Evidence Sort is an activity designed to help students sift pieces of information or ideas they find in texts as they prepare to make arguments. The sorting process is always the same, but the criteria for sorting move up a scale of sophistication, beginning with recognizing what is and is not evidence, and moving on to sorting evidence based on validity, relevance, and strength. The activity provides a teacher with formative assessments as students develop understanding of key EBA vocabulary.

To prepare for this activity, the teacher should provide a texts or texts containing evidence that could be used to support or oppose a claim. In order to speed up or scaffold the activity, a teacher may choose to create a list of pieces of evidence beforehand.

Individually or in pairs, students sort pieces of evidence (or evidence and claims) into 2 columns. A teacher could use charts with sticky notes, or packs of index cards, for the task, since these allow students to change their minds about where a piece of evidence belongs. It’s especially helpful for the ranking task (Skill 6). A teacher could use a sequence of Evidence Sort activities (See Step 1, 2, and 3) to refine evidence in preparation for a mini-debate, full debate, or writing activity. The final result of a thorough evidence sort is the “Golden List” of evidence that is valid and relevant to the claim.

Evidence Sort helps students build a sophisticated conceptual understanding of what evidence is and how to use it in crafting strong arguments.

| **Step** | **Teacher Move** | **Student Move** |
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| **1** | Before class, develop a claim and text or texts relating to the claim. Optional: create a list of statements or evidence, or a set of cards with evidence written on each. | Read text (s). |
| **2** | Review the concepts (claim/evidence/reasoning, valid/invalid, relevant/irrelevant), and models of evidence sorted correctly. |  |
| **3** | Briefly review the claim (proposal) and procedures. |  |
| **4** |  | Students work on the sorting task. |
| **5** |  | As an extension, students look at one another’s lists, to “compare notes” |
| **6** | Have the class consider some “judgment calls” – discuss reasons for placing a piece of evidence in one column or another. |  |