

READING

Fact vs. Opinion

Facts: Statements that can be verified. They can be proven true or false. Statements of fact are objective -- they contain information but do not tell what the writer thinks or believes about the topic.

Example: My car payment is \$250 per month.

Questions to Identify Facts:

1. Can the statement be proved or demonstrated to be true?
2. Can the statement be observed in practice or operation? Can you see it happen?
3. Can the statement be verified by witnesses, manuscripts, or documents?

Opinions: Statements that express a writer's feelings, attitudes, or beliefs. They are neither true nor false. They are one person's view about a topic or issue.

Example: My car payments are too expensive.

Types of Opinions:

1. Positions on controversial issues
2. Predictions about things in the future
3. Evaluations of people, places, and things

Words to Identify Opinions:

1. Biased Words (*bad, worse, worst, good, better, best, worthwhile, worthless, etc.*)
2. Qualifiers (*all, always, likely, never, might, seem, possibly, probably, should, etc.*)

Informed Opinions: The opinions of experts are known as informed opinions. As experts in their field, they may make observations and offer comments that are not strictly factual. Instead, they are based on years of study, research, and experience.

*Example: Chimps are in massive danger of extinction from dwindling habitats.
(Jane Goodall, primate expert and ethologist)*

Questions to Identify Informed Speakers:

1. Does the speaker have a current and relevant background to the topic under discussion?
2. Is the speaker generally respected within the field?
3. Does the speaker carefully signal, via judgment words, to identify when they are presenting opinions vs. facts?

Identify Facts and Opinions

- _____ 1. Alligators provide no physical care for their young.
- _____ 2. Humans should be concerned about the use of pesticides that kill insects at the bottom of the food chain.
- _____ 3. There are 28 more humans living on the Earth now than there were 10 seconds ago.
- _____ 4. We must bear greater responsibility for the environment than our ancestors did.
- _____ 5. Nuclear power is the only viable solution to our dwindling natural resources.

Locating Judgment Words (*underline or circle the bias or qualifying words*)

- 1. Purchasing a brand new car is a terrible waste of money.
- 2. Many wonderful vegetarian cookbooks are available in bookstores.
- 3. Of all the film version of Victor Hugo's novel *Les Miserables*, the 1935 version starring Charles Laughton is the best.
- 4. The introductory biology textbook comes with an amazing CD-ROM.
- 5. Volunteers for Habitat for Humanity are engaged in a worthwhile activity.

Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion in a Paragraph

[1] Flowering plants that are native to the South include purple coneflower and rose verbena. [2] In the view of many longtime gardeners, these two plants are an essential part of the Southern landscape. [3] Trees that are native to the South include a variety of oaks, as well as flowering dogwoods and redbuds. [4] Dogwoods are especially lovely, with their white, pink, or coral blossoms announcing the arrival of spring. [5] For fall color, the deep red of the Virginia willow makes a spectacular show in the native Southern garden.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

Recognizing Informed Opinion (*underline or circle the phrase that acts as a clue*)

- 1. It seems clear that parents who would bring a young child to an R-rated movie are putting their own interests ahead of what's best for the child.
- 2. Voters rejected the proposed rapid transit system connecting the southern and northern suburbs, possibly because of racial issues.
- 3. According to the city superintendent of schools, school uniforms lead to improved behavior and fewer disruptions in the classroom.