

# How to Build an Evidence Trail

A practical method for connecting claims, sources, evidence and judgements.





# What Is an evidence trail?

*A clear chain connects a claim to the evidence, judgement and action.*

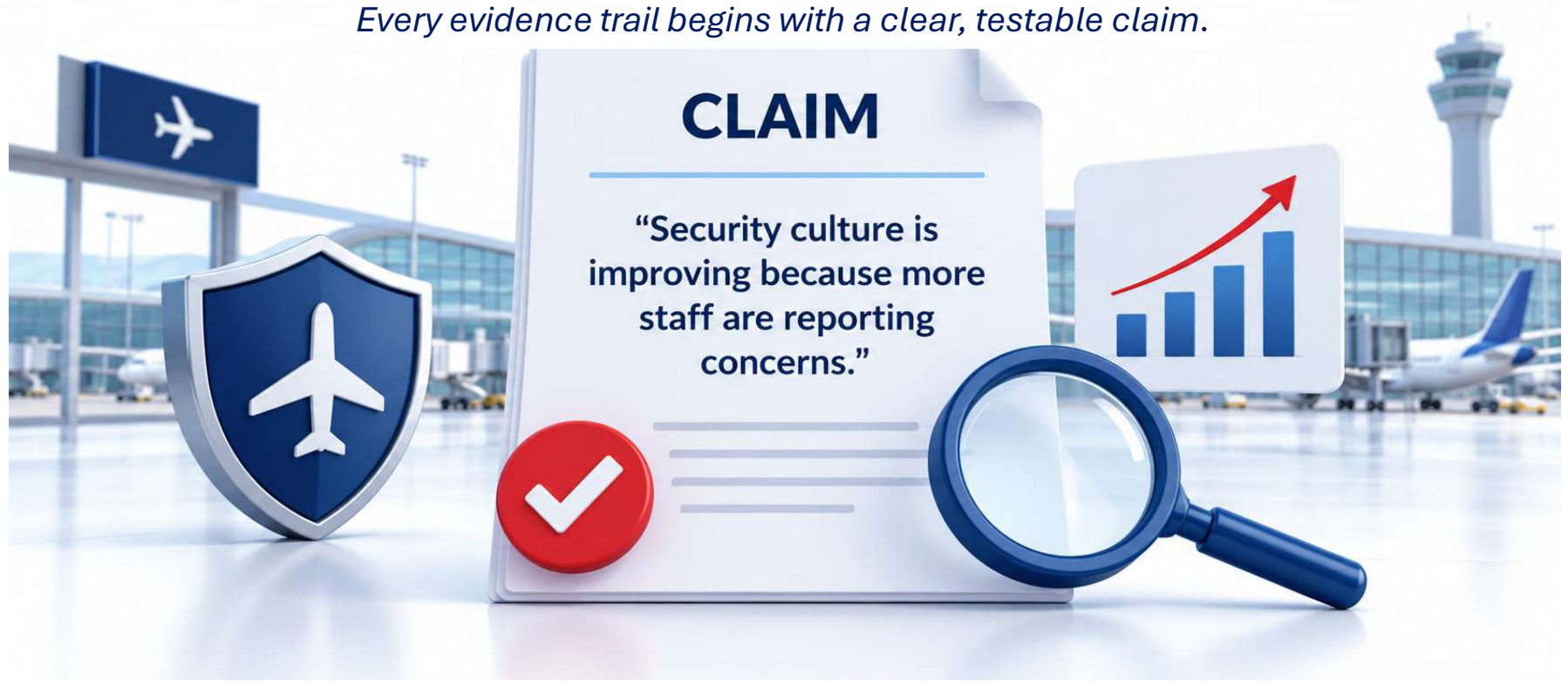
An evidence trail records how a researcher moves from information to a reasoned judgement.





# Start with the claim

*Every evidence trail begins with a clear, testable claim.*



# Define what must be established

*Break the claim into questions that can be tested with evidence.*





# Capture the original source

*Preserve the source before it is edited, moved or lost.*



For professional discussion and reflection • Illustrative, not exhaustive • Apply alongside appropriate organisational risk, evidence and decision-making processes



# Build the source record

*Record where the information came from, when it was accessed and why it matters.*





# Extract the relevant evidence

*Capture the exact evidence and the context needed to understand it.*

**AVIATION SECURITY THREAT REPORT**  
GLOBAL TRENDS 2024

**27%**  
Unruly passenger incidents increased by 27% in 2024 compared with 2023.

**RESEARCH LOG**

| Date | Source | Key evidence | Notes |
|------|--------|--------------|-------|
|      |        |              |       |
|      |        |              |       |
|      |        |              |       |
|      |        |              |       |
|      |        |              |       |

- 1. Executive summary
- 2. Threat environment
- 3. Incident data
- 4. Regional analysis
- 5. Mitigation measures
- 6. Outlook

**Exact statistic or statement**  
"Unruly passenger incidents increased by 27% in 2024 compared with 2023."

**Page, paragraph or timestamp**  
Page 14, paragraph 2.

**What it directly shows**  
A 27% increase in unruly passenger incidents in 2024 compared with 2023.

**What it does not show**  
The causes, severity, or regional distribution of the incidents.

**Important qualifications**  
Covers reported incidents only; may be affected by changes in reporting.

**INCIDENTS**



# Separate evidence levels

*Distinguish what is directly supported from interpretation and assumption.*



# Link evidence to the claim

*Show how each piece of evidence supports, challenges or qualifies the claim.*



For professional discussion and reflection • Illustrative, not exhaustive • Apply alongside appropriate organisational risk, evidence and decision-making processes

# Add independent sources

*Test the claim against relevant evidence from different sources.*



**X**

Repeated copies of one source do not count as independent confirmation.



# Record contradictions and gaps

A balanced evidence trail records evidence that does not fit the claim.



For professional discussion and reflection • Illustrative, not exhaustive • Apply alongside appropriate organisational risk, evidence and decision-making processes

# Assess the strength of the trail

*A strong evidence trail is relevant, reliable, current, sufficient, independent and consistent.*



# Record the judgement

*State what the evidence supports, what remains uncertain and what action is reasonable.*





# The evidence trail checklist

*A good evidence trail allows another person to follow, test and understand the judgement.*

- ✓ Original source preserved
- ✓ Evidence extracted
- ✓ Sources linked to the claim
- ✓ Fact separated from interpretation
- ✓ Independent evidence considered
- ✓ Contradictions and gaps recorded
- ✓ Confidence and limitations stated
- ✓ Judgement proportionate to evidence

**Follow it. Test it. Understand it.**