

Appeal to Authority – Valid and Invalid

1. Flying saucers really exist! It said so in a magazine I saw on the checkout line at Safeway.
2. Advocates of the view that the earth is really flat are wrong. All scientists without exception agree that the earth is spherical.
3. From a newspaper: “Today, the United States and Britain bombed Iraq. It is clear that there were no civilian casualties. According to a western diplomatic source, only military targets were hit, and no civilians were killed or injured.”
4. From another newspaper: “Today, it was revealed that Turkish government forces committed major atrocities against Kurdish rebels in western Turkey, including such acts as the execution and torture of prisoners. The Foreign Minister of Turkey, in an interview, acknowledged that such atrocities had occurred and expressed regret about the incidents.”
5. In a recent controversy, Professor Gibbs admits that he accepted a \$10,000 “gift” from a student, and the next day, he increased the student’s grade to an A. Some say that Professor Gibbs was bribed by the student, but this is not true. I asked Professor Gibbs about the incident and he said that the student’s gift had no influence on the decision to increase the grade.
6. Several newspaper articles have accused the Central Intelligence Agency of participating in the marketing of heroin, cocaine, and other illegal narcotics. However, such reports are false. The CIA has flatly denied any such involvement. In his memoirs, former CIA director Alexander Harcourt-Smith states that the CIA never had any involvement, either directly or indirectly, in the narcotics trade.
7. The Colgate corporation claims that according to a major study, its toothpaste greatly reduces tooth decay. I looked into this and found that, indeed, a 1999 article in the *American Journal of Dentistry* found that Colgate toothpaste does reduce decay. After digging through the medical and dental journals I found that no one has challenged this journal article or contradicted its findings. So I conclude that the Colgate claim is essentially accurate.