

How should an evaluator make judgements about the quality of research evidence from the social sciences?

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Parsimony: Never posit two causes when one will do.

Stuff your mother told you?

Swimming after lunch will make
you drown.

Drinking milk when you have a
cold will make you develop more
mucus.

Rule 1

**Check for congruence with
other knowledge**

Correct??



- Eating blessed thistle (*Cnicus benedictus*) can help nursing mothers produce more milk.
- Having your neck manipulated can improve your eyesight.
- For healthy living, an adult needs to drink a minimum of eight glasses of water a day.
- The brain is only plastic for certain kinds of information during specific 'critical periods', so the first three years of a child's life are decisive for later development and success in life.
- Exposure to 'enriched environments' in early childhood enhances the brain's capacity for learning.
- There are visual, auditory and haptic learners.

Rule 2

Be wary of your own intuitions!

Rule 3

Check that the source is authoritative.

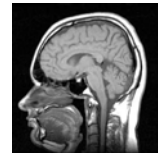
Rule 4

Look for dissent and criticism.

Money matters to check

Rule 5

How much did it cost?



Rule 6

Where does the funding for the research come from?

Rule 7

**Check that the research is
methodologically sound.**

Rule 8

**Extraordinary claims require
extraordinary proof.**

Rule 9

Always look for alternative explanations.

Summary

- Rule 1** Check for congruence with other knowledge.
- Rule 2** Be wary of your own intuitions!
- Rule 3** Check that the source is authoritative.
- Rule 4** Look for dissent and criticism.
- Rule 5** How much did it cost?
- Rule 6** Where does the research funding come from?
- Rule 7** Check that the research is methodologically sound.
- Rule 8** Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof.
- Rule 9** Always look for alternative explanations.

That's all folks!