

Rule 702. Testimony by Experts.

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Effective:
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(a) Subject to the limitations in paragraph (b), a witness who is qualified as an expert by knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education may testify in the form of an opinion or otherwise if the expert's scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge will help the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue.

(b) Scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge may serve as the basis for expert testimony only if there is a threshold showing that the principles or methods that are underlying in the testimony

(b)(1) are reliable,

(b)(2) are based upon sufficient facts or data, and

(b)(3) have been reliably applied to the facts.

(c) The threshold showing required by paragraph (b) is satisfied if the underlying principles or methods, including the sufficiency of facts or data and the manner of their application to the facts of the case, are generally accepted by the relevant expert community.

2011 Advisory Committee Note. The language of this rule has been amended as part of the restyling of the Evidence Rules to make them more easily understood and to make class and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic only. There is no intent to change any result in any ruling on evidence admissibility.

Original Advisory Committee Note. Apart from its introductory clause, part (a) of the amended Rule recites verbatim Federal Rule 702 as it appeared before it was amended in 2000 to respond to Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc., 509 U.S. 579 (1993). The 2007 amendment to the Rule added that introductory clause, along with parts (b) and (c). Unlike its predecessor, the amended rule does not incorporate the text of the Federal Rule. Although Utah law foreshadowed in many respects the developments in federal law that commenced with Daubert, the 2007 amendment preserves and clarifies differences between the Utah and federal approaches to expert testimony.

The amended rule embodies several general considerations. First, the rule is intended to be applied to all expert testimony. In this respect, the rule follows federal law as announced in Kumho Tire Co. v. Carmichael, 526 U.S. 137 (1999). Next, like its federal counterpart, Utah's rule assigns to trial judges a "gatekeeper" responsibility to screen out unreliable expert testimony. In performing their gatekeeper function, trial judges should confront proposed expert testimony with rational skepticism. This degree of scrutiny is not so rigorous as to be satisfied only by scientific or other specialized principles or methods that are free of controversy or that meet any fixed set of criteria fashioned to test reliability. The rational skeptic is receptive to any plausible evidence that may bear on reliability. She is mindful that several principles, methods or techniques may be suitably reliable to merit admission into evidence for consideration by the trier of fact. The fields of knowledge which may be drawn upon are not limited merely to the "scientific" and "technical", but extend to all "specialized" knowledge. Similarly, the expert is viewed, not in a narrow sense, but as a person qualified by "knowledge, skill, experience, training or education". Finally, the gatekeeping trial judge must take care to direct her skepticism to the particular proposition that the expert testimony is offered to support. The Daubert court characterized this task as focusing on the "work at hand". The practitioner should equally take care that the proffered expert testimony reliably addresses the "work at hand", and that the foundation of reliability presented for it reflects that consideration.

Section (c) retains limited features of the traditional Frye test for expert testimony. Generally accepted principles and methods may be admitted based on judicial notice. The nature of the "work at hand" is especially important here. It might be important in some cases for an expert to educate the factfinder about

general principles, without attempting to apply these principles to the specific facts of the case. The rule recognizes that an expert on the stand may give a dissertation or exposition of principles relevant to the case, leaving the trier of fact to apply them to the facts. Proposed expert testimony that seeks to set out relevant principles, methods or techniques without offering an opinion about how they should be applied to a particular array of facts will be, in most instances, more eligible for admission under section (c) than case specific opinion testimony. There are, however, scientific or specialized methods or techniques applied at a level of considerable operational detail that have acquired sufficient general acceptance to merit admission under section (c).

The concept of general acceptance as used in section (c) is intended to replace the novel vs. non-novel dichotomy that has served as a central analytical tool in Utah's Rule 702 jurisprudence. The failure to show general acceptance meriting admission under section (c) does not mean the evidence is inadmissible, only that the threshold showing for reliability under section (b) must be shown by other means.

Section (b) adopts the three general categories of inquiry for expert testimony contained in the federal rule. Unlike the federal rule, however, the Utah rule notes that the proponent of the testimony is required to make only a "threshold" showing. That "threshold" requires only a basic foundational showing of indicia of reliability for the testimony to be admissible, not that the opinion is indisputably correct. When a trial court, applying this amendment, rules that an expert's testimony is reliable, this does not necessarily mean that contradictory expert testimony is unreliable. The amendment is broad enough to permit testimony that is the product of competing principles or methods in the same field of expertise. Contrary and inconsistent opinions may simultaneously meet the threshold; it is for the factfinder to reconcile - or choose between - the different opinions. As such, this amendment is not intended to provide an excuse for an automatic challenge to the testimony of every expert, and it is not contemplated that evidentiary hearings will be routinely required in order for the trial judge to fulfill his role as a rationally skeptical gatekeeper. In the typical case, admissibility under the rule may be determined based on affidavits, expert reports prepared pursuant to Utah R.Civ.P. 26, deposition testimony and memoranda of counsel.
