

Activity Type

Reading and Writing Exercises: identifying, answering questions, gap-fill, categorising, rewriting sentences

Speaking Activity: guided discussion, communicative practice (pair work)

Focus

Critical thinking

Distinguishing facts from opinions

Aim

To practice distinguishing between facts and opinions in academic contexts.

Preparation

Make one copy of the two-page worksheet for each student.

Level

Intermediate (B1)

Time

35 minutes

Introduction

In this critical thinking worksheet, students learn the differences between facts and opinions and practice distinguishing between the two.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the two-page worksheet.

First, students read a text explaining the differences between facts and opinions and answer questions in their own words.

Exercise B - Possible answers

1. A fact can be proven with evidence. An opinion is what someone thinks or feels and can't be proven.
2. Check if there is evidence. If the words are personal or emotional, it's probably an opinion.
3. It helps you understand better, see false arguments, and use strong arguments in writing.

Students then read four statements and discuss them with a partner to decide if each one is a fact or an opinion.

Elicit answers from the class and ask students how they can identify what is a fact and what is an opinion.

Exercise A - Answer key

1. Opinion 2. Fact 3. Fact 4. Opinion

Next, students complete statements using words and phrases from a box.

Exercise C - Answer key

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. confirm | 2. should | 3. claim |
| 4. best | 5. Research | 6. According to |

After that, students categorise the words and phrases according to whether they signal a fact or an opinion.

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Procedure continued

Exercise D - Answer key

Fact	Opinion
research, demonstrate, confirm, according to, discover, data, show	claim, always, should, view, possibly, seem, best

Following that, students read a text about opinions that are disguised as facts.

Students then choose a statement and analyse it by answering questions.

Exercise F - Example answer

Statement A

1. The name of the study, who did it, and how they tested it.
2. What research supports this idea? What is the purpose of this text?
3. A study from 2020 showed that meditation helped people reduce stress more than other methods.

Finally, students read a rewritten statement to a partner and ask them if it is a fact or an opinion, and why they think so.

Ask individual students to share their statements for the class to discuss why they are either facts or opinions.

A. Read the text and answer the questions in your own words.

Understanding the difference between fact and opinion is an essential skill in critical thinking. A fact is a statement that can be proven true with evidence. An opinion is a personal belief or judgement, which cannot be proven true or false. To identify a fact, ask yourself: Can this be checked or supported with evidence? To spot an opinion, look for personal or descriptive language, such as opinion phrases, adjectives, adverbs or qualifiers. Most academic texts include a mix of facts and opinions. For example, a writer may present factual research and then give their interpretation of it. However, some texts, especially those written to argue and persuade, may be more heavily opinion-based. Recognising the difference helps you evaluate sources, avoid being misled, and build stronger evidence-based arguments in your own writing.

1. What is the main difference between a fact and an opinion?

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2. If you are unsure whether a statement is a fact or an opinion, what could you do to find out?

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3. Why is knowing the difference between a fact and an opinion important in critical thinking?

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B. In pairs, discuss whether each sentence states a fact or an opinion.

1. Governments are not doing enough to fight climate change.
2. The human body requires oxygen to survive.
3. Online courses have become more common in higher education since 2020.
4. Social media is the main reason young people feel anxious.

C. Complete each statement with one word or phrase from the box.

claim	research	always	should	demonstrate	confirm	view
possibly	according to	seem	discover	data	show	best

1. The findings what experts have previously suggested.
2. Universities offer more support to low-income students.
3. Economists often that reducing taxes boosts economic growth.
4. Shakespeare is widely considered to be the playwright of all time.
5. has consistently shown that smoking increases the risk of diabetes.
6. recent studies, the Earth's average temperature has risen by 1°C.

D. Categorise the words and phrases from Exercise C according to whether they signal a fact or an opinion.

Fact	Opinion

E. Read the text about opinions disguised as facts.

Sometimes, facts and opinions are manipulated. Opinions can be stated by using the language of facts, making them seem more trustworthy or objective than they really are.

For example: Research confirms that most people prefer working four days a week.

This sounds like a fact, but unless we know which research, how many people, or how the data was collected, it can't be proven. Without this information, the statement is simply an opinion presented in a more convincing way.

F. Choose one statement and analyse it by answering the questions.

- Research demonstrates that listening to music is the most effective stress-reduction technique.
- Studies confirm that home-schooled children are more sociable than public school students.
- Data shows that teenagers will soon use their phones for more than eight hours a day.

1. What specific information is needed to check this statement's accuracy?

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2. Write two questions that you would ask to decide if this is truly factual.

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3. Rewrite the statement to make it a fact or an opinion.

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G. Now, read your rewritten statement to a partner and ask them if it is a fact or an opinion, and why they think so.