

ADMISSIBILITY OF EXPERT TESTIMONY IN ALL 50 STATES

The use of expert witnesses has become an integral and indispensable aspect of American litigation, and it is often the side with the best expert who wins the day. The use of science in the courtroom to advise judges and juries on technical and scientific issues which bear on the arrival at a just and fair outcome was, and still is, a controversial subject. The earliest known use of an expert witness in English law came in 1782, when a court hearing litigation relating to the silting-up of Wells Harbor in East-Central England allowed evidence from a leading civil engineer named John Smeaton. The court's ruling allowing Smeaton's testimony is thought to be the genesis of the modern rules on expert evidence. The rise of the use of expert testimony and its perceived need in civil and criminal litigation went hand-in-hand with the culture of science which, along with the rise of the Industrial Revolution, became more and more confident in its ability to discern the hidden laws of nature, however subtle they were.

The use of expert testimony in American litigation has grown exponentially since it came into focus, and the use of experts is now frequently used to place into evidence opinions and circumstances related to opinion, which would not otherwise have been put into evidence. The sale of expert testimony began to grow during the mid-19th Century, adding fuel to the fire of a new litigation industry. In the early years of forensic history, there was great deference and importance placed on expert testimony. However, it didn't take long for this credibility to dissipate. By 1870, a study on expert testimony identified an "unmistakable tendency on the part of eminent judges and jurists to attach less and less importance to testimony of this nature." The new lucrative forensic cottage industry came hand-in-hand with abuses. The English and the American legal systems were all too aware of the need to protect the credulous jury from con men and quick-buck "experts" eager to make a profit at all costs. Compounded by the generally universal distrust of juries to be able to do its job properly, the need for the court to become the "gate-keeper" of credible expert testimony grew quickly. This need became even more critical in America, because the English legal system granted its judges the freedom to take part in the questioning of the witnesses, advise counsel in the framing of their questions, and comment fully on the weight of the evidence and the credibility of the witnesses in their charge to the jury. The American system lacked these tools and tended to recognize the jury as the final adjudicator on the facts of the case, with the judge prohibited from commenting or questioning witnesses. For this reason, the problem of expert testimony and how to control it reached its zenith in America rather than in England.

FRYE STANDARD

Throughout the 20th Century, American courts and legislatures made numerous efforts at reforming the business of selling forensic opinions which are truly not based in sound science, also known as "junk science." In the 1922 murder trial of an African-American named James Frye in District of Columbia federal court, the court disallowed introduction of a lie detector test "proving" the innocence of the defendant. The defendant was found guilty and on appeal, the defendant claimed it was error not to allow the lie detector test. The logical relevance of the test and its potential helpfulness to the jury was obvious. So were the credentials of the test inventor, William Marston. In *Frye v. United States*, 293 F. 1013 (D.C. Cir. 1923), the court shifted the focus of the admissibility of the expert's testimony from the expert's credentials to the particular scientific knowledge his testimony would contain. The resulting **Frye standard**, Frye test, or general acceptance test, as it became to be known, is a test to

determine the admissibility of scientific evidence. It provides that expert opinion based on a scientific technique is admissible only where the technique is generally accepted as reliable in the relevant scientific community. A court applying the *Frye* standard must determine whether or not the method by which that evidence was obtained was generally accepted by experts in the particular field in which it belongs. In many, but not all jurisdictions, the *Frye* standard has been superseded by the *Daubert* standard. States still following *Frye* include California, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

DAUBERT STANDARD

In *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals*, 509 U.S. 579 (1993), the Supreme Court held that the Federal Rules of Evidence superseded *Frye* as the standard for admissibility of expert evidence in federal courts. Some states, however, still adhere to the *Frye* standard. Standard used by a trial judge to make a preliminary assessment of whether an expert's scientific testimony is based on reasoning or methodology that is scientifically valid and can properly be applied to the facts at issue. Under this standard, the factors that may be considered in determining whether the methodology is valid are: (1) whether the theory or technique in question can be and has been tested; (2) whether it has been subjected to peer review and publication; (3) its known or potential error rate; (4) the existence and maintenance of standards controlling its operation; and (5) whether it has attracted widespread acceptance within a relevant scientific community. The *Daubert* standard is the test currently used in the federal courts and some state courts. In the federal courts, it replaced the *Frye* standard. It is widely believed that this standard gives judges greater authority to evaluate and reject unreliable expert testimony. Federal Rule of Evidence 702 provides:

Rule 702. Testimony by Expert Witnesses.

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:

- (a) 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) the testimony is based on sufficient facts or data;*
- (c) the testimony is the product of reliable principles and methods; and*
- (d) the expert has reliably applied the principles and methods to the facts of the case.*

Rule 702 specifies, first, that the witness must be "qualified as an expert by knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education." If so qualified, the witness may testify in the form of an opinion provided, first, that his testimony is relevant, meaning that it will aid the jury, and second, that it is reliable, meaning it is grounded in sufficient data, reliable methods, and the facts of the case. *In re Scrap Metal Antitrust Litig.*, 527 F.3d 517 (6th Cir. 2008). The Supreme Court in *Daubert* provided a list of factors for trial courts to consider as they evaluate the reliability of scientific testimony. But, that list is not exhaustive, nor any one factor dispositive. Rather, district courts have "considerable leeway" in determining whether expert testimony is admissible. *Meridia Prods. Liab. Litig. v. Abbot Labs*, 447 F.3d 861 (6th Cir. 2006) (quoting *Kumho Tire*, 526 U.S. at 152). But, the burden remains on the proponent of the testimony to establish its admissibility by a preponderance of the evidence. *Pride v. Bic Corp.*, 218 F.3d 566 (6th Cir. 2000).

Under normal circumstances, a district court may resolve a *Daubert* motion without holding a hearing. *Nelson v. Tenn. Gas Pipeline Co.*, 243 F.3d 244 (6th Cir. 2001). A hearing is required only if the record is inadequate to decide the motion. *Jahn v. Equine Servs., PSC*, 233 F.3d 382 (6th Cir. 2000). When the parties brief the admissibility of the experts' testimony and develop an extensive record that includes depositions, a hearing is unnecessary.

THE POLITICS OF FORENSIC TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE

The push for the *Daubert* standard throughout the country is often political. Insurance companies and businesses that manufacture or sell products usually believe that the *Daubert* standard favors defendants in civil suits. For that reason, they lobby state legislatures and courts to adopt *Daubert*. On the other hand, plaintiffs' lawyers

usually oppose the adoption of *Daubert* on the ground that it favors the interests of businesses over those of victims. As a result, there is a continuous tug-of-war over the issue. Missouri’s governor recently vetoed the state’s legislative adoption of *Daubert* because he felt the standard hurts injury victims by increasing the cost of litigation. The governor felt that Missouri already had “well-established” criteria to guide judges in admitting expert testimony and that the new legislation would replace that criteria with a “complicated and costly procedure.” Some believe that, without *Daubert*, judges hold too much power in determining the admissibility of expert witnesses. On the other hand, some courts emphasize that *Daubert* and Federal Rule of Evidence 702 have greatly liberalized the admissibility of expert testimony, while *Daubert*’s detractors insist that the standard encourages judges to usurp the role of jurors in deciding whether expert opinions have merit.

NON-SCIENTIFIC EXPERT TESTIMONY

Up until 1999, the standards set forth in *Frye* and *Daubert* applied only to “scientific testimony.” In *Kumho Tire Co. v. Carmichael*, 526 U.S. 137, 147 (1999), the U.S. Supreme Court extended its *Daubert* reasoning to all expert testimony, not simply that which was considered “scientific.” It applies *Daubert* to expert testimony from non-scientists. Prior to *Kumho*, some litigants argued that *Daubert* did not apply to testimony based on “non-scientific” knowledge, such as technical and other specialized knowledge.

STATE	ADMISSIBILITY STANDARDS	CASE/STATUTORY LAW	COMMENTS
ALABAMA	<i>Daubert</i>	Ala. Code § 12-21-160 (1975)	The Alabama Legislature amended § 12-21-160, Ala. Code 1975, effective January 1, 2012, to adopt, with some exceptions, the standard for scientific expert testimony established in <i>Daubert</i> .
ALASKA	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Coon</i> , 974 P.2d 386 (Alaska 1999).	
ARIZONA	<i>Daubert</i>	<p>A bill (2010 Legis. Bill Hist. AZ H.B. 2492) was introduced to adopt <i>Daubert</i> standard. It became § 12-2203, which requires expert opinions to be “the product of reliable principles and methods” and requires experts to have “reliably applied principles and methods to the facts of the case.” It also requires courts to apply the <i>Daubert</i> standard.</p> <p><i>Frye/Logerquist</i> is no longer the standard governing the admissibility of expert testimony in Arizona; the <i>Daubert/Kumho Tire</i> reliability test is.</p>	<p>In 2010, Arizona changed the standard from <i>Frye</i> to <i>Daubert</i>. In 2011, the Arizona Supreme Court adopted Rule 702 -identical to the Federal Rule 702 – effective 1/1/12, which says:</p> <p>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:</p> <p>(a) 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;</p> <p>(b) the testimony is based on sufficient facts or data;</p> <p>(c) the testimony is the product of reliable principles and methods; and</p> <p>(d) the expert has reliably applied the principles and methods to the facts of the case.</p>
ARKANSAS	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>Farm Bureau Mut. Ins. Co. of Ark., Inc. v. Foote</i> , 14 S.W.3d 512 (Ark. 2000).	
CALIFORNIA	<i>Frye</i>	<i>People v. Leahy</i> , 882 P.2d 321 (Cal. 1994).	

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COLORADO	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>People v. Shreck</i> , 22 P.3d 68 (Colo. 2001).	The trial court may consider <i>Daubert</i> for factors involving reliability (follow CRE 702).
CONNECTICUT	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Porter</i> , 698 A.2d 739 (Conn. 1997).	
DELAWARE	<i>Daubert</i>	D.R.E. 702	
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	<i>Frye</i>	<i>Bahura v. S.E.W. Investors</i> , 754 A.2d 928 (D.C. 2000).	
FLORIDA	<i>Frye</i>	Fla. Stat. § 90.702	The Florida Supreme Court, by a 4-2 vote on Feb. 16, 2017, declined to adopt as a rule the legislative changes “to the extent that they are procedural” due to “grave constitutional concerns” about the <i>Daubert</i> standard. <i>In re: Amendments to the Florida Evidence Code</i> , No. SC16-181 (Fla. Feb. 16, 2017).
GEORGIA	<i>Daubert</i>	O.C.G.A. § 24-7-702	
HAWAII	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Montalbo</i> , 828 P.2d 1274 (Haw. 1992).	
IDAHO	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Merwin</i> , 962 P.2d 1026 (Idaho 1998).	
ILLINOIS	<i>Frye</i>	Ill. R. Evid. 702	The second sentence of Rule 702 enunciates the core principles of the <i>Frye</i> test for admissibility of scientific evidence as set forth in <i>Donaldson v. Central Illinois Public Service Co.</i> , 767 N.E.2d 314 (Ill. 2002).
INDIANA	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>Alsheik v. Guerrero</i> , 956 N.E.2d 1115 (Ind. App. 2011).	The court may consider the <i>Daubert</i> factors in determining reliability, there is no specific test or set of prongs which must be considered in order to satisfy I.R.E. 702(b); the court finds <i>Daubert</i> helpful, but not controlling when analyzing testimony under Rule 702(b).
IOWA	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>Ganrud v. Smith</i> , 206 N.W.2d 311 (Iowa 1973).	
KANSAS	<i>Daubert</i>	K.S.A. § 60-465(b)	
KENTUCKY	<i>Daubert</i>	KY R. Evid. 702	Rule 702 does not mandate the use of all or any one of the factors suggested by the court. It allows the trial court to use those factors that are appropriate to the case at trial.
LOUISIANA	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Foret</i> , 628 So.2d 1116 (La. 1993).	

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MAINE	Other	<i>State v. Williams</i> , 388 A.2d 500 (Me. 1978); <i>Searles v. Fleetwood Homes of Pennsylvania, Inc.</i> , 878 A.2d 509 (Me. 2005).	Maine uses a test substantially similar to <i>Daubert</i> resulting in a fairly liberal standard for the admission of expert testimony: <i>If scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge will assist the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue, a witness qualified as an expert by knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education, may testify thereto in the form of an opinion or otherwise.</i>
MARYLAND	<i>Frye</i>	Md. Rule 5-702	
MASSACHUSETTS	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>Commonwealth v. Lanigan</i> , 641 N.E.2d 1342 (Mass. 1994).	
MICHIGAN	<i>Daubert</i>	MRE § 702	
MINNESOTA	<i>Frye-Mack Standard</i>	<i>State v. Mack</i> , 292 N.W.2d 764 (Minn. 1980).	Hybrid standard using <i>State v. Mack</i> and <i>Frye v. United States</i> . To be admitted, testimony must (1) involve technique which has gained general acceptance in the scientific community, and (2) the testing must be done properly. An advisory committee is considering whether the Minnesota Supreme Court should replace the state's version of the <i>Frye</i> standard with the <i>Daubert</i> test.
MISSISSIPPI	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>Miss. Transp. Comm'n v. McLemore</i> , 863 So.2d 31 (Miss. 2003); Miss R. Evid. 702.	
MISSOURI	Other	Mo. Rev. Stat. § 490.065; <i>Hawthorne v. Lester E. Cox Medical Centers</i> , 165 S.W.3d 587 (Mo. App. 2005).	
MONTANA	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Moore</i> , 885 P.2d 457 (Mont. 1994).	
NEBRASKA	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>Schafersman v. Agland Coop.</i> , 631 N.W.2d 862 (Neb. 2001).	
NEVADA	Other	<i>Higgs v. State</i> , 222 P.3d 648 (Nev. 2010).	To the extent that <i>Daubert</i> promulgates a flexible approach to the admissibility of expert witness testimony, the Supreme Court of Nevada has held it is persuasive.
NEW HAMPSHIRE	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>Baker Valley Lumber, Inc. v. Ingersoll-Rand Co.</i> , 813 A.2d 409 (N.H. 2002).	
NEW JERSEY	<i>Frye</i>	N.J. R. Evid. 702	

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NEW MEXICO	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Alberico</i> , 861 P.2d 192 (N.M. 1993).	The differences between federal and New Mexico law in applying the <i>Daubert</i> requirements. <u>See</u> Rule 11-702 comm. cmt. 8. New Mexico has not adopted the changes made to the federal rule in 2000 to incorporate the requirements of <i>Daubert</i> .
NEW YORK	<i>Frye</i>	<i>People v. Wesley</i> , 633 N.E.2d 451 (N.Y. 1994).	
NORTH CAROLINA	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. McGrady</i> , COA13-330, 2014 WL 211962 (N.C. Ct. App. Jan. 21, 2014); <i>State v. Goode</i> , 461 S.E.2d 631 (N.C. 1995).	<i>Daubert</i> rejected until 2014. In <i>Goode</i> , court held that the standard depends on reliability, qualifications of expert, and relevancy. However, in <i>McGrady</i> , the Supreme Court finally adopted <i>Daubert</i> .
NORTH DAKOTA	N.D. R. Evid. 702	<i>State v. Hernandez</i> , 707 N.W.2d 449 (N.D. 2005).	N.D. R. Evid. 702 (more liberal than Federal Rule of Evidence 702). <i>Daubert</i> rejected. Court determines that method of proof is reliable as an area for expert testimony, then whether the witness is qualified as an expert to apply this method. It is not necessary that an expert be experienced with the identical subject matter at issue or be a specialist, licensed, or even engaged in a specific profession. <i>Hernandez</i> stated that North Dakota never has explicitly adopted <i>Daubert</i> or <i>Kumho Tire</i> ; expert admissibility instead is governed by North Dakota Rule of Evidence 702.
OHIO	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Martens</i> , 629 N.E.2d 462 (3d Dist. Mercer County 1993).	
OKLAHOMA	<i>Daubert</i>	Okla. Stat. Tit. 12 § 2702	
OREGON	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. O'Key</i> , 899 P.2d 663 (Or. 1995).	
PENNSYLVANIA	<i>Frye</i>	Pa. R.E. 702(c); <i>Snizavich v. Rohm and Haas Co.</i> , 2013 Pa. Super. 315 (Pa. Super. 2010).	Pa. R.E. 702(c) applies the “general acceptance” test for the admissibility of scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge testimony. Note that Pa. R.E. 702(c) differs from F.R.E. 702 in that it reflects Pennsylvania’s adoption of the standard in <i>Frye v. United States</i> , 293 F. 1013 (D.C. Cir. 1923). The rule applies the “general acceptance” test for the admissibility of scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge testimony. This is consistent with prior Pennsylvania law. <i>Grady v. Frito-Lay, Inc.</i> , 576 Pa. 546, 839 A.2d 1038 (2003). The rule rejects the federal test derived from <i>Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc.</i> , 509 U.S. 579 (1993).
RHODE ISLAND	<i>Daubert</i>	RI R. Evid. Art. VII, Rule 702	

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SOUTH CAROLINA	Other	<p><i>State v. Council</i>, 515 S.E.2d 508, cert. denied, 528 U.S. 1050 (1999).</p> <p><i>Graves v. CAS Medical Systems, Inc.</i>, 735 S.E.2d 650, 655 (S.C. 2012).</p>	<p>South Carolina Rules of Evidence provides the proper analysis to determine admissibility of scientific evidence. <i>Id.</i> at 20, 515 S.E.2d at 518.</p> <p>(1) <i>The subject matter is beyond the ordinary knowledge of the jury.</i></p> <p>(2) <i>The expert must have acquired the requisite knowledge and skill to qualify as an expert in the particular subject matter, although he need not be a specialist in the particular branch of the field.</i></p> <p>(3) <i>The substance of the testimony must be reliable.</i></p> <p>The final inquiry is the central feature of the analysis.</p> <p>Although <i>Daubert</i> never formally adopted, S.C. rules have always charged the court with performing a “gate keeping” function in limiting the presentation of expert testimony to situations where the testimony will assist the trier of fact in understanding evidence or determining a fact in issue.</p>
SOUTH DAKOTA	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Hofer</i> , 512 N.W.2d 482 (S.D. 1994).	
TENNESSEE	<i>Daubert</i>	Tenn. R. Evid. 702	
TEXAS	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. V. Robinson</i> , 923 S.W.2d 549 (Tex. 1995).	
UTAH	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Rinmasch</i> , 775 P.2d 388 (Utah 1989).	
VERMONT	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>State v. Brooks</i> , 162 Vt. 26, 30, 643 A.2d 226, 229 (1993).	
VIRGINIA	Other	Va. Code Ann. § 8.01-401	Expert testimony generally admissible if it will assist trier of fact in understanding evidence. Admissibility is subject to basic requirements, including requirement that evidence be based on adequate foundation.
WASHINGTON	<i>Frye</i>	<i>State V. Riker</i> , 869 P.2d 43 (Wash. 1994).	
WEST VIRGINIA	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>Wilt v. Buracker</i> , 443 S.E.2d 196 (W. Va. 1994).	
WISCONSIN	<i>Daubert</i>	Wis. Stat. § 907.02(1)	
WYOMING	<i>Daubert</i>	<i>Bunting v. Jamison</i> , 984 P.2d 467 (Wyo. 1999).	

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