

The Investigation Method

Six steps for testing any claim — about history, money, media, or power

Why You Need a Method

Every day, someone tells you what is true: a teacher, a textbook, a news anchor, an influencer, a politician, an algorithm. Some of them are right. Some are wrong. Some are telling part of the story.

You don't need to trust everyone, and you don't need to distrust everyone. You need a way to **test** what you hear.

We don't sell you a conclusion. We teach you how to investigate.

The Six Steps

Claim → Record → Mechanism → Beneficiary → Counterevidence → Conclusion

Step	The Question to Ask	What You're Looking For
1. Claim	What exactly is being said?	Put it in one clear sentence. Vague claims can't be tested.
2. Record	What evidence exists?	Original documents, data, recordings, firsthand accounts — not just someone's summary.
3. Mechanism	How would this actually work?	The steps, people, and rules that would make the claim true.
4. Beneficiary	Who gains if people believe it?	Money, power, votes, attention, or reputation.
5. Counterevidence	What evidence challenges it?	The strongest case <i>against</i> the claim, not the weakest.
6. Conclusion	What can we reasonably say?	What the evidence supports — and what is still uncertain.

The Two Mistakes This Prevents

Mistake #1: Blind Obedience	Mistake #2: Blind Rebellion
Believing the official story just because an authority said it	Believing an alternative story just because it sounds rebellious

Both are forms of intellectual dependence. One hands your mind to the institution. The other hands it to whoever sounds most against the institution. The method keeps your mind in your own hands.

A Worked Example

Let's run one common claim through all six steps.

Step	Applied
1. Claim	"The Civil War was mainly about states' rights."
2. Record	The Confederate states' own declarations explain why they left the Union. Mississippi's declaration says: "Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery." South Carolina's complains that Northern states were refusing to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act.
3. Mechanism	After the war, groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy worked to shape textbooks and public memory — making the "states' rights" version widespread.
4. Beneficiary	The version that minimizes slavery protected the reputation of the Confederacy and supported the racial order that followed it.
5. Counterevidence	People raise tariffs and regional economics, and point out that the Union's original war aim was preserving the Union, not ending slavery. Those are real parts of the story.
6. Conclusion	The secession documents themselves place slavery at the center. Other factors existed, but "mainly states' rights" does not match what the seceding states said at the time. Notice the irony: South Carolina was complaining that <i>Northern</i> states were using their own rights to resist returning people who had escaped slavery.

The method didn't tell you what to think. It showed you where to look — and the record did the rest.

Use It Everywhere

The same six steps work on any subject:

Subject	A Claim You Could Test
History	"That's just how things were back then."
Economics	"Anyone who works hard enough can get rich."
Media	"This video shows exactly what happened."
Advertising	"Nine out of ten experts recommend it."
Technology	"The algorithm made the decision."
Politics	"This policy will help everyone."

Your Checklist

Before you accept — or reject — any claim, ask:

1. What exactly is being said?
2. What is the original evidence?
3. How would it actually work?
4. Who benefits if I believe it?
5. What is the strongest evidence against it?
6. What can I honestly conclude?

Don't surrender your mind to the person with the loudest voice. Learn how to investigate.

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