

Create a “before you forward” decision card. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

How should a club handle a message that must reach an adviser for help when its group rule otherwise limits forwarding?

08 Is the recommendation actually an ad?

UNIT 2 / Read the fine print

The question underneath: creator literacy and sponsorship

A creator recommends a backpack as a favorite. A viewer could reasonably treat that first screen as a personal review and use it to decide whether to keep watching or buy the bag. The information that the company supplied the product appears only after opening “more,” where the disclosure says “gifted.”

The brand's email makes the arrangement clearer: it will send the backpack free, provide no payment, and leave posting optional. There is no evidence of a cash fee or a required positive review. There is evidence of a benefit from the company whose product appears in the recommendation. Both details matter.

The packet's FTC guidance summary says material connections can include free products and that disclosures should be clear and hard to miss. That principle helps explain why location matters. A disclosure can exist somewhere in a post while still being absent from the screen where viewers first encounter the endorsement.

Your editing task is to rewrite that opening screen so the relationship is understandable before viewers decide how much weight to give the recommendation. The creator can state that the backpack was free, no payment was made, and posting was optional. The sources do not settle the product's quality or a specific enforcement outcome. Clear disclosure lets viewers evaluate the recommendation with the relationship visible; it does not require deciding that every favorable opinion is false.

Words in the case

Endorsement

A message that expresses support for or recommends a product.

Material connection

A relationship or benefit that could affect how an audience weighs a recommendation.

Disclosure

A statement making a relevant relationship or fact visible to the audience.

Read the evidence

Source A shows the endorsement and the hidden placement of “gifted.” Source B explains the relationship behind it, including both the free product and the absence of payment or a posting requirement. Read together, they support a more informative first-screen statement without inventing a sponsorship fee or guaranteed opinion.

Source C supplies the advertising principle used in this practice case: free products can be material connections, and disclosure should be hard to miss. It does not decide whether a regulator would act on this specific post. The appropriate revision addresses visibility and clarity, while leaving product quality and any enforcement judgment outside the claim.

Your next move

Rewrite the first screen so the relationship is clear. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

How would you disclose a free restaurant meal in a short review when viewers may never open the caption?

09 Why does my feed keep showing this?

UNIT 3 / Find who's responsible

The question underneath: introductory algorithmic literacy

Two students search the same topic and receive different recommended videos. That difference raises a useful question about what the platform might know from earlier activity. It does not, by itself, reveal the exact reason one video appeared above another. A recommendation diary can make possible inputs visible without pretending to read the platform's formula.

Malik's practice log records five basketball-shoe clips watched to completion over two days, two likes, and a search for one brand. Those actions are observable signals. Watching to the end could reflect interest, curiosity, distraction, or something else. The log cannot directly measure Malik's private reasons or prove what he wants to see next.

The platform explainer lists categories that recommendations may use: viewing, likes, follows, searches, location and language settings, and information about similar users. It does not say how much each category counts. The comparison observation shows mostly general trending clips in a fresh logged-out browser, but several conditions changed together, including account state and available history.

For a 24-hour diary, record recommendation topics, time, account state, and relevant actions without collecting private message contents or classmates' histories. A paper chart can record observations from teacher-provided practice screenshots. Compare patterns cautiously, and name alternative explanations. A useful ending might identify viewing completion as a possible signal while explaining why this diary cannot establish that it caused a particular recommendation.

Words in the case

Signal

An observable input a system may use to make a decision.

Personalization

Adjusting information shown to an account using available information about it.

Controlled comparison

A comparison that holds conditions steady to examine a particular difference.

Read the evidence

Source A provides concrete interactions that fit signal categories in Source B: completed viewing, likes, and search. Their match supports a hypothesis that these activities could influence recommendations. The explainer's "may" leaves the actual inputs and their weights unresolved. Neither record exposes the ranking calculation for a specific clip.

Source C strengthens the possibility of personalization because its logged-out feed differs from the shoe-focused context. It is not a controlled test of one signal: account state, history, and potentially other conditions vary together. A diary should preserve those differences rather than label one of them the proven cause. The platform controls ranking; users can document patterns and consult its stated controls.

Your next move

Keep a 24-hour recommendation diary and identify possible signals. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

If you wanted to test whether language settings affect recommendations, which conditions would you try to hold steady and what would remain uncertain?

10 It looks real. What can the picture prove?

UNIT 3 / Find who's responsible

The question underneath: AI/synthetic media verification

An image of a flooded basketball court arrives without a source link or date. The practice image is described as a flooded playground, with a caption claiming it happened at the school today. Those labels may encourage an immediate warning, but the image's appearance alone cannot establish when or where the scene occurred.

The earliest-post trace changes the question. It finds the same image in a post from four months earlier by an account in another state. An account's location does not establish the photograph's location or identify the photographer. Still, the older appearance strongly challenges a caption presenting the image as evidence newly documenting today's event.

A school facilities notice issued today at 2:10 p.m. says fields are closed after rain, buildings remain open, and no flooding has been reported. This gives a current record from the office connected to site conditions. It does not guarantee that every corner was inspected or that no unreported puddle exists.

Your verification note should keep two questions separate: whether the caption is supported and whether the image itself is synthetic. The packet gives a strong reason to question the caption, but no conclusion about how the image was made. Save the earlier-post trace and facilities notice, then ask facilities staff about any specific current concern. Neither a dramatic image nor a limited notice proves conditions everywhere.

Words in the case

Provenance

The origin and history of an image or other piece of information.

Reverse-image trace

A search for other appearances of the same or a similar image.

Synthetic image

An image generated or constructed rather than simply captured as a photograph.

Read the evidence

Source A pairs a visual with a place-and-time claim but provides no provenance. Source B finds the same image four months earlier, undermining its use as fresh evidence of today's school conditions. B does not prove that the image was created in the other state or generated artificially; an account and an image can have different origins.

Source C adds a current, independently relevant facilities record: field closures, open buildings, and no reported flooding as of 2:10 p.m. That report narrows what can be said about the school, while leaving later or unreported conditions open. Taken together, B and C justify withholding the viral caption, not declaring all visible water impossible.

Your next move

Write a verification note that says what is known and unknown. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

A real photograph from last year is used to describe today's canceled game. How can you correct the caption without claiming the photograph is fake?

11 What does the school board actually do?

UNIT 3 / Find who's responsible

The question underneath: institutional roles

Students hear about a calendar change from their principal and decide the principal caused it. The starter tells us the district board approved the change. But the practice packet contains no calendar vote, announcement, or minutes. We must distinguish information supplied by the story from conclusions that these three documents can establish independently.

Lupa opens the board agenda. Adopting a budget and approving a superintendent recommendation sound different from receiving comments or hearing a facilities report. An agenda describes planned business. It does not show that every planned vote happened, that a proposal passed, or that a speaker's request became policy. Those questions require a later record.

Pauta uses the organization chart to trace the board, superintendent, and principals. The arrows describe reporting relationships. They help explain how a decision can travel through a district, but they do not list every power. A principal may communicate or implement a decision approved elsewhere. A familiar face is not necessarily the final decision maker.

Nexo checks the policy manual's contents. Governance, finance, instruction, student policy, and personnel are useful places to start searching. Contents headings cannot settle a particular calendar dispute. The crew's task is to match the decisions actually named in the packet to likely actors, marking where the match is direct and where a full policy or meeting record is still needed.

Words in the case

Agenda

A list of business planned for a meeting.

Oversight

Monitoring an organization and holding its leaders accountable.

Reporting structure

The relationships showing who answers to whom within an organization.

Read the evidence

Source A places budget adoption and approval of a superintendent recommendation on the board agenda. It also includes informational and public-comment items. Source B supplies the reporting structure behind those activities. Together they support a provisional role map, but an agenda is not a record of completed decisions and reporting lines are not a complete authority code.

Source C identifies policy areas through which the board governs. It is a search guide, not the policy text itself. None of the three proves who proposed the calendar change, how individual board

members voted, or what the principal said. Those facts need calendar records or the relevant adopted policy.

Your next move

Match each decision to the actor most likely to have authority. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

If a superintendent emails a new lunch schedule, what records would distinguish the person announcing it from the person authorized to approve it?

12 Did one complaint ban the book?

UNIT 3 / Find who's responsible

The question underneath: process stages and original records

A parent requests review of a library novel. Soon students hear that one complaint has banned the book. That statement packs several possible events into one word: someone objected, a review began, access changed, or a final removal occurred. Duda separates them before asking whether the rumor matches the documents.

The challenge form records one parent's request. It does not show the book leaving a shelf. A request can matter without being a decision. Lupa places the form at the beginning of a paper trail and leaves space for later records. Empty spaces are visible reminders that a reader should not invent steps merely to finish a timeline.

Pauta reads the reconsideration policy. A committee reviews a challenge, and the default is continued availability. The policy allows an interim restriction under specified criteria. That exception means the crew cannot promise that every challenged book always remains available. It also does not establish that anyone authorized an exception in this case.

The committee notice schedules a review meeting for October 12 and says no decision has been made. This is the latest stage documented in the practice packet, not a prediction of the outcome. Voz can prepare a careful update now while leaving the final-decision box unfilled. The next useful question concerns the committee's eventual record and who holds final authority under the complete policy.

Words in the case

Challenge

A request to reconsider whether or how material is available.

Interim

Temporary while a process is still underway.

Paper trail

Connected records that allow a person to trace actions and decisions.

Read the evidence

Source A establishes the request and its scope: one parent seeks review of a title. Source B explains what that request triggers, the default access rule, and a possible interim exception. Reading them together distinguishes an objection from an authorized change. The packet does not include evidence that the exception was invoked.

Source C adds the scheduled October 12 meeting and the statement that no decision has been made. Unlike completed minutes, a notice cannot establish what the committee later discussed or decided. None of these sources names the final decision maker beyond the committee's review role, so the complete policy remains necessary.

Your next move

Build the paper trail from complaint to final decision. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

How would the same stage-by-stage method help evaluate a rumor that a petition has already changed a school rule?

13 Who decided the park closes at dusk?

UNIT 4 / Put it to the test

The question underneath: local government and rule checking

The starter presents a park sign closing a basketball court at dusk and a city webpage listing 10 p.m. The document exercise supplies different evidence: a dusk sign, delegated authority in a city code, and a seasonal exception until 9 p.m. Lupa keeps the unprovided webpage separate from the available records.

The sign identifies the City Parks Department and states a dusk closing time. Pauta then reads the practice code, which allows the department to establish facility hours through posted rules. This connects an instruction on the ground to an authorizing rule. The code neither sets dusk closing universally nor identifies who selected this time.

Onda notices that the seasonal notice has several conditions. It concerns athletic fields with lighting, says they may remain open until 9 p.m., and ties that possibility to permitted programs. Lighting alone does not establish a permitted program. A basketball court is not automatically covered simply because someone calls it an athletic facility.

The crew can describe the sign and the exception accurately while asking whether the specific facility and activity qualify. They can also request the missing webpage's date, location coverage, and current status. A useful response gives readers a bounded claim and a practical contact, rather than treating every official-looking item as interchangeable or inventing a single closing time for all situations.

Words in the case

Delegated authority

Power assigned by one body to another to make specified decisions.

Operating hours

The times a facility is available for use.

Exception

A different rule that applies only when stated conditions are met.

Read the evidence

Source A establishes the posted instruction and issuing department. Source B explains the department's delegated power to set hours by posting rules. Together they connect the sign to an authority structure, but they do not prove when this sign was installed or whether another applicable notice supersedes it.

Source C supplies a conditional seasonal variation, not a universal later closing time. Its 9 p.m. limit differs from the starter's unprovided 10 p.m. webpage. No supplied source verifies that webpage or establishes a permit for the activity. Checking facility type, program status, and current notices is therefore necessary before claiming an exception applies.

Your next move

Decide what you can say now and what needs checking. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

If a recreation-center poster and registration page disagree about pool hours, what facts would help decide whether they describe different services or outdated information?

14 The bus stop moved

UNIT 4 / Put it to the test

The question underneath: public transportation and impact

The starter compares a twelve-minute detour on one route with a two-minute detour on another. The practice receipts do not document those travel times. Instead, they show a temporary stop relocation and a possible access barrier. The crew investigates unequal burdens without inventing measured delays.

The closure sign gives dates, September 25 through October 4, and directs riders to Pine at 8th. That answers where and when, but not how a person reaches the replacement stop. A route map places it 0.4 miles east and marks a curb ramp. For someone planning a trip, a symbol can look like a promise of access.

Onda compares that map with a rider report: construction fencing blocked the marked ramp at 4:20 p.m. The observation is specific enough to report usefully. It does not prove the ramp is always blocked, identify every affected rider, or show that transit staff already know. One observation can reveal a problem without being a survey.

Nexo maps possible consequences by mechanism. A wheelchair user or someone pushing a stroller may need the ramp; someone carrying groceries may face additional effort over the extra distance. These are plausible impacts to investigate, not testimony collected from those people. Voz prepares a report with the location, observation time, closure dates, and a request for a verified accessible route and responsible contact.

Words in the case

Accessibility

Whether people with different needs can use a place or service.

Relocation

A move from one place to another.

Field verification

Checking actual conditions rather than relying only on a record or map.

Read the evidence

Source A establishes the official temporary location and closure window. Source B adds distance and the map's ramp marking. They support trip planning but cannot establish the actual sidewalk condition. Neither source measures the starter's two-minute or twelve-minute delays, so those numbers should not appear as findings from this packet.

Source C supplies the observed obstruction at 4:20 p.m. It challenges an assumption that a mapped ramp is usable at all times, but does not prove continuous obstruction or prior agency awareness. The transit agency can receive the access report and identify who coordinates the stop and construction response; exact responsibility needs confirmation.

Your next move

Map who is affected differently and what information the agency needs. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

How could a school evaluate whether moving an entrance creates unequal burdens even when the new entrance appears nearby on a map?

15 Why did the total change at checkout?

UNIT 4 / Put it to the test

The question underneath: consumer math and disclosure

In the starter, a student has \$14.00 and an online cart reaches \$17.46 after tax and shipping. The packet is a separate checkout exercise about headphones: a \$19.99 member shelf price and a \$26.49 receipt. Those figures cannot be merged into one transaction. Both situations raise the same useful question: what conditions and additions separate an advertised price from a payable total?

Lupa reads beyond the large shelf number. The \$19.99 offer requires a free account. The promotion terms add that the shopper must sign in and identify \$24.99 as the regular price. Free account describes one condition's cost; it does not mean the merchandise is free, the tax disappears, or every shopper receives the discount automatically.

Duda separates two calculations. The receipt's merchandise amount exceeds the member price by \$5.00. Its \$1.50 tax then brings \$24.99 to \$26.49. Tax accounts for only part of the difference between the shelf number and the total. The receipt matches the regular merchandise price, but it does not tell us whether the shopper signed in.

Voz turns the investigation into a checklist usable before a purchase. Check the exact item, eligibility conditions, sign-in step, merchandise subtotal, added charges, and displayed total. Preserve the offer and ask the store about an unexplained mismatch. The sources support arithmetic and a question about the transaction; they do not settle whether the signage satisfied consumer law.

Words in the case

Conditional price

A price available only when specified requirements are met.

Subtotal

The amount before selected additions such as tax or shipping.

Disclosure

Information communicating terms, conditions, or charges to a customer.

Read the evidence

Source A advertises a conditional \$19.99 member price. Source C explains the sign-in condition and \$24.99 regular price. Reading both prevents treating the largest printed number as an unconditional offer. Neither source establishes whether this shopper created an account, signed in correctly, or met any other transaction-specific requirements.

Source B shows the actual merchandise charge, tax, and total. Its arithmetic is consistent: \$24.99 plus \$1.50 equals \$26.49. The \$5.00 merchandise difference matches the gap between regular and

member prices. That pattern supports asking whether the discount applied, not declaring that a cashier made an error or that the promotion was lawful.

Your next move

Make a “before you buy” checklist. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

How would your checklist change for a ticket advertised at one price but sold with a service fee and optional add-ons?

16 The free trial was not free forever

UNIT 4 / Put it to the test

The question underneath: subscriptions and consumer terms

A game subscription begins with a free trial, then a charge appears. The student remembers the word free more clearly than the renewal line. Duda asks a narrower question than whether the entire offer was free: what period had no charge, what happened afterward, and what action could prevent another charge? The answer depends on reading the terms as a timeline.

The practice signup screen pairs seven free days with a later price of \$9.99 per month until cancellation. Lupa highlights the duration, the amount, the repeating interval, and the stopping condition. Each detail changes a decision. Missing the monthly repetition can obscure the ongoing commitment.

The calendar and charge record place the start on September 1 and the \$9.99 charge on September 8. Those dates fit the seven-day transition described in the screen. A matching timeline does not prove what this student saw or understood. The packet supports a comparison of terms and events, not a complete account of the signup experience.

Pauta turns to the cancellation page. It describes stopping the next monthly charge by canceling before the next billing date. It says nothing here about refunding the charge already posted. Voz separates those two requests, checks the account's next billing date, and keeps a confirmation if cancellation is chosen. A reminder alone does not cancel a subscription.

Words in the case

Renewal

A service continuing into another paid period under its terms.

Recurring charge

A payment that repeats on an established schedule.

Cancellation confirmation

A record showing that a request to end service was completed.

Read the evidence

Source A provides the trial length, later monthly amount, and continuing-renewal condition, assuming that wording was accurately displayed at signup. Source B supplies a start and charge date consistent with those terms: September 1 to September 8. This agreement supports the timeline, but cannot establish what the student actually saw or authorized.

Source C explains how to avoid a future charge: cancel before the next billing date. It does not provide the exact account-specific next date, cancellation confirmation, or a refund policy. The

three sources therefore answer different questions about an offer, an event, and a future action; none alone settles every part of a billing dispute.

Your next move

Highlight the words that should affect a decision. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

How would you evaluate a storage app offering one free month if the cancellation screen says access continues until the paid period ends?

17 Why are they cutting the trees?

UNIT 5 / Take it public

The question underneath: environmental decisions and tradeoffs

The starter describes trees being removed during a stormwater-line repair. The three practice receipts document a different investigation: tree work beginning October 3, an arborist's risk assessment, and a replacement plan. No receipt identifies a stormwater project. The crew keeps the starter's explanation separate from documented reasons.

The parks notice says removal will occur across three blocks. It establishes planned action and a start date but does not identify each tree or explain the decision. Lupa resists filling that gap with the most visible explanation. An accurate notice can still leave questions about why and where.

The arborist assessment identifies twelve high-risk trees: eight scheduled for pruning and four for removal. Onda notices that high-risk does not mean all twelve will be cut down. The response differs within the assessed group. At the same time, the assessment is a technical basis, not a complete public explanation of every alternative, location, or effect on people using the blocks.

Nexo compares the replacement plan: six trees this fall and six next spring, selected for canopy and heat tolerance. Twelve new trees do not automatically provide twelve mature trees' shade right away. The supplied documents do not measure that timeline or explain how replacements relate to the four removals. Voz prepares questions that acknowledge risk, distinguish treatments, and investigate environmental consequences without assuming the plan erases every loss.

Words in the case

Arborist

A specialist who evaluates and cares for trees.

Canopy

The cover formed by tree branches and leaves.

Mitigation

An action intended to reduce or offset a harmful effect.

Read the evidence

Source A announces removal on three blocks beginning October 3, but gives no reason. Source B supplies a technical rationale and separates eight pruning treatments from four removals within twelve high-risk trees. It does not name the individual trees or demonstrate that all possible alternatives were assessed in the excerpt.

Source C describes twelve planned replacement plantings over two seasons and the species-selection goals. It does not prove those plantings have occurred, that they replace only

these four removals, or that equivalent shade will return immediately. No supplied record establishes the starter's stormwater explanation. The next inquiry should connect tree locations, treatment reasons, and replacement outcomes.

Your next move

Write three questions that separate environmental impact from rumor. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

If a school removes mature trees and promises new landscaping, what evidence would help compare immediate losses with expected benefits across several years?

18 Who gets to be “the neighborhood” in the story?

UNIT 5 / Take it public

The question underneath: representation and source selection

The starter describes a video calling a block dangerous while relying on police footage. The document exercise concerns a different story: an article celebrating a new plaza, supported by two quoted residents from new market-rate buildings. The video transcript is not supplied. Both examples raise representation questions, but their evidence must remain separate.

Lupa counts the actual sources in the article before debating its conclusion. Two residents may describe their own experiences accurately. Trouble arises when a broad phrase makes those experiences sound like a neighborhood-wide finding. The packet shows a narrow source selection, not that other residents disagree.

Onda reads the community profile, which describes differences in age, tenure, language, income, and length of residence. Those categories reveal possible gaps in the reporting plan. They do not assign opinions to people. A long-term renter might welcome the plaza; a new resident might raise concerns. The crew must ask.

Nexo finds possible contacts in the community-board testimony list: a tenant association, small business owner, youth sports group, accessibility advocate, and new resident. One listed speaker cannot represent everyone in a category. Voz builds a revised reporting plan with open questions about use, access, benefits, and costs, then narrows any headline to what the resulting evidence can support.

Words in the case

Representation

How a story includes and characterizes people and their experiences.

Tenure

Whether people own or rent their housing, in this profile context.

Tokenizing

Treating one person as a stand-in for an entire group.

Read the evidence

Source A establishes that the article quotes two residents, both from new market-rate buildings. It supports a critique of the breadth of source selection, but does not prove either account is false. Source B identifies demographic variation that can guide outreach; it cannot supply missing interviews or tell us any group's opinion.

Source C offers additional potential contacts through a testimony list, without providing their testimony or making them representative spokespeople. Together, the sources justify broadening reporting and narrowing unsupported collective language. They do not establish neighborhood consensus, universal opposition, or the claims made in the separate starter video. An editor controls revisions; residents supply experiences and evidence.

Your next move

Create a source-balance plan for a revised story. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

How would you investigate a school article claiming students love a new schedule if all quoted students belong to the same club?

19 What happens at public comment?

UNIT 5 / Take it public

The question underneath: public meeting basics

A student wants to speak about a park proposal but is unsure where public comment fits or what the meeting can accomplish. Voz checks the meeting documents to identify a suitable audience. The practice agenda identifies playground redesign as item 6 and places public comment before board discussion.

Pauta reads the comment rules before drafting. Speakers must sign up by 5 p.m. and have two minutes each. The class task asks for a sixty-second comment, which fits inside that limit. Neither the time limit nor the agenda promises a reply, vote, or adoption of the request.

The rules also state that the speaker's name and comment enter the public record. Students can discuss playground needs without adding unnecessary personal details. In class, a role-play can use a role label rather than treating the exercise as an actual public submission. The exercise practices informed participation without requiring personal disclosures.

Nexo traces authority. The advisory board recommends the design; the parks commissioner approves the final contract. Asking the board for a design recommendation matches its stated role. Demanding that it approve the contract does not. The packet contains no design drawing or accessibility assessment, so the student should frame any suggested feature as a request for consideration rather than a proven defect in the current plan.

Words in the case

Public comment

An opportunity for people to address a public body under its meeting procedures.

Advisory

Providing recommendations rather than holding every final decision power.

Public record

Recorded information about public business that may be accessible to others.

Read the evidence

Source A establishes the agenda topic and the placement of public comment before discussion. Source B supplies the sign-up deadline, speaking limit, and public-record implication. Together they help a student prepare participation, but they do not establish the exact sign-up method, guarantee a speaking slot, or promise an immediate response.

Source C separates an advisory design recommendation from final contract approval by the parks commissioner. This makes a request about the board's recommendation more appropriately directed

than a demand for contract approval. None of these sources describes the proposed playground design, so claims about missing features require additional evidence or must be clearly framed as questions.

Your next move

Write a 60-second comment with one request in scope. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

How would you revise the same request if your audience were the parks commissioner instead of the advisory board?

20 What would you change at school, and what can actually change it?

UNIT 5 / Take it public

The question underneath: student voice and informed agency

The crew wants an achievable, evidence-backed school change. The practice proposal gives them a concrete starting point: keep the library open until 6 p.m. three days a week. A specific proposal does not itself prove demand, affordability, staffing, or approval.

Lupa reads the staffing schedule: the librarian's contract ends at 4 p.m., after-school supervisors are available until 6 p.m., and a budget code permits hourly coverage with approval. These details identify options and constraints. They do not show that a supervisor has been assigned, that funds are sufficient, or that all library services can continue unchanged.

Pauta follows the decision map. Student council may recommend, the principal may approve a pilot within budget, and district operations approves a permanent staffing change. Nexa sees that a recommendation, a temporary trial, and a permanent arrangement are different decisions. A smaller decision may already be within the principal's authority.

Onda asks how the crew could learn who would use later hours and what barriers remain after the library opens. Voz shapes a short information brief separating the proposal, documented options, unknown costs, and needed approval. A costed pilot review is a possible next step without promising new hours or inventing demand.

Words in the case

Pilot

A limited trial used to learn before a broader commitment.

Feasibility

Whether a proposal can realistically work under its constraints.

Decision map

A record showing which actors can recommend, approve, or implement different actions.

Read the evidence

Source A states the desired hours and weekly frequency. It is evidence of a proposal, not evidence that students need it or that it has been approved. Source B identifies staffing times and a budget mechanism permitting hourly coverage with approval; it does not supply a cost, committed staff, or an available funding balance.

Source C assigns recommendation, pilot approval, and permanent staffing approval to different actors. Combining it with Source B supports approaching the principal about a possible pilot within budget. The packet does not justify skipping approval or asserting that a pilot is feasible. Demand, cost, supervision, and service information would strengthen the project.

Your next move

Complete a mini public-information project with sources and one realistic next step. Include one clear claim or question, at least two source references, one statement of uncertainty/scope, the person or office with relevant authority, and one realistic next step. A paper route must teach the same skill as any digital route.

Try the idea somewhere else

How could you apply this method to a request for a new after-school activity when student interest, supervision, space, and funding are still uncertain?