

HOW TO BECOME A PSEUDOSKEPTIC

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It is very easy to become a pseudoskeptic. I know of many individual success stories. Don't worry: if I don't quite agree with your methods, that by itself doesn't imply you're not much of a scientist. You might even have won a Nobel Prize.

Healthy skepticism plays an important role in science. A constructive criticism may point out in which aspects the proof of a newly published claim is not convincing. An attempt will then be made to solve the issue, but of course the issue may also turn out to be unsolvable: the claim then has to be retracted. Eventually, science advances by terminating degenerating research programs and adopting the views laid down in the progressive ones.

The difference between a skeptic and a pseudoskeptic is that skeptics are merely out to argue that a newly published claim is not yet proven to be true, while pseudoskeptics are merely out to discredit someone else's work by claiming that the work is false or contains gross errors without providing the proof that these claims require.

Here is how to become a **pseudoskeptic**. The first and foremost lesson is that you must understand that pseudoskepticism is easy and pleasant. It does not require the hard work of actually understanding or even reading the targeted work: it suffices to have hearsay knowledge of it, but surely reading title and abstract of the targeted work is enough!

The second lesson that you must understand as a pseudoskeptic is that in order to discredit a work or its author, it only matters *that* an attack finds place: the actual scientific content of your arguments is irrelevant. It doesn't even matter if your expertise is actually limited to another research field or if you only have an administrative position like rector.

The next lesson is writing your attack. As a general method, simply start making up things that would please you if they indeed could be said of the targeted work or its author, don't bother to check these for accuracy, ignore all academic ethics, and write these fabrications down. If your academic position is so strong that you can get away with anything, then don't hold yourself back: think of big words such as '*charlatan*', '*incompetent*', '*utter nonsense*', '*complete rubbish*'—you have impunity, so what the hell! Be creative. Just don't be afraid of lowering the standards of discussion: it is an illusion to think that such standards exist anyway. If you are willing to invest some time in a (very) superficial reading, the sheer brutality of the following tactic might yield good results: just put forward—*without proof!*—a strong claim that is false but that, if true, indeed would be a reason to discard the targeted work immediately. For example, simply claim that a theory is mathematically bogus without bothering to check it. This is especially effective if you have at least a PhD in mathematics: who would dare to question your finding? One would actually have to read the targeted work to disprove your claim!

Now that you have written your attack, you are ready to advertise it. If you are an authority, the easiest way to is to contact a journalist of a widely read newspaper or a popular science journal—if you are an administrator, you can even have your spokesperson do it for you in the name of your university! In case you stumble on a journalist or editor who actually has some integrity left and starts to ask ugly questions about your motivation, don't bother: just go to another media outlet. For the pseudoskeptic, a pleasant feature of nowadays society is that there will always be somebody who is willing to publish your comment, regardless of its contents. If you aren't an authority with a university affiliation, the internet is the perfect outlet for your attack. It even gives you the opportunity to place your attack *anonymously*, which means that you can deceive the public with impunity! Use that opportunity! For maximum effect, start a Wikipedia page: everybody who googles keywords of the new theory or its author, is then immediately referred to your work. Make sure that the page has a negative tone, and—important!—carefully guard further developments. You must act as if the negative tone is neutral: if the page changes towards the *real* neutral, immediately place the NPOV-sign that you dispute the neutrality of the page.

When you have published your attack, you may discover that there are quite a few pseudoskeptics like you, who agree with you that the targeted work must be put in its place and that any further research has to be halted: the pleasant result of publicly discrediting someone else's work is the pack effect—a first attack, even when blatantly unscientific, will cause colleague-pseudoskeptics everywhere to crawl from under their rock and join the pack! Nothing beats that group feeling!

And now for the final lesson: do **not ever** give in. Never ever admit to any wrongdoing, not even in the face of conclusive evidence to the contrary. Never retract anything. Persist! If your attack has been debunked, simply produce a new one!

If you expect that this is the way to go in science, you are the true champion of this web page.

For understandable reasons, I decided to refrain from listing names of people in academic circles who succeeded to gain the title of 'pseudoskeptic', or to make too overt allusions. This article was inspired by the activities of real existing people, but doesn't refer to one single existing person.