Quiz: Common knowledge vs. needs citation

In academic writing, the concept of “common knowledge” refers to information that the average educated reader would accept without needing the validation of a source.

To be considered common knowledge, a concept should be widely known, undisputed and easily verified. Common knowledge does not include interpretations, data gathered in empirical studies, or arguments, and generally cannot be attributed to a specific person or paper.

Take a look at the quiz below. Which questions do you think are common knowledge? Which need a citation?

Quiz:

1. Independence Day in the United States is celebrated on July 4.
   a. Common knowledge
   b. Needs citation

2. Nairobi is the capital of Kenya.
   a. Common knowledge
   b. Needs citation

3. According to the CDC, “the timing, severity and length of the flu season varies from one season to another.”
   a. Common knowledge
   b. Needs citation

4. The Great Wall of China is the world's longest wall.
   a. Common knowledge
   b. Needs citation

5. The monarch is the only butterfly known to make a round-trip migration, a phenomenon usually observed in birds.
   a. Common knowledge
   b. Needs citation

6. Approximately 46 million turkeys are eaten each Thanksgiving.
   a. Common knowledge
   b. Needs citation

7. Augustus was the first emperor of Rome.
   a. Common knowledge
   b. Needs citation

8. 97 percent or more of actively publishing climate scientists agree that climate change is real.
   a. Common knowledge
   b. Needs citation

9. World War I ended with the Treaty of Versailles.
   a. Common knowledge
   b. Needs citation

10. The human skeleton has 206 bones.
    a. Common knowledge
    b. Needs citation
Answer key:

1. Common knowledge
2. Common knowledge
3. Quote, needs citation
4. Common knowledge
5. Not universally known, needs citation
6. Not universally known, needs citation
7. Common knowledge
8. Uses a statistic gathered from a study, needs a citation
9. Common knowledge
10. Common knowledge