



Eight Pitfalls of Biased Writing

As an independent research and analysis organization, CNA carefully guards against bias or the appearance of bias in all of our written products. To ensure our work is presented accurately, neutrally, and free of personal preconceptions, we train all of our analysts to maintain objectivity by avoiding the following eight pitfalls:

1

Politically biased language

As a nonpartisan organization, CNA is committed to making sure our work is free of political biases. When we discuss potentially controversial topics, we remain politically impartial and present information in a neutral way.

2

Presentation bias

We discuss data in a clear, unembellished way. For example, when we present statistics, we avoid using intensifiers (e.g., “a staggering 40 percent”). Such descriptive words are subjective, and they can create a false perception of the information.

3

Imprecision

In our writing, we avoid language that is ambiguous and open to misinterpretation. Rather than using vague words such as several or many, we use concrete facts and statistics drawn from authoritative sources.

4

Emotive language

Our work uses neutral language that is free of emotional appeals, stereotypes, or prejudices. We don't use provocative or emotional language to sway the reader's opinion; rather, we allow the reader to consider the arguments and evidence on their own merits.

5

Personal opinion

We base our work on facts and well-reasoned arguments. We thoroughly review the relevant data and ensure that preexisting beliefs do not influence the findings.

6

Hyperbole

We limit our claims to what the evidence supports within the scope of our research. We do not use exaggerations or absolutes to prove our points.

7

Misrepresented source

When we quote a source, we make sure to correctly convey the source author's intended meaning. We don't distort quotations to make them serve our purposes, and we avoid using overly short quotations that lack context.

8

Weasel words

Weasel words are phrases that sound meaningful but are actually vague. Examples include the phrases “many people say,” “it is generally thought,” and “researchers believe.” Instead of using phrases like this, we use concrete information from authoritative sources to make claims.