

5 Ways to Keep Bias Out of Your Investigations



An investigator's job is to come to an objective conclusion about something that has occurred. By examining evidence and interviewing involved parties, an investigator's task is to find the truth.

Unfortunately, it's not always that simple and staying impartial can be challenging. And investigators who don't recognize the potential for bias in their investigations risk coming to incorrect conclusions that can be devastating for those involved.

The more we understand our own biases, and the potential we all have to be influenced by them, the better equipped we are to prevent biases from impacting our decisions.

Here are five steps investigators should take to ensure impartiality.



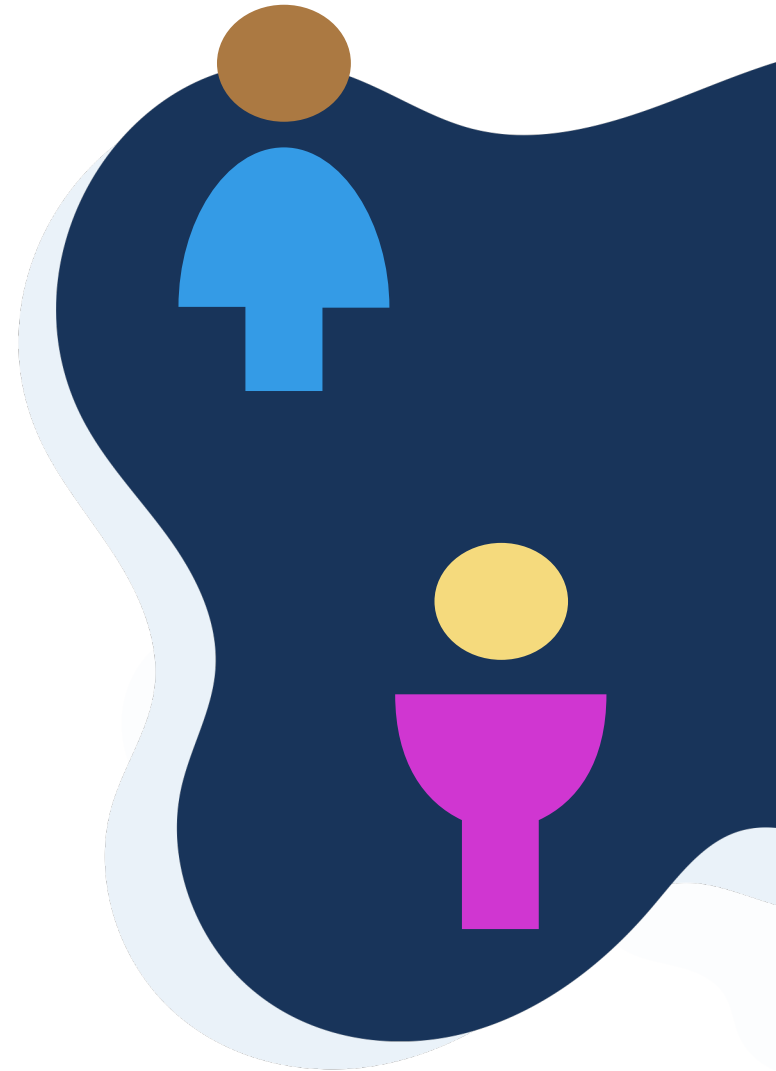
Recognize that We All Have Biases

Studies have shown that people who know they have biases and admit them show less implicit bias. In other words, don't trust your gut.



Identify Situations in Which Biases May Affect Interactions

Preferences and stereotypes can affect the way we interact with people, especially during investigation interviews.





Reduce Confirmation Bias

It's common for investigators to bolster a hypothesis by unconsciously looking for evidence in favor of the hypothesis while minimizing any evidence that refutes it. In the same way, an investigator could try to justify a decision by looking for evidence or information that confirms his or her initial opinion.

One way to reduce this bias is by listing out the reasons the initial hypothesis might be wrong, forcing you to consider all the evidence.



Combat Memory Bias

People forget, especially if there is a large time gap, significant thought or subsequent discussion about the same subject. Thinking or talking about a subject can influence your memory of it.

Take notes during interviews and refer back to them to ensure you aren't assigning importance to what was a minor detail in the original discussion.



Practice Empathy

Imagine yourself in the other person's shoes. Concentrate on treating everyone the way you would want to be treated. Ask open-ended questions and listen without judging.



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