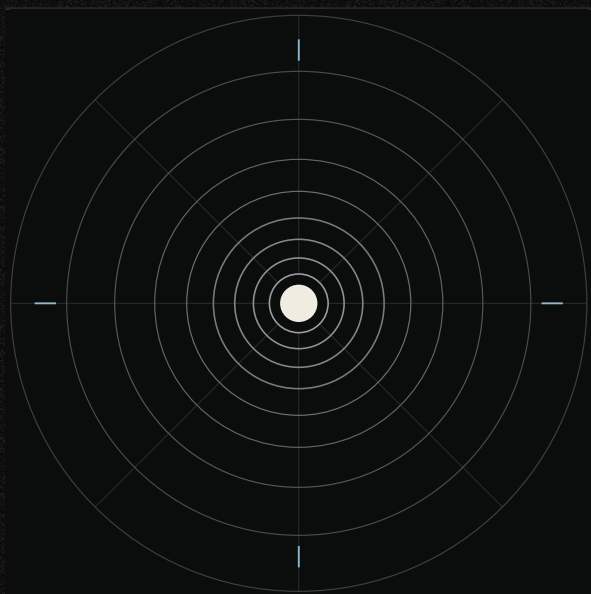


SAME WORLD. A CLEARER VIEW.

# A SHORT GUIDE TO FINDING OUT WHAT'S ACTUALLY TRUE

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Five minutes.  
One belief. A better question.  
A way to check.



# HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Take something you believe. Before defending it, ask where it came from. Something you saw? Something you were told? A conclusion you reached?

Each can be a useful starting point. But they give you different things to check. A familiar explanation deserves examination. So does an exciting new one.

**FINDING A WALL IS A START.  
NOW EXAMINE WHAT  
YOU THINK IT MEANS.**

## SEPARATE THE EVENT FROM THE EXPLANATION

**Observation:** At Monday's meeting, I made a suggestion. Nobody responded before the topic changed.

**Interpretation:** My colleagues do not respect me.

The interpretation might be right. The observation alone does not establish it. What would you need to learn before making that leap?

**TRY IT:** Write what happened in one sentence. Then write what you think it means in another.

The meeting is a fictional example used throughout this guide. Your own notes and memories can also be incomplete; check records when available.

# NAME THE CLAIM.

“They never listen” bundles several questions together. Which people? In what setting? What would listening look like?

Try a narrower claim: “My suggestions receive less discussion than comparable suggestions from colleagues during team meetings.”

Now you can look for a pattern. Define “discussion” before counting: a reply, a follow-up question, or time spent considering the idea. Include occasions that do not fit your impression.

# WHAT ELSE COULD EXPLAIN IT?

Before settling on a cause, write two plausible alternatives. For the meeting:

## **A / SELECTIVE DISMISSAL**

Your contributions are treated differently.

## **B / TIME PRESSURE**

Suggestions from several people are passed over when the meeting runs late.

## **C / UNCLEAR PROPOSAL**

People cannot tell what response or decision you are asking for.

These possibilities can overlap. Listing an alternative does not make it equally likely; it tells you what else to investigate.

# WHAT WOULD CHANGE YOUR MIND?

A useful check produces different expectations under different explanations.

**If time pressure matters:** other people's late suggestions should also be passed over.

**If clarity matters:** a specific proposal with a clear question may get a different response.

**If selective dismissal matters:** a difference may persist when timing and clarity are similar.

Compare similar occasions and ask for feedback. One response is a clue; several things may have changed at once.

**DECIDE WHAT WOULD COUNT AGAINST YOUR EXPLANATION BEFORE YOU GO LOOKING.**

# LET CONFIDENCE MOVE.

Use “uncertain,” “tentative,” or “well supported,” and write why. Move your confidence as the evidence changes. An unresolved cause does not erase the observation.

For outside claims, trace the original evidence and seek independent corroboration. Ten retellings are still one source. Check relevant expertise, methods, context, and limitations.

# CHECK ONE BELIEF.

Choose a small claim that matters to you. Spend ten minutes setting up the inquiry; gathering evidence may take longer. Use these prompts in a notebook.

## 1. STATE IT.

What exactly do I believe? How confident am I, and why?

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## 2. SORT THE EVIDENCE.

What did I observe? What was reported to me? What did I infer?

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## 3. OFFER ALTERNATIVES.

What are two other plausible explanations?

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## 4. NAME A DIFFERENCE.

What finding would favor one explanation over another? What would count against mine?

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## 5. CHOOSE ONE CHECK.

What record, source, question, or small test could help? When will I review the result?

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## 6. RETURN AND UPDATE.

What did I find? What changed? What remains unknown?

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Keep the original entry. A dated record lets you compare what you expected with what you actually found.

METHOD READING: NASA - scientific method  
Richard Feynman - Cargo Cult Science (1974)



# ANDREW VALENTINE

SYSTEMS FOR LIVING · TOOLS FOR THINKING · WORLDS FOR PLAY

I didn't write this because I've escaped anything. I wrote it because I keep finding walls I didn't know were there, and I'd rather compare notes than keep them to myself.

If this works, you'll need me **less** over time, not more. If I've got something wrong, I want to know.

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## FOUND A WALL?

Tell me what you found. I read these.

— *Andrew*

**Worth sending:** the assumption you questioned · what you discovered · something you disagree with · something you can't explain · an experiment you ran · a system you escaped — or one you built instead.



[andrewvalentine.net/wall](https://andrewvalentine.net/wall)

Scan to take one thing you consider normal and find the wall in it — ten minutes, guided. Or to write to me.

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**AndrewValentine.net**

@\_AVALENTINE

DONE READING? HAND IT TO SOMEONE.