

Functional Skills

English

Level 2 Reading R4b

Detect Fact & Opinion v1.0

Functional Skills English:

Level 2

Skill Standard:

Reading R4b

Coverage and Range:

‘Learners should know how to identify the difference between fact [and] opinion... and to use this in order to inform their choices (for example knowing when something is written to persuade them to support or to buy something through marketing materials, for example).’¹

¹ QCA Functional Skills guidance: amplification of the standards June 2008 QCA/08/3700

Facts & Opinions

The word *fact* stems from the Latin for truth or reality. Facts are statements that can be proven by reference to suitable and sufficient evidence. *The Moon goes round the Earth* and *The Earth goes round the Sun* are two separate **facts**, as they can both be independently verified as being true. Such remarks are also said to be objective.

By contrast, opinions are particular points of view that can differ from person to person and which are often based on emotional responses. *Lemon and lime marmalade is far nicer than strawberry jam* is an **opinion**, as it is based on subjective criteria: a personal preference for the taste of one preserve over another. *That was the worst performance in the history of football* is likewise an **opinion**, as there is no possible way the writer/speaker can have accurately compared the match he was watching against every other game played.

Be careful, though, not to misunderstand some facts as opinions and vice versa. *BBQ flavoured crisps are just awful* is clearly an **opinion**, as not everyone would agree and the claim is unprovable. *BBQ is my least favourite crisp flavour*, however, is a **fact**, as I can objectively list all the flavours offered and rank it last. *Jesse told me that he thinks BBQ flavoured crisps are just awful* is also a **fact** (Jesse did indeed do that), even though I am reporting Jesse's opinion in mentioning it to you. Lastly, *I prefer salt and vinegar to cheese and onion* is also a **fact**, even though the reasons for it are likely to be largely, if not exclusively, **opinion-based**, e.g. *Cheese and onion stinks!*

Exercise 1

Identify which of these sentences are facts and which opinions are circle your answer.

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. <i>Atomic</i> and <i>nuclear</i> are synonyms for one another. | Fact / Opinion |
| 2. Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel invented dynamite in the 1860s. | Fact / Opinion |
| 3. Skegness is the best seaside resort in the universe. | Fact / Opinion |
| 4. The best-ever touch-screen phone has just been released onto the open market | Fact / Opinion |
| 5. New medical devices will definitely make all our lives better. | Fact / Opinion |
| 6. Blackburn Rovers won the Premier League in 1994/5. | Fact / Opinion |
| 7. This drink is too sweet. | Fact / Opinion |
| 8. Pluto's orbit sometimes brings it closer to the Sun than Neptune. | Fact / Opinion |
| 9. 10am is the time she said she'd be here. | Fact / Opinion |
| 10. Diets don't work because they don't focus enough on how we eat. | Fact / Opinion |
| 11. I don't want to buy artificially sweetened drinks. | Fact / Opinion |
| 12. Young people are the reason this country is going to the dogs. | Fact / Opinion |
| 13. My wife drove into a metal bollard last week. | Fact / Opinion |
| 14. I think she is definitely the woman pictured in the CCTV. | Fact / Opinion |
| 15. More than eighty percent of colleges in the UK use BKSb's products. | Fact / Opinion |

Exercise 2

Identify whether each sentence in this extract from *The Times* is a fact or an opinion.

This is the season for self-loathing and mortification... Every newspaper and magazine is featuring a new you, a fresh start, quick-fix recipes, thin plans and slim promises. The latest magical vanishing trick... gleaned from experts and scientists and the wisdom of the ancients. And there will be a new absurd body goal foisted on women.

...

All diets, by their nature, deal with food. Usually bits of food. Last year it was protein and lots of little meals. This year it's sugar and no meals at all. The diet industry comes up with a continuous smorgasbord (vast range) of diets because the old diets don't work... Diets don't work because we don't work them.

Exercise 3

Highlight the **opinion** in the following text about a medical trial in which children with peanut allergies received treatment.

Nine out ten allergic children were gradually able to eat five peanuts a day... [and] NHS clinics could start using the method within a year. [However] experts told parents not to try the therapy at home...

About one per cent of children have peanut allergies... [and] several children die each year from anaphylactic shock after eating peanuts.

Researchers in Cambridge looked at 99 children aged 7 to 16, half of whom were given a daily dose of peanut protein equivalent to a seventieth of a peanut. This doubled every two weeks until it reached 800mg, equivalent to five nuts. Although some children felt sick, 84 per cent tolerated this dose. Half could cope with ten peanuts and when the control group was later given the therapy, 91 per cent were able to eat five peanuts, researchers say.

Andrew Clark, of Addenbrooke's Hospital, who led the study, said the children would take a daily or weekly dose of peanuts for at least two years. It was unclear whether the effect would be permanent.

Exercise 4

Re-read the following text and then answer the question that follows.

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Which, if any, of the following statements are presented as facts in the above text?

- Within two years the children in the trial would be able to eat peanuts normally.
- The doctors were committed to finding a cure for the children's peanut allergies.
- A daily dose of peanut protein equivalent to a seventieth of a peanut was given to all the children.
- Seven or more children die each year from anaphylactic shock after eating peanuts.
- The trial's techniques will also be used with other nuts.
- One per cent of children have peanut allergies that cause them anaphylactic shock.

Exercise 5

Read the tongue-in-cheek article below and then answer the question that follows.

I could kill for a raspberry jam sandwich. It's about three o'clock in the afternoon. Rain is pummelling against the window, everything in our village seems to have turned grey and I'm feeling desperately peckish. One of the dogs ate a glove this morning, and I'm wondering how many calories there might be in the other one. The other glove, not the other dog.

Our wise ancestors organised an orgy of drinking and feasting to cheer themselves up in winter. And what do we do? We make January even more miserable by giving up alcohol and starving ourselves with ever more elaborate diets.

Pick the odd one out of these four statements:

The writer is seriously harbouring thoughts of murder in order to obtain food.

The rain outside is literally beating the window.

The writer's dog has eaten one of his gloves.

The writer feels that January is made more miserable because of all the dieting people do. (It's the only one that we can say for certain is a fact.)

Exercise 6

Using the skills you have developed from the other bksb workbooks, write a short article in which you include at least four opinions and four facts. Pick any topic you like (a few suggestions are below) and have your tutor mark your work when you have finished.

Holiday Horrors

Fun at the Fair

Weather Woes
