Summary of Directness and Oppositional Intensity

Here, we summarize *directness* and *oppositional intensity* to help refresh you on what to look for. Please use this section as a handy reference while you work on the labeling task.

Directness

> ***Questions for Directness:***
>
> You will answer the following questions while rating the conversation for directness:
>
> In this chat, does the writer…
> - Clearly convey the content of their opinion? (Directness of Content)
>   - **Yes** - Direct Content
>   - **Neutral** - Content contains no opinion
>   - **No** - Indirect Content
> - Express their opinion in a tone or manner that is direct and assertive? (Directness of Expression)
>   - **Yes** - Direct Expression
>   - **No** - Indirect Expression

Directness of Content

Think about trying to understand the author's <u>underlying opinion</u>. If you feel like the author's position on an issue is clear, mark the content as **direct**. If you feel like the author is vague about what they believe, mark the content as **indirect**.

Statements that clearly have *no opinion*, are clarifying the situation, or that are unrelated to the issue at hand can be marked as **neutral**.

Examples:
- "That is the point. If you like to listen to tons of different music, it is more expensive to buy the tracks than to subscribe to a collection."
  - **Direct content:** The content is about whether you should buy the music or subscribe to a streaming service. The author has a clear position on this issue (buying is more expensive if you listen to a lot of music).
- "This is an important point which I don't feel qualified to address."
  - **Indirect content:** The author acknowledges something about the topic at hand, but leaves their actual opinion vague.
- "Wow!"

- - **Neutral content:** This reaction does not convey any opinion at all.
- ● "I have to ask, which single method of swimming are you talking about?"
  - ○ **Neutral content:** The author is simply clarifying someone else's position, but they are not yet expressing their own position.

Directness of Expression

Think about the <u>way in which the author conveys their opinion</u>. Do the author's words explicitly state what they believe, or do you have to read between the lines? **Direct expressions** are clear and unambiguous, while **indirect expressions** are subtle.

<u>Make sure that you understand how the expression differs from the content.</u> Sometimes, while the author's opinion is clear, the manner in which it is conveyed is indirect (e.g., by asking a question).
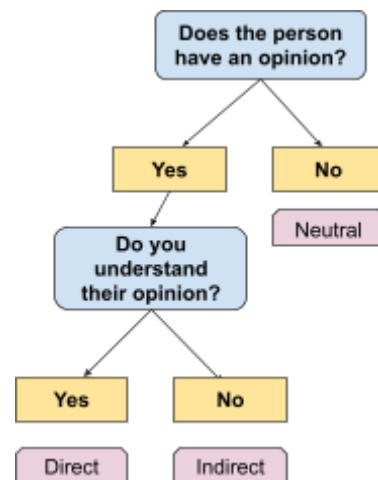
Examples:
- ● "If you understand this, you know why it's scary then. What did you need clarified?"
  - ○ **Direct content, but indirect expression:** The speaker makes their position known, i.e. they think it is scary, but indirectly express their position by asking what is to be clarified.
- ● "And the problem with this is?"
  - ○ **Indirect content and indirect expression:** The speaker does not state their opinion, and indirectly expresses their position by asking a question.

Use the diagram below to help you label **Directness.**

Do the person's words explicitly state their opinion, or do you have to infer it?

	Yes *Direct Expression*	**No** *Indirect Expression*
Does the person have a clear stance?		
Yes *Direct Content*	"I disagree with this"	"I am not sure that I agree"
No *Indirect Content*	"That is a fair point"	"What's your problem with this?"
N/A (No stance) *Neutral Content*	"Wow."	"Huh?"

Helpful Tips for Directness

- **When evaluating the directness of content, first ask yourself: "*does this person have an opinion*?"**
  - If the person <u>doesn't</u> have an opinion at all, the statement is likely **neutral**.
  - If the person <u>does</u> have an opinion, ask yourself: "*do I understand exactly what their opinion is?*"
    - If their opinion is very clear, it is likely **direct content**.
    - If their opinion is unclear (e.g., they're expressing vague displeasure, but their exact stance is unknown), it is likely **indirect content.**

- **Not all questions are made equal**.
  - Some questions are <u>neutral</u>, especially if the person simply doesn't understand what's going on and is asking for more information. Here, *they don't have an opinion yet; they are still learning.*
  - Some questions are provocative, and intended to make people think in a certain way. <u>These may suggest an indirect way of proving a point.</u>
    - For example, suppose someone says, "I believe race should be removed from college admissions decisions," and a person replies with, "What about in cases where race is an important part of an identity? Don't you think it will come up in a person's essays anyway?" This response is an <u>indirect expression</u> that conveys the person's point (that race is something that colleges should consider).
- **Sarcasm** is often a signal of <u>indirect expression</u>.

Oppositional Intensity

Questions for Oppositional Intensity:

You will answer the following questions while rating the conversation for oppositional intensity:

In this chat, does the writer…
- Defend their own position in opposition to others' positions? (Oppositional Intensity in Content)
    - **Yes** – Content opposes someone else
    - **No** – Content does not oppose anyone
- Express their point(s) with high emotional activation or force? (Oppositional Intensity in Expression)
    - **Yes** – Expression is emotional/forceful
    - **No** – Expression is not emotional/forceful

Oppositional Intensity in Content

Think about whether the <u>content of the argument is being positioned relative to others' arguments</u>. This is about "what" is being said, rather than "how" it is being said.

Here are three key indicators of oppositional intensity in the content:

- **Reference to a person, group, or entity:** Being *oppositional* means that you have to have someone to oppose! Oppositional intensity goes beyond simply having an opinion, and requires having an opinion *that also disagrees with someone else's opinion*.
    - Examples of direct expressions that are not oppositional:
        - "I support funding for the military"
        - "I agree with your argument."
    - Here, the speaker's opinion is clear (it is *direct*), but they do not disagree with anyone (it is *not oppositional*).
- **Entrenchment** - Being unwilling to listen to other ideas, by being defensive or close-minded. (The speaker is trying to convey that they are right and others are wrong)
- **Subversion** - Personal attacks, blocking other people from saying their views or excluding them from the conversation (The speaker is trying to undermine others, take over the conversation, etc.)
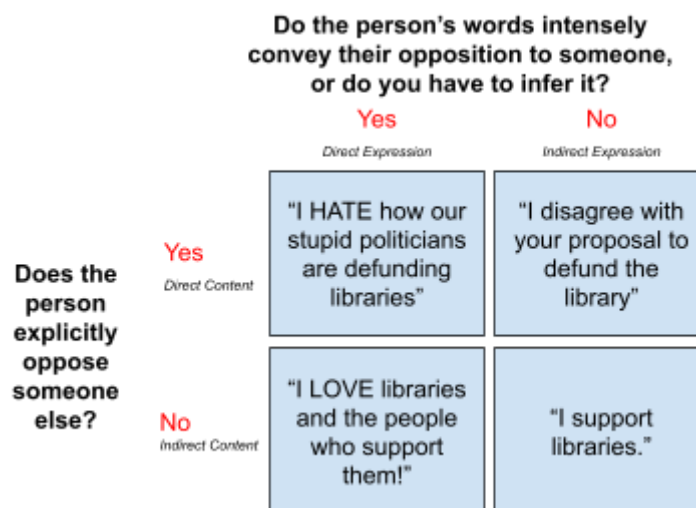
Oppositional Intensity in Expression

Think about the <u>level of energy, force, or emotional activation</u> being used to convey the content. This is about "how" something is being said, rather than "what" is being said.

Here are a few indicators of emotion and forcefulness to consider:

- Extensive use of UPPERCASE to type, excessive use of punctuation marks indicating emotions like exclamations, question marks, typing the same character multiple times. For example: "DUDE!!!!!!", "WHATTTTTTTT???"
- Similarly, using asterisks to emphasize words may achieve a similar effect as all caps, as asterisks turn text to bold/italics in Markdown formatting. For example: "This is the *stupidest* thing I've ever seen!"
- Use of phrases indicating high emotional activation like swear words
- Use of emotional or loaded language (e.g., calling someone "anti-choice")

Use the diagram below to help you label **Oppositional Intensity.**

Helpful Tips for Oppositional Intensity

- **Worked Example**: "Dude. The scary part is that a CHILD IS BEING BITTEN BY AN ADULT. How is this not making sense?"

  This statement is oppositionally intense in both content and expression.
    - **Reference to a specific person**: The author is addressing someone else – "Dude."
    - **Look for high emotional activation:** the all-uppercase "CHILD IS BEING BITTEN BY AN ADULT."
    - **Sarcasm sometimes intensifies opposition:** the author seems to be poking at the opposing party by asking, "how is this not making sense?"

General Instructions - Pay attention to chats involving the following:

- **Quotes:** If you see a chat quoting another person (the symbol "**>**" is actually an HTML tag that represents a quote)., label the text which is not a part of the quote. The quote can, however, give useful context about what someone is opposing.

  For example:

  > " >How do you propose these cats and dogs get turned into meat? Your solution requires at least some amount of butchering, packaging, and quality control." - The text appearing immediately after &gt is the sentence being quoted and not the speaker's own view

  > You're right in that it would require some work on the production side, just like any meat source. However the benefits of not having to invest in the raising and farming side (as with beef) still make it a preferable alternative, or rather, supplement. - This text, after the quote, is the speaker's own view. Consider only this while labeling

- **Links**: For any chat which primarily consists of links to external materials (which are often shown in markdown format, as "**[text_to_display](link.com)**"), label it as a neutral statement when considering directness.

  For example:

  > "*[sandwiches cut in squares] (https://sandwiches.com) - This is a link to some external material

  There may be exceptions to this rule if the speaker is linking to an outside source, but then primarily discussing their own opinion.

  For example:

  > "I really hate [sandwiches cut in squares] (https://sandwiches.com). They don't make sense to me at all - While there is a link to some external material, the primary purpose of this statement is to express the author's own opinion.