

“Is it Common Knowledge?” Activity

Directions: Read each item below and decide, if you were to use the information in an essay, if the information needs to be cited or if it is “common knowledge” and does NOT need to be cited.

(Questions highlighted in **green** are common knowledge. Questions highlighted in **yellow** must have a citation.)

1. **The Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4.**
This is common knowledge in English speaking countries. The dates of any major holidays are also considered common knowledge.
2. **Water freezes at 32 Fahrenheit.**
Basic scientific facts are usually considered common knowledge.
3. **49% of male University students experience depression at some point of their college career.**
This is a statistic and found from a source, so it is not common knowledge.
4. **In the last thirty years, discussion has focused on the possible link between overhead power lines and cancer in children. Researchers have investigated whether a connection exists between the low magnetic fields produced by power lines and childhood leukemia, but the evidence remains inconclusive.**
This discusses what research has found and thus needs a citation.
5. **Earthquakes are common in Japan.**
Common weather in different regions would be considered common knowledge.
6. **Some scholars who work in international development believe that most poverty is caused by illiteracy.**
This is not information the average English speaker would know.
7. **Neil Armstrong was the first person to walk the moon.**
Information an individual is famous for doing is frequently considered common knowledge.
8. **The longest word in any of the major English language dictionaries is pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanokoniosis.**
Information that can be easily found in an encyclopedia is usually considered common knowledge.
9. **Global warming has become a concern of scientists all over the world; in response, many nations have sought to introduce policies to reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses.**
A common issue frequently discussed in the media is considered common knowledge.

10. Journalist Walter Rogers argues that former President Carter was actually a good president.
Opinions by someone usually need citation.