

FACT, OPINION & INFERENCE

A FACT IS A TRUE STATEMENT THAT CAN BE PROVEN USING EVIDENCE AND TESTING

- Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.
- The Earth revolves around the sun.
- Humans have 206 bones in an adult body.
- Oxygen is required for human survival.

What Makes a Statement a Fact?

- **Verifiable:** You can test or measure it to see if it is true.
- **Universal:** It remains true no matter who is looking at it or feeling it.
- **Evidence-Based:** It relies on data, history, or science rather than personal feelings.

Opinion

- An **opinion** is a personal belief, feeling, or judgment that cannot be proven true or false.
- Unlike facts, opinions vary from person to person.

Examples of Opinions

- Winter is the best season because skiing is fun.
- Classical music is boring to listen to.
- Paris is the most beautiful city in the world.
- Public speaking is terrifying for everyone.

What Makes a Statement an Opinion?

- **Subjective:** It is based on personal taste, emotions, or viewpoints.
- **Biased:** It often contains value judgments or emotional words (e.g., *best*, *worst*, *boring*, *beautiful*).
- **Debatable:** Other people can reasonably disagree with it using their own logic or feelings.

Feature	Fact	Opinion
Definition	A statement that can be proven true with evidence.	A personal belief , feeling, or judgment.
Basis	Science , data, observation, or history.	Personal taste , emotions, or viewpoints.
Proof	Can be verified through testing or records.	Cannot be proven true or false.
Agreement	Universal (remains true for everyone).	Debatable (varies from person to person).
Keywords	<i>Calculated, discovered, measured, record.</i>	<i>Best, worst, beautiful, think, believe.</i>
Example	Water freezes at 0°C.	Ice cream is the most delicious treat.

Inference

- An **inference** is a logical conclusion or educated guess based on **facts, observations, and prior knowledge**.
- It is an explanation of *why* something is happening, even if you did not see it happen directly.

Examples of Inferences

- **Observation:** You see someone carrying a wet umbrella and wearing a raincoat.
 - **Inference: It is raining outside.**
- **Observation:** A dog is wagging its tail, jumping up and down, and holding a toy.
 - **Inference: The dog is happy and wants to play.**
- **Observation:** The ground is covered in black ash and smoke is rising from a nearby hillside.
 - **Inference: There was recently a fire in the area.**
- **Observation:** A student comes into the classroom yawning and rubbing their eyes.
- **Inference: The student did not get enough sleep last night.**

What Makes a Statement an Inference?

- **Beyond the Visible:** It goes one step further than what you can directly see, hear, or touch.
- **Evidence-Based:** Unlike a random guess, it relies heavily on clues and logic.
- **Not Always Perfect:** Because it is an interpretation, an inference can sometimes be proven wrong when new facts appear.

Fact –Inference – Opinion

- **Fact/Observation:** The kitchen floor is covered in water and the pipe under the sink is dripping.
- **Inference:** The pipe has a leak and needs to be repaired.
- **Opinion:** Plumbing is the most frustrating chore in the house.

Example:

Thabo walked into the classroom, his head hanging low. He stared at his red-inked report card and stuffed it quickly into the bottom of his schoolbag.

- The text doesn't *tell* us how Thabo feels.
- We can make an inference!
- **The Fact:** His head is low, there is red ink, and he hides the report.
- **Your Prior Knowledge:** Red ink usually means bad marks. People hide things when they are ashamed or upset.
- **Your Inference:** Thabo failed or did poorly in his exams, and he is disappointed or scared to show his parents.

Common mistake

- Confusing an **inference** with a **wild guess**.
- An inference must *always* be tied to a clue in the text.
- *Thabo hid his report card because his dog ate his homework.*
- Wild guess!
- There is no mention of a dog in the text!
- Always stick to the clues provided.

Remember

- **Facts** are real, measurable, and provable.
- **Opinions** are feelings, beliefs, and use judgment words.
- **Inferences** are logical conclusions made by combining textual clues with your own life experience.
- Next time you scroll through social media or read a text, ask yourself: Is this a fact, an opinion, or am I inferring something?
- Keep reading between the lines, and base your answers in the text that you read.

Fact vs. Opinion

Instructions: Read the statements below. In the space provided, write **FACT** if the statement can be proven true, or **OPINION** if it shows a personal belief or feeling. Underline the *keyword/clue word* that helped you decide for the opinions.

1. South Africa held its first democratic election on 27 April 1994.

2. Netball is the most exciting sport to watch at school sports days.

3. Whales are mammals that breathe air through a blowhole.

4. Smoking should be completely banned in public spaces because it is disgusting. _____
5. The Capital city of Limpopo province is Polokwane.

6. **Rewrite the following sentence so that it becomes a purely factual statement:**
"The legendary musician Miriam Makeba gave a flawless performance in America."

7. **Explain the difference:** Why is the statement "*Maths is a difficult subject*" an opinion rather than a fact?

Making Inferences

Instructions: Read the short comprehension text below and answer the questions that follow by reading *between the lines*.

The Rainy Commute

Sipho stood at the taxi rank, shifting his weight from one foot to the other. He kept looking at his watch and then staring down the empty, wet road. His uniform shirt was damp, and his shoes were coated in thick brown mud. When a minibus taxi finally pulled up, Sipho let out a loud sigh, threw his wet hood back, and climbed inside. He reached into his pocket, counted out a few coins, and frowned heavily before passing them forward to the driver.

1. **State TWO facts** from the text that tell you what the weather was like that day.
2. **Inferential Question:** What does the text suggest about Sipho's emotional state while waiting? Quote **two separate physical clues** from the text to support your answer.
3. **Inferential Question:** Was the taxi early, on time, or late? Explain your answer by making an inference based on Sipho's actions.
4. **Inferential Question:** Why do you think Sipho "frowned heavily" when counting his coins? Make a logical inference.
5. Based on the entire text, infer **where** Sipho was likely traveling to. Give a reason for your answer.
6. Is the following statement a **fact**, an **opinion**, or an **inference**? "*Sipho is a poor student who cannot afford taxi fare.*" Explain your choice.

Memorandum

Fact vs. Opinion

1. **FACT** (*Can be verified via historical records*)
 2. **OPINION** – Clue word: **most exciting**
 3. **FACT** (*Can be verified scientifically*)
 4. **OPINION** – Clue words: **should be / disgusting**
 5. **FACT** (*Can be verified via geographical maps*)
 6. **Example:** *"The musician Miriam Makeba gave a performance in America."* OR *"Miriam Makeba performed a concert in America."*
 7. It is an opinion because difficulty is **subjective**. It is based on a person's individual experience or feelings. Some learners find Maths easy or enjoyable, meaning the statement is **debatable** and cannot be universally proven by science.
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Making Inferences

1. *Any two of the following:* The road was "wet" / His shirt was "damp" / His shoes had "thick brown mud" / He wore a "wet hood".
(*Note: These are directly stated facts, not inferences*).
2. He was **anxious, impatient, or stressed**.
 - *Clues (Any two):* "shifting his weight from one foot to the other" / "kept looking at his watch" / "staring down the empty... road".
3. The taxi was **late** (1).
 - *Explanation:* We infer this because Sipho kept checking his watch continuously and staring impatiently down an empty road. When it finally arrived, he let out a "loud sigh" of relief/frustration.
4. *Accept any logical inference backed by the context:* He realised he did not have enough money for the fare OR taxi prices had gone up and he was unhappy about spending his last coins.

5. He was going to **school**.

- *Reason:* The text states he was wearing a "uniform shirt".

6. This statement is an **inference / incorrect inference / wild guess**.

- *Explanation:* The text only tells us he frowned at his coins. It does not state his total wealth or bank status. Assuming he is completely poor without more evidence is a stretch or a weak inference based on limited text clues.