

Fact and Opinion

A **fact** is a specific detail that is true based on objective proof.

An **opinion** is an interpretation, value judgment, or belief that cannot be proved or disproved. An opinion is created.

Objective proof can be physical evidence, an eyewitness account, or the result of an accepted scientific method.

Most people's points of view and beliefs are based on a blend of fact and opinion. The amount of fact and opinion in a piece of writing varies, depending on the author's purpose.

- When an author's purpose is to inform, she will mainly rely on facts. For example, news articles, textbooks, and medical research are supposed to be as factual as possible.
- On the other hand, editorials, advertisements, and fiction often mix fact and opinion. The main purpose of these types of writing is to persuade or entertain.

FACT	OPINION
Is objective Is discovered States reality Can be verified Is presented with unbiased words	Is subjective Is created Interprets reality Cannot be verified Is presented with biased words
<u>Example of a fact:</u> Broccoli is a source of iron.	<u>Example of an opinion:</u> Broccoli tastes awful.

An opinion can often be identified because the sentence contains **biased words**. **Biased words** express opinions, value judgments, and interpretations. Often they are full of emotion.

Biased Words					
awful	best	favorite	great	more	terrible
amazing	better	frightful	handsome	most	unbelievable
bad	disgusting	fun	horrible	smart	ugly
beautiful	exciting	good	miserable	stupid	very

Sometimes an author will use words that qualify an idea. A **qualifier** may express an absolute, unwavering opinion using words like *always* or *never*. Other times a **qualifier** expresses opinion in the form of a command as in *must* or *should*.

Words that Qualify Ideas					
all	could	likely	never	possibly	should
always	every	may	often	possible	sometimes
appear	has/have to	might	only	probably	think
believe	it is believed	must	ought to	seem	usually

NOTE: Many statements include both facts and opinions. The part of the sentence that includes a biased word may be an opinion about another part of the sentence that is a fact.

Example: Even though actor Bruce Willis has a receding hairline, he is still very handsome.

Explanation: The first part of the sentence, "Bruce Willis has a receding hairline" is a fact that can be proven by research. However, the second part of the sentence, "he is still very handsome," is an opinion about his appearance.

Practice Exercises

Read the passage, and identify each sentence as fact (F), opinion (O), or fact and opinion (F/O).

¹Alexander III, more commonly known as Alexander the Great, was one of the greatest military leaders in world history. ²He was born in Pella, Macedonia. ³The exact date of his birth was probably July 20 or 26, 356 B.C. ⁴Shortly before his 33rd birthday, Alexander the Great died. ⁵The cause of his death remains unknown.

1. ____ 2. ____ 3. ____ 4. ____ 5. ____

⁶Mel Gibson is both an actor and a director. ⁷He starred in the movie *Signs* which opened in theatres across the country in 2002. ⁸Mel Gibson's movie *Signs* surprisingly made over \$14 million. ⁹Mel Gibson also starred in the movie *Hamlet*. ¹⁰*Signs* is one of the worst movies Mel Gibson has ever made; on the other hand, *Hamlet* is one of the best movies he ever made.

6. ____ 7. ____ 8. ____ 9. ____ 10. ____

11. ____ The syndicated television comedy *Friends* won numerous awards.

12. ____ The comedy *Friends* is still the funniest show on television.

13. ____ *Friends* has remained popular only because most television viewers have no taste.

14. ____ Nearly 700 Americans die of hypothermia each year.

15. ____ Because the alligator has been listed as an endangered species since 1976, killing alligators for their skins should be against the law.

16. ____ A spinning class is a group exercise program of about 45 minutes of riding on a stationary bike.

17. ____ Spinning classes are indoor group bike rides led by instructors who set the pace and degree of difficulty of the rides.

18. ____ A spinning class is a form of torture.