

# ACE Thinking Skills Chapter 3 Study Guide

## I. Evaluating Evidence and Source Reliability

The primary framework for assessing the credibility and reliability of a source is **RAVEN**, often expanded to **PRAVEN** to include Plausibility.

### A. The RAVEN/PRAVEN Framework

When asked to **assess the reliability** of a source, you **must use the words of the RAVEN/PRAVEN framework** in your sentences to earn the evaluation marks.

| Element                    | Focus (What is it?)                                                                                                                            | Application (How to use it?)                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Plausibility (P)</b>    | The likelihood of a claim being true based on <b>existing knowledge</b> , regardless of the source's reliability.                              | Use to assess if the content makes sense (e.g., if a claim about a fight is unplausible if the person has no marks or bruising).                                                  |
| <b>Reputation (R)</b>      | Does the source (author/organization) appear trustworthy or have a good standing (e.g., neurosurgeon, scientist, national advisory body)?.     | Identify the status and explain how it <b>enhances</b> or <b>decreases</b> reliability.                                                                                           |
| <b>Ability to See (A)</b>  | Is the account <b>firsthand (primary)</b> or <b>secondhand (secondary)</b> ? Could the person actually observe the event or its consequences?. | Assess if the source has <b>direct experience</b> or capacity to observe consequences (e.g., a neurosurgeon can see head injury consequences).                                    |
| <b>Vested Interest (V)</b> | Does the source have an opportunity to <b>gain something in return</b> (money, power, reputation) from the claim?.                             | Identify what the source stands to gain (e.g., an advisory body for installers has vested interest to downplay risks to their members' livelihood). (Distinct from general bias). |
| <b>Expertise (E)</b>       | Does the individual/organization have <b>relevant training, experience, knowledge, and skills</b> in the subject matter?.                      | Ensure the expertise is relevant to the specific topic (e.g., a teacher is not an expert in surgery). Relevant expertise <b>increases</b> reliability.                            |
| <b>Neutrality (N)</b>      | Is the outlook <b>impartial</b> ? Does the source avoid taking sides, or is it <b>biased</b> (only supporting one side)?.                      | If a source is biased in favor of a position (e.g., solid fuel heating), it is <b>not neutral</b> .                                                                               |

## B. Assessment Approach (Structure)

1. **Look at Both Sides:** Nothing is 100% reliable or 100% unreliable. You must analyze factors that **increase** reliability and factors that **decrease** reliability.
2. **Assess What Is There:** Focus on analyzing the evidence **as presented**; do not suggest how the source could be improved (e.g., by adding statistics).
3. **Use Full Sentences (What + How):** For each point, state the **"what"** (the specific feature from the source related to the RAVEN element) and the **"how"** (how that feature increases or decreases reliability).
4. **Match Marks to Points:** Use the number of marks indicated (e.g., 4 marks = 4 distinct points/sentences).

## II. Answering Argument Questions

### A. Identifying an Argument (Question 1)

An argument must contain a **persuasive conclusion** and **supporting material (premise)**.

- **If YES, it is an argument:**
  1. State it is an argument.
  2. **Identify the specific conclusion** (usually the final sentence). Example: "Our members should have no concerns about their work".
  3. Note that the conclusion is **supported by the preceding material**.
- **If NO, it is not an argument:**
  1. State it is not an argument.
  2. Explain that it is only **stating evidence/information** or explaining an action.
  3. Specify that it **lacks a persuasive conclusion**.

### B. Weakness and Inconsistency Questions

- **Weakness Strategy (Identify & Explain/Suggest):** Act as a "detective" to **"poke holes"** in the argument.
  - **Identify:** State the specific weakness (1 mark).
  - **Explain:** Detail *how* that weakness fails to support the claim (1 mark).
  - **Suggest:** If the command word is "suggest," you must generate the reason in your "own noggin". (e.g., Suggesting people donated brains because they were already experiencing symptoms).
- **Inconsistency Strategy:** State the specific claim in Source A and clearly detail how the claim in Source C presents an opposing or inconsistent view.

## III. Writing Short Arguments (Paper 2, Question 2)

The objective is to achieve **eight out of eight marks**, though the mark scheme has **11 total possible points**.

## A. Core Structure and Length

1. **Plan:** You are **advised to spend time planning your answer before you begin.**
2. **Length:** You will **need at least eight sentences** to cover all requirements and earn the marks.
3. **Conclusion:** The conclusion is **"super important"** and must be the **first sentence.**
4. **Scale of Four:** Use the "to what extent" answer by choosing one of the following: **strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, or strongly agree.** **"Somewhat"** answers are highly recommended as they allow for discussion of sources that lean both ways.
5. **Use Exact Words:** The conclusion must use the **exact words from the prompt.**

## B. Evidence Integration and Skills

1. **Everything Goes Back to a Source:** Question 2 requires using and evaluating sources; this is unlike Question 5.
2. **Use Many Sources:** Use **four or five sources** to earn the maximum source usage marks (two marks).
3. **Mandatory Evaluation: Evaluate every source used.** You **must use the words of the RAVEN/PRAVEN framework** to earn evaluation marks. Do not use all six letters for every source; **"pick the most important thing that supports your conclusion"**.
4. **Avoid Summarizing/Quoting: Never summarize or quote the source** because the grader already knows what the sources are. Focus on evaluation and using the evidence.
5. **Inferential Thinking:** Earn points by providing inferential thinking, usually structured as the **"because of what?"** that links the evidence back to your conclusion.
6. **Handling Challenges:** If a source **challenges** your main conclusion, use it to **counter-support** your claim, **attack its credibility** (evaluation), or **provide an alternate explanation.**
7. **Personal Thinking:** Try to include **one personal thinking** that is not from the sources and link it back to your main conclusion.

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**Mindset Tip:** Success requires **constant practice** (re-doing assignments and extra credit). The homework is designed to **over-prepare** you for the actual exam, and believing in yourself is key to overcoming the difficulty of the class.