

# Challenging the Reliability of a Claim

We often read in the newspaper where someone claims to have seen an unidentified flying object or a strange creature such as Bigfoot or the Loch Ness monster. Your first thought is to ask yourself 'How reliable is this newspaper?' or 'How reliable is the person who wrote this article?' Naturally we want some **proof** or **evidence** before believing them.

A good critical thinker would have some really useful questions that they would want the person making the claim to answer. Here is your chance to think about your questions for judging the reliability of a claim.

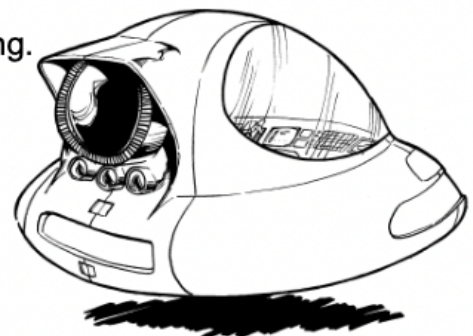
## Example

In a newspaper report a man claims to have seen a large, glowing unidentified flying object (UFO) that hovered over the ocean in front of his house. Which **three** of these facts would most help you, or anyone else, **believe** that his report could be true? **Circle** the letter in front of the **three facts** you choose. Why aren't the other observations useful?

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| a) The ocean was rough.                | e) He viewed it with his old binoculars. |
| b) He saw it for ten minutes.          | f) The friends next door saw it.         |
| c) There was a new moon.               | g) The man was 25 years of age.          |
| d) It was exactly 10 o'clock at night. |  |

### Answer:

- b), e) and f).
- a), d) and g) wouldn't help good or bad viewing.

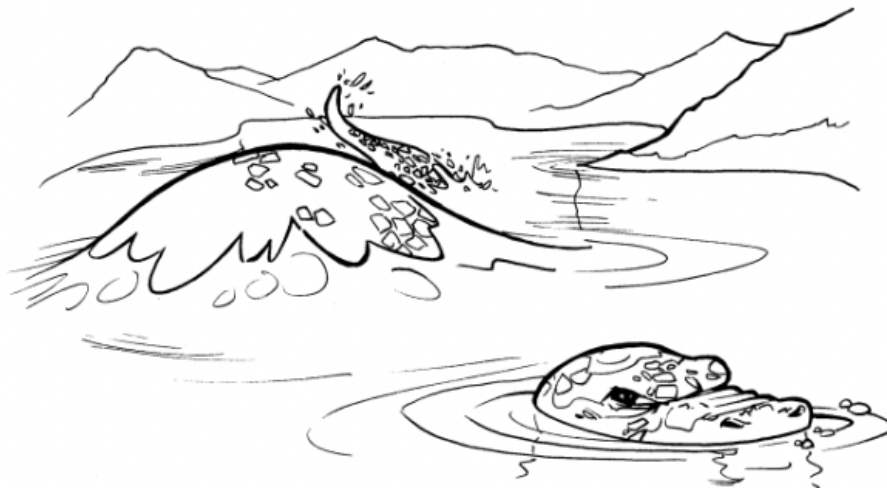


## Student worksheet

Write **Y** in front of the statements that **help** you to **believe** this claim.  
Write **N** in front of the statements that causes you to **doubt** that this claim is true.  
Write a **O** in front of the statements that **don't help** you judge this claim.

### Claim:

1. In 1960 Tor MacLeod claimed that he saw the Loch Ness monster through his binoculars.
2. The large grey mass was about one mile away on the opposite shore.
3. The loch is very deep.
4. The monster had three elephant-like trunks at the front.
5. MacLeod was not accompanied by any of his friends.
6. He had moved to the area to live because he wanted to view the monster before he died.
7. He viewed the monster for about eight minutes.
8. The weather was dull and overcast with the drizzle of rain on the loch.
9. He wore a new overcoat and hat to keep himself warm.
10. MacLeod phoned the newspaper immediately after sighting the monster.
11. The newspaper had just been taken over by a new owner.



## Student worksheet

1. Write **Y** in front of the statements that **help** you to **believe** this claim.  
Write **N** in front of the statements that causes you to **doubt** that this claim is true.  
Write a **O** in front of the statements that **don't help** you judge this claim .

### Claim:

1. On November 2, 1957 in Levelland, Texas, a family claimed to have seen a flying saucer.
2. It appeared on the ground, near their car at about 10 o'clock at night.
3. The car was a new one and in very good condition.
4. The family were on their way home after watching an airforce display during the day.
5. They watched the saucer for about five minutes.
6. Several hours later another person saw the saucer in the nearby town.
7. The family said that the engine of their car stopped as the saucer came near.
8. An electrical thunderstorm was in the area at the time of their viewing.
9. The father of the family called the editor of the local newspaper.
10. During the week the paper had run a series of articles on flying saucers.

## Useful questions to ask someone before DECIDING the RELIABILITY of a CLAIM

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