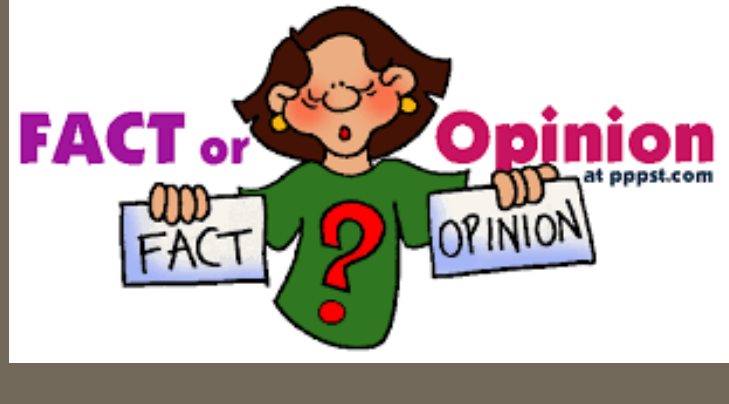




CANADIAN DREAM
LANGUAGE TRAINING ACADEMY



Fact or Opinion?

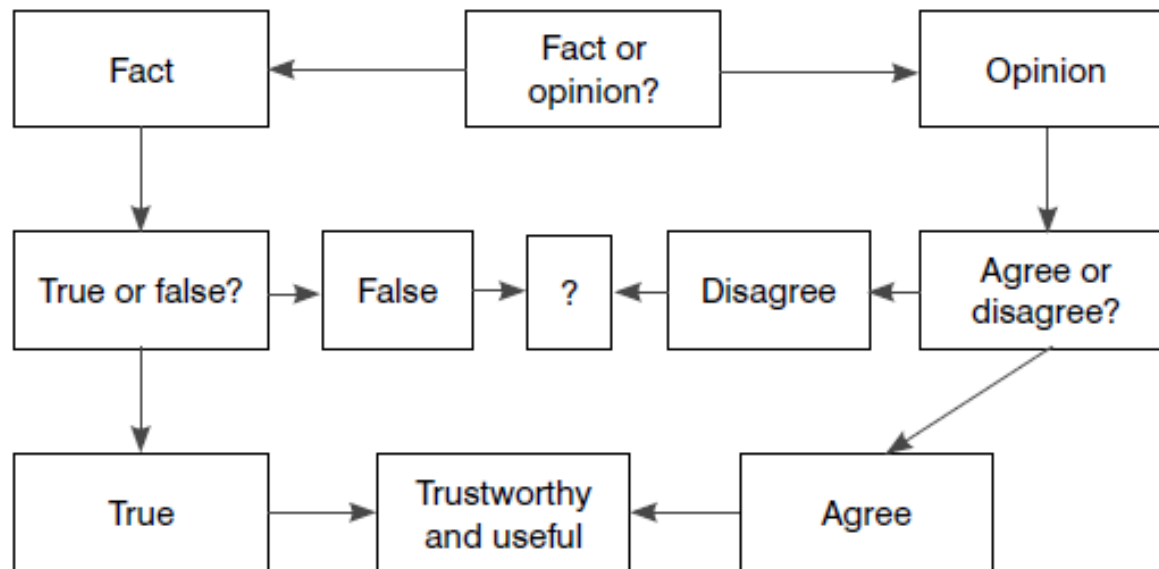
Intermediate & Upper-
Intermediate level

One of the key steps in writing is to **read around the subject**. Time spent learning these skills will help you avoid the use of unreliable or irrelevant materials.

When reading a text, ask yourself questions about the value of the text.

- Is this text fact or opinion?
- If fact, is it true?
- If opinion, do I agree?

These questions can be seen as a process:



A FACT OR AN OPINION?

EX:1. READ THE SENTENCES BELOW.

1. Decide whether they are fact or opinion.
2. Decide if you agree with the opinions.
3. If the factual sentences are true.



	Opinion or fact?	Agree or disagree?	True or false?
Example: <i>The USA has the biggest economy in the world</i>	<i>Fact</i>		<i>True</i>
a) Shakespeare was a great writer			
b) Shakespeare wrote textbooks			
c) Smoking can be dangerous			
d) Too many people smoke in Britain			
e) 95% of criminals cannot read			
f) Poor education causes half of all crime			



LET'S PRACTISE

NOTE: *Even short sentences can have a mixture of fact and opinion. Most longer texts, of course, consist of both.*

EX:2. Read the following text about crime in Britain and underline facts (_____) and opinions (.....).

- a) Britain has one of the highest crime rates in the world.
- b) A robbery takes place every five seconds. Clearly, criminals are not afraid of the police.
- c) Even if they are caught, few criminals ever appear in court.
- d) Most of those who are found guilty are let off with a small fine.
- e) To reduce crime, we need more police and tougher punishments.





EVALUATION

THE TEXT THAT YOU JUST ANALYZED CAN BE EVALUATED AS FOLLOWS:

- a) Fact, but only partly true. Britain does not have one of the highest overall crime rates in the world. For some crimes, e.g. car crime, the rate is high, but other countries, e.g. South Africa, have much higher rates of violent crime.
- b) This may or may not be true, but it does not follow that criminals are unafraid of the police.
- c) Fact, but not true. A significant number of those arrested are charged and later prosecuted.
- d) This fact is distorted. A fine is not ‘letting off’. What is meant by ‘small’?
- e) This is opinion. More police would probably help reduce crime, but it is not clear if more severe punishments would have that result.

The bottom line is even if the facts are correct, the opinions that are expressed may not be reliable.

EX:3. Evaluate the texts on the next page in a similar way, using the table below.

1. Underline and assess the facts and opinions.
2. Decide if the text as a whole is trustworthy.



Text	Are the facts true?	Do I agree with the opinions?	Trustworthy?
a			
b			
c			
d			



FACT OR OPINION?

- A)** Every year large numbers of students travel abroad to study at university. Most of them spend thousands of pounds on their degree courses. The cost of travel and accommodation adds significantly to their expenses.
- B)** London is an ideal city for young students. Britain's lively capital, with a population of two million, is the perfect place to live and study. Cheap, comfortable accommodation is always available, and transport is provided by the clean and reliable underground railway system.
- C)** Global warming affects most people in the world, especially those living in low-lying areas near the sea. It has been predicted that the melting of polar ice may cause the sea to rise by as much as twelve metres by 2050. This would cause flooding in many major coastal cities, such as Tokyo.
- D)** There is significant new evidence of the effects of heavy alcohol consumption by young people. In Britain in 2000 nearly 800 people under 44 died from cirrhosis of the liver, a condition which is mainly caused by excess drinking. This is over four times higher than the number in 1970.



ASSESSING READING TEXTS

EX:1.

- a opinion
- b fact false
- c fact true
- d opinion
- e fact false
- f fact and opinion



EX:3.

- a Factual and mainly true until last sentence (In the future . . .) which is an opinion.
- b Most sentences mix facts and opinions. Most of the facts are untrue, e.g. the population is not two million. Clearly an unreliable source!
- c Although this begins with a generally accepted fact, the second sentence contains a totally untrue statement, and the speculation built on this is absurd!
- d Mainly factual, except for an opinion in the first sentence (significant). The penultimate sentence is speculation