

Boost Free Lessons - Year 10 English

Lesson 3: Features of Authority

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Worked Example 1

What gives the second version more authority?

A. Experts say screen time is harming teenagers' sleep.

B. A 2023 study of 1 400 Australian teenagers, published by the Sleep Health Foundation, found that those using screens after 10 pm slept 47 minutes less on average.

1. **Authority** comes from features a reader can check, not from confident wording.
2. Version A names no expert, no study and no measurement, so nothing can be traced.
3. Version B names the **source**, the **date**, the **sample size** and a **specific figure**.
4. It also states the finding precisely, so a reader knows exactly what was measured.

Version B names its source, date, sample size and a specific measurement, all of which can be checked.

Worked Example 2

Why does technical vocabulary create authority, and when does it fail?

The soil showed elevated salinity at depths below 400 millimetres.

1. Precise vocabulary signals that the writer works in the field and knows what to measure.
2. *Salinity* and *400 millimetres* are specific, so the claim is testable.
3. But technical language creates authority only when the audience can follow it.
4. For a general reader, unexplained jargon signals distance rather than expertise, and may hide weak reasoning.

Precise terms signal expertise and make claims testable, but for a general audience unexplained jargon obscures meaning rather than building trust.

Remember: Authority comes from **named sources**, **dates**, **specific measurements** and **precise vocabulary**. Phrases like *research shows* and *experts agree* imitate authority without supplying any.



Question 1: Write whether each claim has **strong** or **weak** features of authority.

1. Research shows this method works.

2. A 2022 trial of 300 students found a 14 per cent improvement.

3. Everyone knows the system is outdated.

4. The Bureau of Statistics recorded a 3.2 per cent rise in 2024.

5. Many people believe the changes were unnecessary.

6. Dr Anita Rao, who led the review, described the finding as unexpected.

7. Studies have proven the link beyond doubt.

8. The report, published in March, cites fourteen separate sources.



Question 2: Read the passage below, then answer the questions.

A 2024 report by the National Transport Institute found that 18 per cent of regional services ran late. It is widely accepted that funding is the cause. A survey of commuters supported this view. Improvements have been recommended.

1. Identify two features of authority in the passage.

2. Identify the weakest claim and explain why.

3. What would make the survey claim stronger?

4. Why does naming the funder of the research matter?

5. Rewrite the final sentence so it carries more authority.



Question 3: Answer the following questions.

1. Write a claim with strong features of authority.

2. Rewrite the same claim with those features removed.

3. Explain three features that give a claim authority.

4. Why is a source that names its own limitations often more trustworthy?





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Answers and Model Responses: Features of Authority**Question 1**

1. Weak
2. Strong
3. Weak
4. Strong
5. Weak
6. Strong
7. Weak
8. Strong

Question 2

1. Model: the named institution and the specific figure of 18 per cent.
2. Model: *it is widely accepted*, because it names nobody and cannot be checked.
3. Model: the sample size, the date, and who conducted it.
4. Model: An organisation that benefits from a particular result has an interest in finding it, which does not disprove the research but means it needs independent confirmation.
5. Model: A 2024 review by the state auditor found that three of the eleven recommendations had been implemented.

Question 3

1. Model response: A 2023 report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that 61 per cent of Year 10 students reported fewer than eight hours of sleep on school nights.
2. Model response: Reports show that most students do not get enough sleep.
3. A named source, a date, and a specific measurement. A stated sample size and method strengthen it further.
4. Naming limitations shows the writer is describing what the evidence actually supports rather than overstating it, which makes the rest more credible.

