

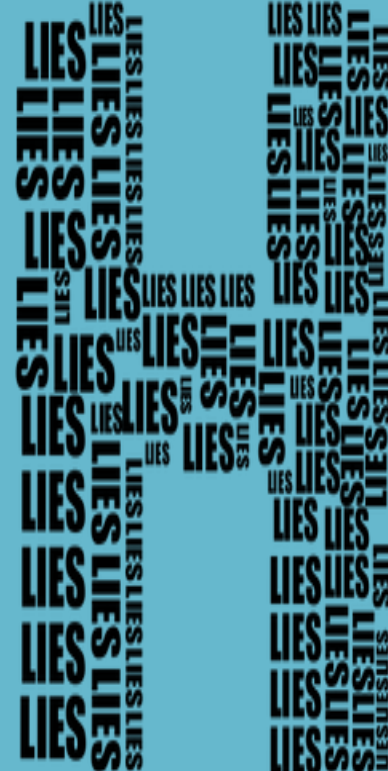
# Does truth exist?



Philosophy helps us deal with questions about what is and isn't true by encouraging us to look at the broader picture. It may not give us absolute truths but it helps us shine a light on how we think about what is and isn't true.

How do you determine what is true and what to believe?

**Are some published scientific studies more trustworthy than others? Journals have an impact factor based on the number of times its articles have been cited by other researchers. A higher impact factor should mean a higher trustworthiness of the study published.**



**One way to tell if a statistic is true is to review who is the author and who paid for the study? For instance, if you read that 80% of dentists recommend a type of toothpaste and have been paid for their review, would you trust this recommendation?**

Young children **start to lie** as they mature cognitively and socially.

Children learn to lie from about the age of two. The first lies children learn to tell are **denials of wrongdoing**. From the age of three they also learn to tell “white” lies. These are lies that are told to **benefit other people or to be polite**.





**Should the news be true?**

While it would clearly be unrealistic to expect journalists to challenge every statistical reference they encountered, in only 4.2% cases were statistical claims challenged. In other words, the vast majority of statistics reported in the news media were not verified either by journalists or external sources.

<https://explore.org/additional-resource/1085/1243#1243>

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a blue pen, poised to write on a document. The document features a bar chart with several bars of varying heights. The background is slightly blurred, showing a wooden desk surface.

## Question the connection!

Statistics is basically about probabilities. When working with probabilities, it's useful to understand the difference between dependent and independent events.

Dependent events are when one event influences the probability of another event happening. For example, winning the lottery is dependent on buying a lottery ticket. Independent events are when one has no effect on the probability of the other happening.

Correlation is when two events seem to follow the same pattern. For example, data records show that the amount of ice cream eaten in New York and the number of murders are positively correlated – as more ice cream is sold, more murders seem to occur! But just because there's this rather odd correlation doesn't mean that one caused the change in the other.

The results of a study conducted by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, showed that people were no better than chance in their explicit judgements of **who was telling the truth and who was lying**, but the measurements of their other behaviours showed significant differences. Specifically, for people who were actually lying, **observers were slower** to associate their faces with the word TRUTH or quicker to associate it with the word LIE.

<https://explore.org/additional-resource/1085/1277#1277>

**“No one is more hated than he who speaks the truth.”**

**–Plato, Greek Philosopher**



**Does truth depend on facts or  
perceptions?**

**How can you ever know if someone is  
being truthful?**

**In what ways have you learned the difference between what is true and what is false?**