

Fact and Opinion

- Understand the differences between facts and opinions
- Understand how opinions can be presented as facts

Facts

A **fact** is something that can be proved to be true. It is something that has really happened or is actually in evidence.

A test for a fact is if it can be checked and proved. Facts may be checked by things such as using reason, doing experiments, personal experience, or they may be argued from a position of authority.

Example

Italy is in Europe.

This is a fact because it can be checked and proved.



Opinions

An **opinion** is an idea, viewpoint or statement about something that is not absolutely certain.

Different people will have different opinions about things.

Example

This is the best hotel in Italy!

This is an opinion because someone else might not agree and it cannot be checked and proved.

Why are Facts and Opinions Important?

It is important for you to be able to distinguish between facts and opinions so that you can make sensible judgements.

For example, newspapers and news reports use facts, but they select them or present them in a particular way. They might not speak to everyone involved in an incident, so the report is **biased** (meaning it favours one



side of the story). They might use exaggerated language, which again shows **bias**. This can change facts into opinions.

Opinions Presented as Fact

Writers often present opinion as though it is fact to make their arguments more convincing, or to affect the reader's thinking.

Example

Read these sentences.

1. Georgia did not do her homework.
2. Georgia, the dreadful, lazy student, did not do her essential homework.
3. Georgia, the poor girl, was unable to do her really difficult homework.

Sentence 1 is a fact. It can be proven, perhaps by checking Georgia's book, or speaking to Georgia.

Sentence 2 is an opinion presented as a fact. The writer uses **adjectives** ('dreadful' and 'lazy') to describe Georgia, and the adjective 'essential' to describe the homework. This suggests that the sentence has been written either by Georgia's teacher, or someone who agrees with Georgia's teacher's viewpoint.

Sentence 3 is an opinion presented as a fact. This time, the adjective 'poor' and the phrase 'really difficult' show sympathy for Georgia. This was probably written by a friend of Georgia's, or someone who feels sorry for her.

Quick Test

1. Name two ways that you can check facts.
2. Name two ways that newspapers might be biased.
3. Name one way that facts can be changed into opinions.
4. Is this sentence a fact or an opinion?
'Port Vale is a brilliant football team.'
5. Is this sentence a fact or an opinion?
'Dogs have four legs'.

Key Point

Facts can be turned into opinions by using adjectives, e.g.:

Fred is a boy. (Fact.)

Fred is a *naughty* boy. (Opinion – the adjective 'naughty' has been added. Not everyone might agree that he is naughty.)

Tip

Choose adjectives of a similar type to show a consistent opinion. For example, using lots of sad words to describe what has happened to you might make the reader feel sympathy for you.

Key Words

- Fact
- Opinion
- Bias/Biased
- Adjective