

Fact and Opinion

Good readers know the difference between a fact and an opinion. It is important for students to decide the value of the information they receive. Facts contain provable information about a subject. Opinions contain someone's thoughts about a subject. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell the difference between facts and opinions.

A fact tells something that is known to be true, or something that really happened. Facts do not change over time, from person to person, or from place to place; they are a certainty. Facts can be tested and proven. Facts do not include a writer's feelings about an event.

- Ex. The temperature today is 76 degrees.
- Ex. Algebra is a type of mathematics.
- Ex. Pizza is made from cheese, bread, and sauce.

An opinion is what a person thinks, feels, or believes about a subject. Opinions can change over time. Opinions cannot be tested or proven. Opinions can discuss a person's emotions.

- Ex. This is the best weather we've had in months.
- Ex. Algebra is boring.
- Ex. This is the most delicious pizza I have ever eaten.

In order to determine if a statement is a fact or an opinion, ask yourself the following questions:

- Would two different people disagree about the statement?
- Does the statement contain any clue words: should, always, never, all, none, longest, most, least, greatest, best, or worst?
- Does the statement include a clue phrase: "I believe," "It is obvious," or "They should not"?

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, the statement is an opinion. If you answer "no" to all of these questions, the statement is a fact.

Practice

Have the student fold a piece of paper in half, making two columns. In the middle of the top of the page, have the student write the name of a topic (space travel, pets, favorite foods). Label one column "Facts" and the other "Opinions." Starting with the fact column, brainstorm facts about the topic. Then brainstorm opinions about the topic.

Here is an example of the activity using the topic "Ladybugs."

Facts:

- Ladybugs have wings.
- Many ladybugs are red.
- Ladybugs have spots.

Opinions:

- Ladybugs are cute.
- Everyone has seen a ladybug.
- You should not touch ladybugs.