

FACT VS. OPINION IN THE NEWS

Fact vs. Opinion in the News

Can you tell what a writer knows from what a writer thinks? This is the skill that keeps you reading critically.

NAME _____ DATE _____ CLASS _____

Fact or Opinion?

A fact is a statement that can be checked and proven true or false. An opinion is a judgement, preference, or belief — it can't be proven, only argued for.

§ Watch for opinion signal words: *best, worst, should, clearly, obviously, in my view, surely, too (expensive/slow/long)*. Facts are usually signalled by numbers, dates, named sources, and verifiable events.

Panel 1 · Side by Side

FACT	OPINION
The city opened the new library on 3 March.	The new library is the best thing the city has built in years.
The bus journey takes 42 minutes.	The bus journey feels like it takes forever.
Electric cars produce zero tailpipe emissions.	Electric cars are clearly the only responsible choice.

Should Your Town Ban Plastic Bags?

Read the article. Some sentences are facts, some are opinions — and a few disguise an opinion as if it were a fact.

The city council voted 7–2 last Tuesday to ban single-use plastic bags from all shops starting in January. Shoppers will be required to bring their own bags or buy a reusable one at the till for 50 cents.

Supporters say the move is long overdue. "We produce over 300 tonnes of plastic waste from bags every year in this city alone," said council member Elena Ruiz, citing a report from the environmental department. Local shop owner Daniel Oyelaran agrees, calling the ban "the single most sensible decision this council has made in a decade."

Not everyone is convinced. Critics argue the fee unfairly burdens lower-income families, who already stretch every dollar at the checkout. "Fifty cents might sound small, but it adds up fast for a family doing a big weekly shop," said local parent Grace Thompson. Others question whether the ban will even work. A nearby town introduced a similar policy two years ago, and plastic bag use there dropped by 68 percent within the first year, according to municipal records — though overall waste reduction has been harder to measure.

Whatever the outcome, one thing is certain: shoppers in this city will need to get used to carrying their own bags from January onward.

01 Comprehension Check

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned).

1. The council voted 7–2 in favour of the ban.
2. The ban starts in January.
3. Everyone in the city supports the new policy.
4. A nearby town saw plastic bag use drop by 68 percent after a similar ban.
5. The article states overall waste in the nearby town definitely decreased.

02 Fact or Opinion?

Label each statement from the article F (Fact) or O (Opinion).

1. The city council voted 7–2 last Tuesday to ban single-use plastic bags.
2. This is the single most sensible decision this council has made in a decade.
3. We produce over 300 tonnes of plastic waste from bags every year.
4. Fifty cents might sound small, but it adds up fast for a family doing a big weekly shop.
5. Plastic bag use there dropped by 68 percent within the first year.

03 Spot the Disguised Opinion

Some writers present an opinion using confident, fact-like language. Find one sentence in the article that sounds factual but is actually a judgement, and explain what makes it an opinion rather than a fact.

04 Rewrite It

Turn each opinion into a fact-based statement, and each fact into an opinion, keeping the same topic.

1. **Opinion** → **Fact**: "This is clearly a terrible idea." → _____
2. **Fact** → **Opinion**: "The library opened on 3 March." → _____
3. **Opinion** → **Fact**: "Public transport here is too unreliable." → _____

05 Discussion

Discuss in pairs, then share one idea with the class.

1. Why might a newspaper include both facts and opinions in the same article, rather than only facts?
2. Find a headline from a news site today. Is it reporting a fact, or is it really an opinion dressed up as one?
3. Do you think the 50-cent bag fee is fair? Use at least one fact from the article to support your opinion.

TEACHER'S REFERENCE

Fact vs. Opinion in the News

Answer key

ⓘ This page is for teachers only. Remove it before distributing the worksheet to students.

01 Comprehension Check — Answer Key

1. T · 2. T · 3. F (*"Not everyone is convinced"*) · 4. T · 5. F (*"though overall waste reduction has been harder to measure" — the drop in bag use is confirmed, overall waste reduction is explicitly not*)

02 Fact or Opinion? — Answer Key

1. F · 2. O · 3. F (*attributed to a report, verifiable*) · 4. O · 5. F (*attributed to municipal records*)

03 Spot the Disguised Opinion — Answer Key *(model answer)*

"Whatever the outcome, one thing is certain: shoppers in this city will need to get used to carrying their own bags" reads as a confident, fact-like prediction, but it's really a judgement about human behaviour that hasn't happened yet — it can't be verified the way a vote count or a measured percentage can.

04 Rewrite It — Answer Key *(Personal answers — accept any reasonable, well-formed rewrite, model shown)*

1. e.g. "The policy requires an extra step at checkout that some shoppers may find inconvenient."
2. e.g. "The library's opening in March was a welcome addition to the city."
3. e.g. "Buses on this route arrive, on average, 12 minutes later than scheduled."

05 Discussion *(Personal answers — accept any reasonable, well-explained response)*

TEACHER'S REFERENCE — CONTINUED

Fact vs. Opinion in the News

Teaching notes & classroom strategy

Teacher Notes

TIMING	§ panels: 8 min · Reading: 8 min · Ex 1–2: 12 min · Ex 3: 10 min · Ex 4: 12 min · Ex 5: 10 min. Total ≈ 60 min.
LEVEL	B1, stretches to B2 via Exercise 3 (the "disguised opinion" task is genuinely challenging and can be skipped for a pure B1 class).
KEY TEACHING POINT	The real skill isn't just labelling obvious opinions ("the best thing ever") — it's catching confident-sounding predictions and generalisations that have no actual proof behind them, which is exactly how misleading news and advertising work.
L1 INTERFERENCE (GERMAN)	German has a similarly clean fact/opinion distinction (<i>Tatsache</i> vs. <i>Meinung</i>), so the concept transfers easily; the challenge is usually vocabulary (signal words like "clearly," "surely," "arguably") rather than the underlying logic.
DIFFERENTIATION	Support: complete Exercise 2 as a class first, discussing each answer aloud before Exercise 3. Extension: have students find a real opinion article online and highlight every disguised-opinion sentence they can find.
PAIRS WITH	WS (<i>Reading block</i>) Context Clues: Guessing Meaning from Context, WS (<i>Reading block</i>) Making Inferences from a Short Text — completes the reading-skills strand launched this month.