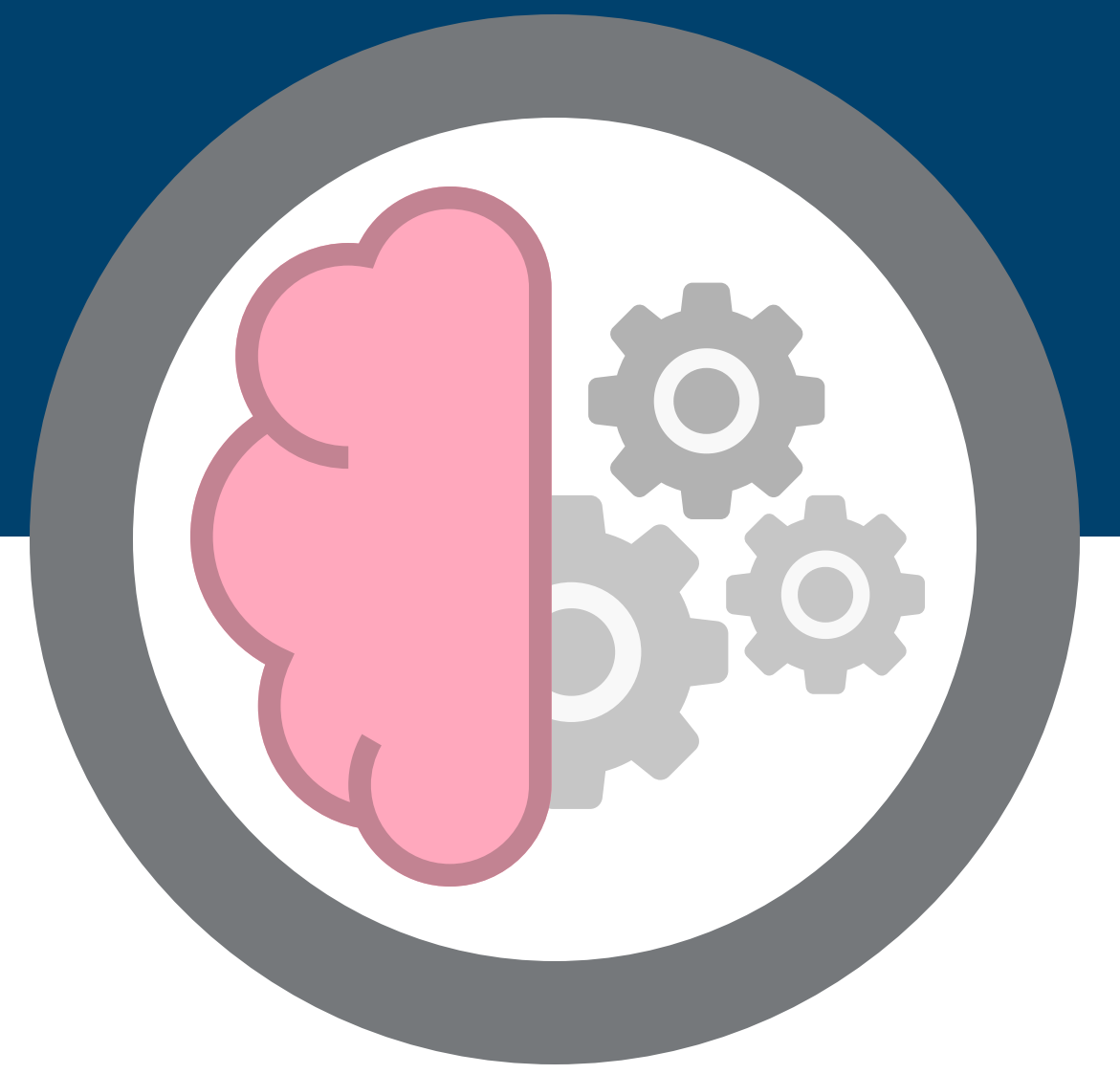


COGNITIVE BIAS

+ information practices



Psychologists define **cognitive biases** as common, systematic human errors in judgment and decision-making that may be caused by motivational factors, adaptations to an environment, and/or other cognitive limitations.

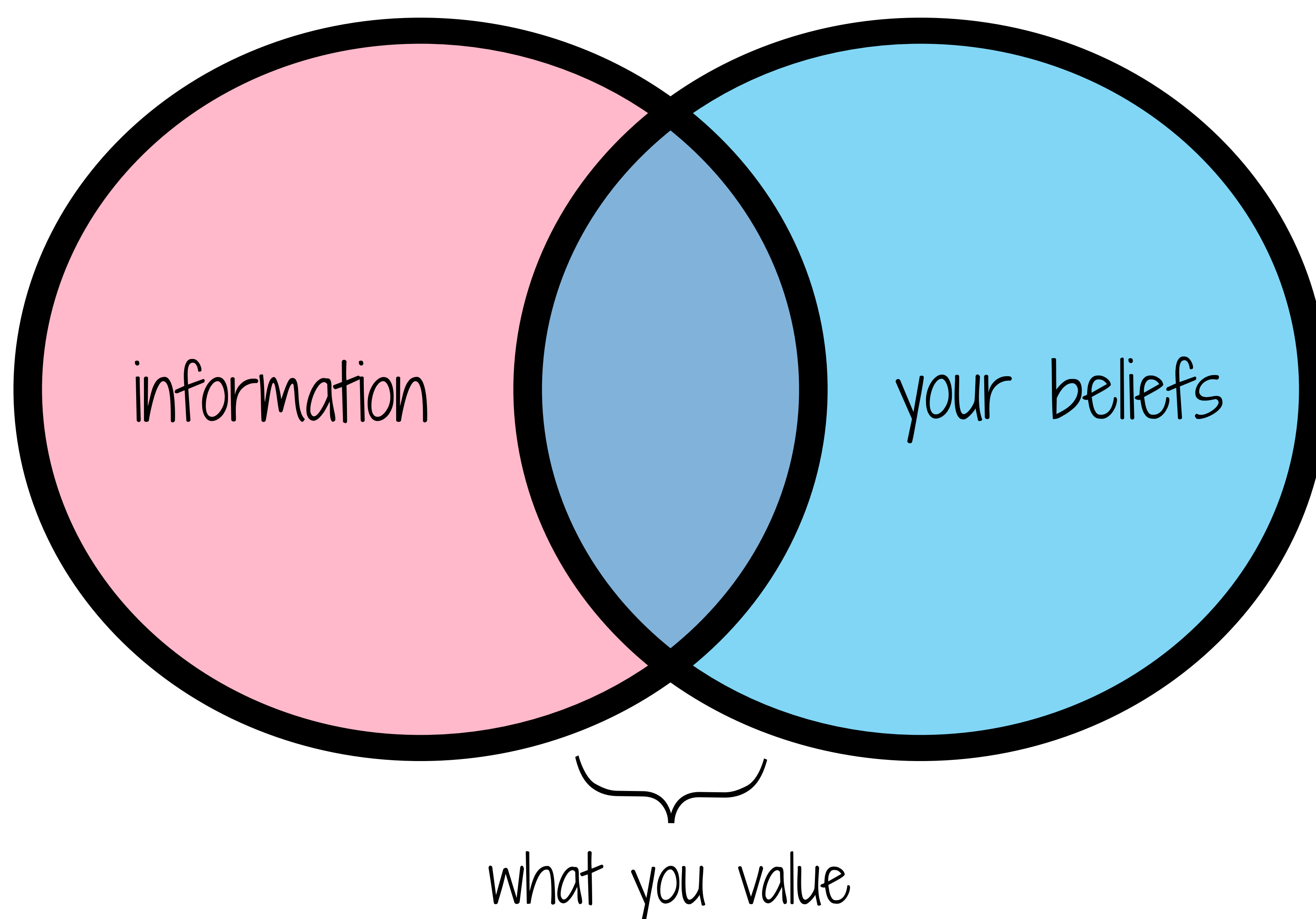
Isn't bias a bad thing? It depends! Some argue that cognitive bias can be a human design *feature*, not just a flaw. Think about how you make decisions and solve problems. Your process likely involves cognitive "short cuts," such as relying on your own prior knowledge, experiences, or beliefs and seeking advice or information from convenient, believable sources. However, an important question to ask is, **does this bias cause harm to others?**

What other processes are involved in how you find, process, and use new information? Researchers have documented and defined lots of different types of cognitive bias, but here are a few that can help you better understand your own information practices.

CONFIRMATION BIAS

The tendency to selectively search for or interpret information in a way that confirms your previously held beliefs or hypotheses.

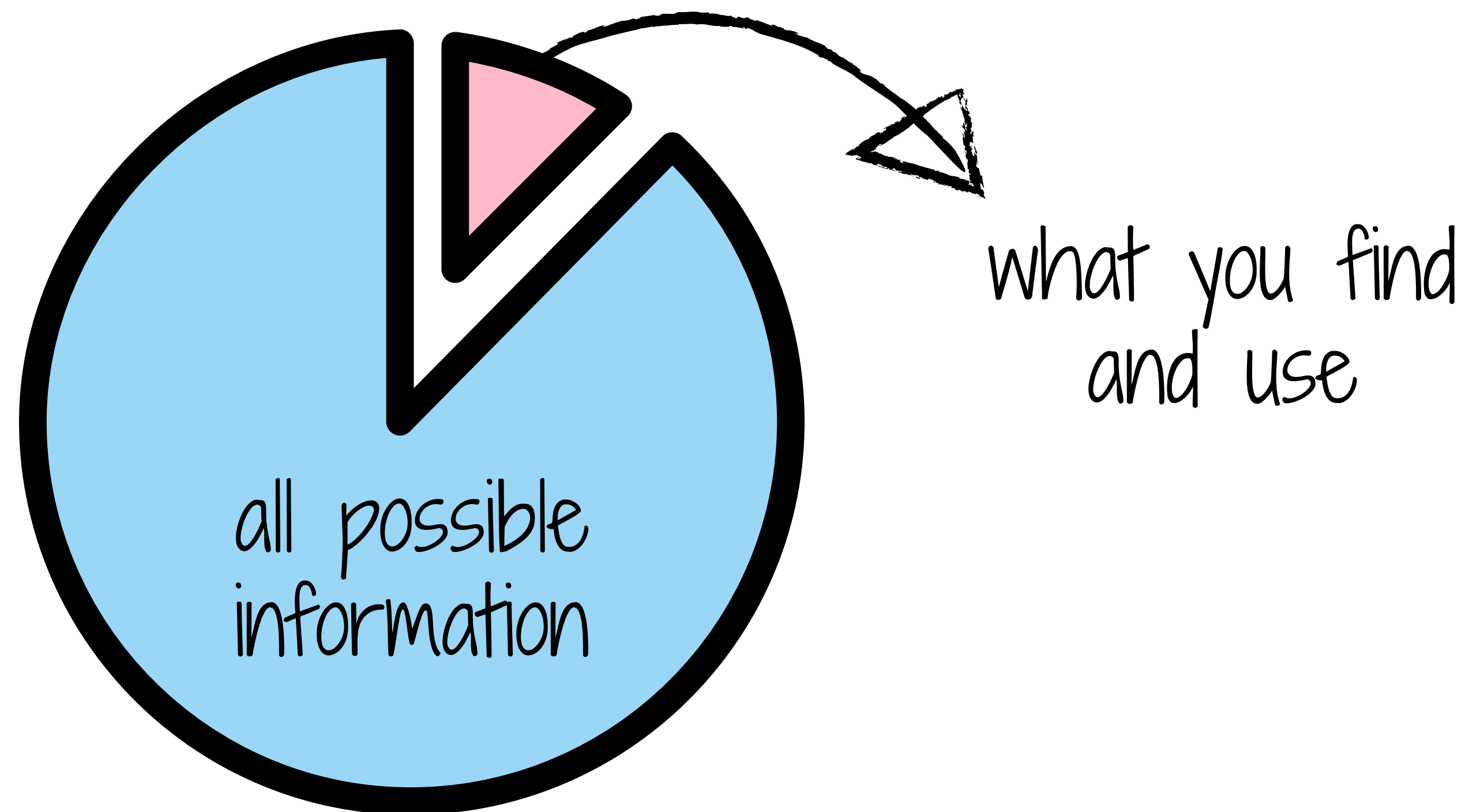
Example: Only using sources in a research assignment that confirm or support your argument.



AVAILABILITY BIAS

The tendency to rely on the first example that comes to mind or the most recent/readily available information.

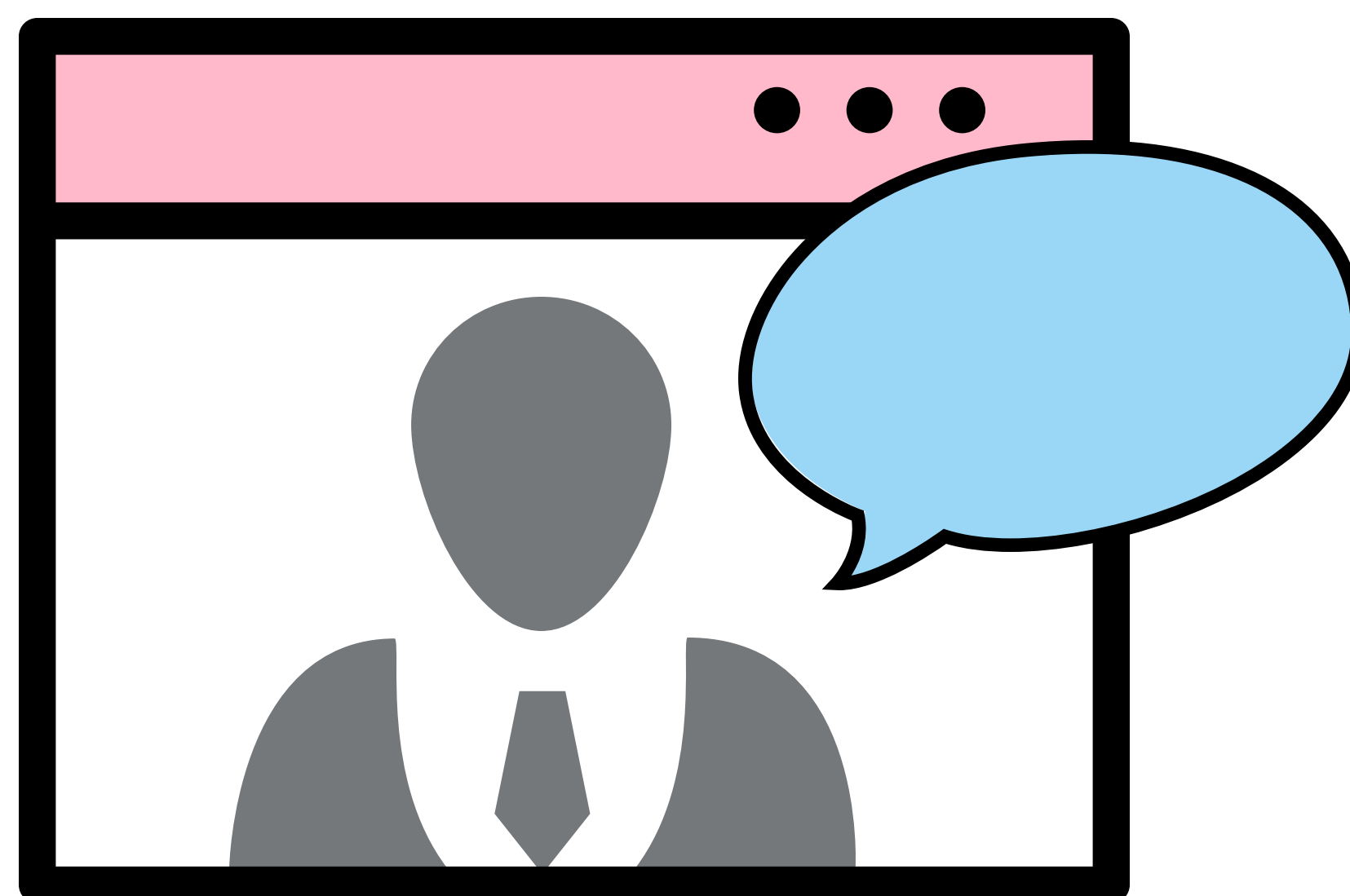
Example: Clicking on the first link in a list of search results that seems relevant to what you need.



AUTHORITY BIAS

The tendency to attribute greater accuracy to or be more easily persuaded by the opinions of "authoritative" figures.

Example: Buying a "doctor recommended" toothpaste brand.



References: Wilke, A., & Mata, R. (2012). [Cognitive bias](#). *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior* (2nd ed.).

Haselton, M. G., Nettle, D., & Andrews, P. W. (2015). [The evolution of cognitive bias](#). *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*.