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Distinguish Between Fact and Opinion

Are the following statements true? Why?

- ☐ There are 7 continents in the world.
- ☐ Chocolate is the best dessert.
- ☐ The tallest mountain is Mount Everest.
- ☐ Cats make better pets than dogs.
- ☐ Water boils at 100°C.

Definition

Facts are statements that can be checked and proven true. Opinions, on the other hand, express personal feelings, judgments, or beliefs and cannot be labeled as true or false. Words and phrases such as *apparently, this suggests, some believe, it is likely that, seemingly, in my view, and one explanation is* often indicate that a statement is an opinion.

Examples of Facts

- Martin Luther King Jr. was killed in 1968.
- The buffalo was the primary food source for Native Americans.

Examples of Opinions

- Americans ought to stop using cars and rely on public transportation.
- By 2025, most Asian countries will face serious food shortages.

Types of opinions

Opinions fall into two groups. **Informed opinions** come from individuals who have the knowledge or experience to speak with expertise. **Uninformed opinions** come from people who have little background in the subject.

To judge whether an opinion is informed, consider the following questions:

- What relevant experience does the person have?
- How do other credible experts view this person?
- Is the opinion presented respectfully, rather than in an intolerant or offensive way?
- Is the opinion published in a reputable source, or does it appear on a website where anyone can post freely?

Practice

Exercise 1: Each of the following paragraphs contains both fact and opinion. Read each paragraph and label each sentence as fact or opinion.

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.

1 Today, many companies provide child-care assistance, either on- or off-site, for their employees. 2 This suggests that employers are becoming aware that their workers' family concerns can affect the company's bottom line. 3 The Eli Lilly pharmaceutical company, for example, has built two child-development centers with a total capacity of more than 400 children. 4 In addition to assistance with daily child care, Bank of America reimburses employees for child-care expenses related to business travel. 5 It seems clear that other, less progressive employers will have to follow these companies' leads in order to attract and retain the best employees.

1. 2. 3.
4. 5.

1 Preparing a will is an important task that people ignore because they prefer not to think about their own death. 2 However, if you die without a will, the courts will determine how your assets should be distributed, as directed by state law. 3 Even more important than establishing a will, in my opinion, is expressing your willingness to be an organ donor upon your death. 4 Each year, twenty-five thousand new patients are added to the waiting list for organ transplants. 5 The legacy of an organ donor is far more valuable than any material assets put in a will.

1. 2. 3.

4. 5.

Exercise 2: List three facts and three opinions from "*A Brother Lost*". Are the opinions you identified informed or uninformed opinions? How can you tell?

Facts:

1.
2.
3.

Opinions:

1.
2.
3.

References

McWhorter, K. T. (2016). *In Concert: Reading and Writing* (2nd ed.). Pearson