

## Detecting Bias or Slant

### 1. Look at the text as a whole

Has any claim or argument been left out that should have been there?

Which concepts are emphasized (usually by giving them textual prominence) and which concepts are de-emphasized (usually by being backgrounded)?

Is anything being taken for granted as if there were no alternative?

### 2. Look at individual sentences within the text.

Look at which information appears as grammatical subjects which could create a perspective influencing a reader's perception.

Who is doing what to whom? Certain texts may describe things or persons as consistently depicted as initiating actions (thus exerting power), while others are depicted as being passive recipients of those actions.

Does the author place certain things/persons as subjects (for emphasis) and other things as passive verbs (to make them seem weak)? *Massacre of 25 Villagers Reported or 25 Villagers Massacred*

Does the author take anything for granted? *We cannot continue imposing high taxes on the American people.*

Does the author/speaker use any insinuations, sly or suggestive comments that may have double meanings? The author can claim innocence, pretending to have only one of the meanings in mind, thus making the claim very difficult to challenge.

In response to a question about whether or not taxes will be raised, a politician says, "*Congress is not making any decisions to increase taxes.*"

### 3. Look at words and phrases in the text.

Are any negative connotations, labels, or metaphors used?

Gab or Speak	Illegal Alien or Undocumented Immigrant
Vagrant or Homeless	Tax or Revenue Enhancer
Infamous or Well-known	Bribe or Incentive
Liberal or Tolerant	Unpaid Time off or Vacation
Tattle-tale or Whistle Blower	Seize or Secure
Terrorist or Freedom Fighter	Forced Rest or Relaxation

How does the choice of words affect the text's level of formality or informality? Sometimes a writer may deceive readers by creating a phony register that may create a certain misplaced trust.

Look at the tone of the statements, especially as it relates to the degree of certainty and authority: *may, might, could, tend to, should, will, without a doubt, often, almost always*. Be careful of the "all or none" statements.

In a nutshell: Look for emotional responses, exaggerations, overgeneralizations, stereotypical comments, opinions stated as facts, imbalances or one-sided views, all of which could indicate bias.