

Conspiracy Theory Analysis Tool

The following tool is intended to support the discernment process about conspiracy theories. There are ten questions, each with a number of responses that would lead a reasonable person to believe or disbelieve in a particular conspiracy.

Responses that are given using this tool will be biased according to the beliefs of the participant. For example, if you are a person who truly believes that Earth is flat, your score for that conspiracy will be different from someone who believes that Earth is round.

As such, this tool is subjective and should be used for evaluation and discernment purposes only. Scores should not be taken as a definitive basis for understanding the relative truth of a particular conspiracy. You are encouraged to complete the survey as objectively and honestly as possible.

Write down the story of your conspiracy theory on a separate sheet of paper and refer to it often to be sure you are answering each of the questions correctly.

Example: The moon landing was faked and filmed in a Hollywood studio.

Summarize the story of the conspiracy in a single sentence.	
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How extraordinary or shocking is the claim?	<p>The story would be received without surprise by a person who heard the story without observing evidence</p> <p>15</p>	<p>The story is surprising to a person who heard the story without observing evidence</p> <p>12</p>	<p>The story is very surprising to a person who heard the story without observing evidence</p> <p>8</p>	<p>The story is enormously stunning to a person who heard the story without observing evidence</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Don't know or Not applicable</p> <p>10</p>
How much publicly available evidence is there in support of the story?	<p>There is a great deal of evidence in the public record, such as unedited videos and photos, reliable eyewitness accounts, or other physical evidence.</p> <p>20</p>	<p>There are multiple pieces of evidence, such as photographs, videos, or eyewitness accounts.</p> <p>17</p>	<p>There are a few observations of abnormalities by a small number of witnesses or skeptics.</p> <p>8</p>	<p>There is no physical evidence, and there are no eyewitness accounts to support the story.</p> <p>5</p>	<p>There is a great deal of physical, photographic, and eyewitness evidence on the public record that contradicts the story.</p> <p>0</p>
How plausible is the motive of the planners and participants in the conspiracy?	<p>Plausible motives for the conspiracy can be reasonably discerned using common sense.</p> <p>15</p>	<p>Plausible motives for the conspiracy are difficult to discern using common sense.</p> <p>8</p>	<p>Plausible motives for the conspiracy can be reasonably discerned using common sense, but these are no longer plausible given the passage of time.</p> <p>8</p>	<p>Plausible motives for the conspiracy are impossible to discern using common sense.</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Don't know or Not applicable</p> <p>10</p>
Would a witness or participant of good conscience become a whistleblower or keep the secret?	<p>A person of good conscience would likely keep the secret because it would protect the public in a discernible way (i.e., prevent a panic).</p> <p>15</p>	<p>A person of good conscience would not be concerned about the truth being revealed, because the story is inconsequential.</p> <p>10</p>	<p>A person of good conscience would be a whistleblower because maintaining the story would cause some harm to some people.</p> <p>7</p>	<p>A person of good conscience would urgently reveal the truth about the story as keeping the secret would cause significant harm to large numbers of people.</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Don't know or Not applicable</p> <p>10</p>

What do the experts say about the story?	The vast majority of experts in the relevant field believe that the story is true. 20	A small majority of experts in the relevant field believe that the story is true. 13	An equal number of experts in the relevant field believe the story is true and false, or have no opinion. 10	A small majority of experts in the relevant field believe that the story is false 5	The vast majority of experts in the relevant field believe that the story is false. 0
Do the storytellers have a vested interest in believing that the story is real?	Storytellers would likely prefer to believe that the story is false (i.e., whistleblowers calling out their own political party). 20	Storytellers have no discernable ulterior motive for believing that the story is real. 12	Storytellers may have an ulterior motive for believing that the story is real. 8	Storytellers have an obvious motive involving personal self-interest for believing that the story is real, such as an accusation against a political opponent. 5	Don't know or Not applicable 10
Is there an alternative, simpler explanation for the event than the story?	The story is the simplest, most logical explanation for the event. 15	The story is complex, but simpler explanations are difficult to imagine. 12	The story is complex and simpler explanations are not difficult to imagine. 8	The story is incredibly complex, and many simpler explanations could easily be found. 5	Don't know or Not applicable 10
If the story has remained largely secret from the public, how many secret-keepers would have to be involved in order for the story to remain hidden?	A very small number that could sit around a table and plan together would need to be involved in order to implement this event and maintain the story. 15	The story did not remain secret from the public and it is widely reported as factual. 15	A small organization, such as a single business or a few small agencies, would need to be involved in order to implement this event and maintain the story. 12	A large but connected organization, such as people from multiple levels of a single government, would need to be involved in order to implement this event and maintain the story. 5	A very large number of people who have not interacted with each other would have to be involved in order to implement this event and maintain this story. 0

How much speculation is needed in order to fill in the gaps in evidence?	Little speculation is needed to fill in gaps, as the evidence is strong. 15	Some speculation is needed because there are gaps in the evidence. 12	Significant speculation is needed to complete the story because there is little concrete evidence. 8	There is so little evidence that the entire story appears to be invented. 5	Don't know or Not applicable 10
How has the passage of time impacted how this story is perceived?	The conspiracy happened a long time ago, and many additional facts have come to light supporting the story. 15	The conspiracy happened recently, and most experts believe that the conspiracy is true. 13	The conspiracy happened a long time ago, and no new information has come to light to support or contradict the story. 10	The conspiracy happened recently, and it is already clear to experts that the conspiracy is false. 7	The conspiracy happened a long time ago, and many additional facts have come to light contradicting the story. 5

Scores:

Once you receive your score, check it with the chart below to analyze the likelihood of your conspiracy theory based on the input you gave.

Warning: These scores (this assessment) are based solely on your input. It is good to do this survey with someone who might disagree with you, where you together can assess the answers to individual questions.

Scorecard

Between 150 and 160	This story is almost certainly true and is likely taught as fact throughout the world.
Between 130 and 150	This story has a strong likelihood of being true.
Between 110 and 130	This story may be true but may lack enough evidence to be certain
Between 110 and 90	It is difficult to tell whether this story is true or false
Between 90 and 70	This story is likely false but may lack enough evidence to be certain
Between 70 and 50	This story is very likely false, and caution should be exercised.
Between 50 and 35	This story is extraordinarily unlikely, and belief in this story may lead to a significantly skewed perception of reality.