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| Title | **How I Know - Part One** |
| **Due Date** | **Part One due Saturday** |
| Where to Post | Click on "New Post" button above and type your response in the space provided below.  Click Save. |
| Subject | Your Name / How I Know |
| Points | 5 (5 points each for Parts One and Two totalling 10 points) |
| Criteria | * On time, posted in the correct forum, correct subject line. Correct grammar, spelling, and usage * For Part 1, demonstrates that you have considered the assignment, done some research and clearly communicated your conclusion * For Part 2, thoughtfully considers the question and identifies how you know what you know |
| Objective | Use Google to research the answer to a question. |

#### **Step One:**

Read the essay in the text below called, "Theories of Knowing."

#### **Theories of Knowing**

How we know what we know" is the most critical question you encounter in doing research.

Research is a search for truth. It doesn't matter whether you are trying to find a cure for cancer, to develop a new theory about the nature of the universe or to write a paper to meet a requirement for a class. These are all searches for truth and they should be taken equally seriously and carried out through the same careful and objective examination of evidence. It may be that only you and your teacher will ever see your undergraduate research. Perhaps it won't shake the world, but properly done this work may have life-shaking impact on you. About 45 years ago I wrote a high school English paper on the Mormon trek to Utah. What I learned about Mormonism and the LDS (Latter Day Saints) Church has enriched my knowledge of American history and my relationship with Mormons ever since.

With that introduction in mind, let me give you the essence of what I have distilled, over my life, into a personal theory of how we know what we know. It has four parts:

1. What we truly know.

There are certain things that we know because we experienced them first hand. For example I know my name, my house, my family, I know that I am a citizen of Washington and America, I know that Boston, Manhattan, Atlanta, Berlin and Paris exist because I have visited them or lived in them, though I can't be sure how they have changed since I last visited. This first part of what we know is a tiny part of our existence.

2. What we think we know.

These are things that we know because someone else has "told" us about them. The telling may be oral, as when a friend tells us about a trip she took, visual, as when this same friend shows us a picture of the entrance door of the Prado Museum which she says she visited in Madrid, or textual, as in all the books and articles and Web sites we read. What we think we know is a huge part of our existence. It is the foundation of much of what is called education, and it is the area where we have to be constantly on guard in our search for truth. Our friend tells us about a trip to Madrid. Did she actually go there or is she a pirate looking for Treasure Island and is using Madrid for a cover story? Is that really the entrance to the Prado or the door to a pornographic movie palace in Copenhagen? Did our friend visit the Prado or buy the picture but really just hang out for the summer on a beach at Golden Gardens?

It is very easy to push this sort of skepticism to the point of silliness, but we all know people who like to glamorize their lives a bit or who spend a certain amount of energy keeping a part of their lives secret. Perhaps each of us has a little bit of those characteristics within us. This issue turns serious when we are engaged in a conscious search for truth. If I am writing a research paper on Spanish art and want to include a picture of the Prado, then I want to be certain that the picture I have in my hand is a picture of that museum. How can I be sure? One way is to fly to Madrid and take a picture myself, hoping that the Spaniard who guides me or tells me how to get to the museum knows what he's talking about and is not pulling my leg.

Am I beginning to sound paranoid? A little paranoia is a good thing when you are examining second hand evidence, which is most of the evidence that we encounter in education and undergraduate research. We don't have the time and money to run all over the world confirming all the big and little facts that show up in our information sources, so we have to maintain some trust in the authors; but how do we establish trust? This is too complex a topic to cover in this mini-lecture, but we will continue to ask the question and look at techniques for establishing reliability as the quarter goes along.

3. What we know we don't know.

This is an even larger but more comfortable part of existence. I know I don't know Urdu, the language spoken in much of Pakistan. I know that I don't know abstract algebra, or whether the country of Benin has a parliament, or what kind of trees grow in on the island of Luzon. The list of what I know that I don't know could grow very large. It is a comfortable list because what I know I don't know I can work on learning. By knowing that I don't know, I can also be alert to dangers. If I am hiking in eastern Washington and know that I am in an area where there are rattlesnakes, I am more likely to check to see whether there is a snake resting in the shade of that rock I am about to sit on.

Some people think of each human spirit and consciousness as a "cosmic egg." As we learn, our cosmic egg expands. After a while the egg "cracks" and our awareness of the world expands, sometimes dramatically. The key to expanding our cosmic egg is in knowing what we don't know, because that allows us to choose the direction in which we will learn. This third element in my epistemology is the key to research.

4. What we don't know we don't know.

The scope of this part of existence is immeasurable. We would have to call it infinite. This is the part of our lives that is the most dangerous, the most frustrating, but perhaps the most enriching. We've all had the experience of walking into a familiar room or down a familiar street and running into something that wasn't supposed to be there. I was once a marathon runner who did much of his training at night on the Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle. One night I ran into the shadow under a bridge which I had passed under hundreds of times before. Half way under the bridge I tripped and fell flat on my face on an asphalt surface that wasn't supposed to be there. When I got up and stopped swearing I discovered that the city was paving the trail and the workers had stopped for the day right under the bridge, without leaving any sign or light, of course. I didn't know about the paving, so I didn't know I should be careful, so I didn't know about the four-inch sill of asphalt that my foot encountered instead of the emptiness that was there before.

What we don't know we don't know is not directly helpful in education and research. If we don't know we don't know something, we can't do anything about it. The richness of what we don't know we don't know is that it constantly gives us surprises, many of them pleasant. In your readings about research you will occasionally run into the word "serendipity." Serendipity is those good things we find that we were not looking for. For example, when you are looking for magazine articles for your Pathfinder, maybe you will, quite by accident, come upon an article that has nothing to do with the Pathfinder but opens a door in your favorite interest or hobby, or starts you toward the answer to some health problem that has been troubling you or a family member. The possibilities are endless.

I hope I haven't totally confused you with this trip into my personal theory of what I know. The most important thing in your own theory is to be aware of the dangers of what you think you know. When it comes to doing research, there are creatures lurking in that area that will jump right out and bite you on the ankle (or, most likely, higher up) and cause endless trouble with teachers, friends, lovers, colleagues and bosses. What is worse, if you don't examine and deal with them they can keep you from the riches that education and truth can bring to your life.

#### **Step Two:**

Go to [Google](http://www.google.com/) and search the following words: origin word Canuck (do not put the words in quotes, just type them as I have).Examine as few or as many Web sites as you like to find the origin of the word "canuck".

#### **Step Three:**

Go to the Discussion Forum and submit a ONE (1) SENTENCE answer to the question, "What is the most likely origin of the word "Canuck?" (Do not confuse the **definition** of a word with its **origin**!) You will not receive any points for this assignment if you write a definition instead of an origin. You will not receive any points if you say the origin is "unknown." Come up with a LIKELY origin.

#### **Step Four:**

Below your one sentence answer as to the origin of the word "Canuck," write a paragraph explaining what led you to your conclusion and note how certain you are of your answer. How certain are you of your answer?

#### **Step Five:**

Please post your assignment below.  **(YOU WILL POST YOUR RESPONSES TO YOUR CLASSMATES' WORK IN PART TWO.)**