Reading On The Move

Evidence vs. Emotions
Facts vs. Opinions

What is the difference between a *fact* and an *opinion*? Well, *facts* are statements that can be proven. Proof can come from what we experience (observations) or from research.

Example: *In New York, the weather begins to grow colder in the fall.*

This statement can be proven. You could ask someone who lives in New York if the weather begins to grow colder in the fall, or you could research weather and temperatures in New York in an almanac.

Opinions are statements that tell beliefs, feelings, and judgments of a person. Even if you agree with the opinion, it doesn't mean the opinion is a fact. Words like *think, believe, best, worst, should, wonderful,* etc. are clues that the statement is probably an opinion.

Example: *Fall is the most beautiful time of the year.*

Do you think fall is the most beautiful time of the year? Or do you like summer better? Maybe you like winter or spring better. This is a matter of opinion. Some people may agree with this statement, others may disagree. There is no way to prove this statement.

Let's practice! Decide whether you think the statements below are facts or opinions. Write an **F** on the line if you think the statement is a fact and an **O** if you think the statement is an opinion. The first one is done for you.

__F__ **1.** The truck was dirty.

____ **2.** The woman lost her luggage.

____ **3.** We think Dennis committed the crime.

____ **4.** City Hall is the tallest building in town.

____ **5.** That show was not very good.

____ **6.** I didn't wear a coat.

____ **7.** The Beatles were the best band in history.

____ **8.** I believe we can win this game.

____ **9.** I am the first person in my family to go to college.

____ **10.** This chair is wet.

Keep in mind that both facts and opinions can change. That is why it is important to have evidence for support. Let's explore this!

Example: *Grass is green.*

Usually this statement is a fact; however, is grass *always* green? If there is a drought, grass turns brown. That means this fact can change. Giving supporting evidence proves the fact. For example, "*We have had some rain, so the grass is green.*" It is important to be able to support your facts with evidence (other facts) so you can prove to your audience that your fact is true.

Opinions can also change. Sometimes when evidence is provided that goes against an opinion, the person will change his/her opinion. Often times, it is the goal of persuasive writing to provide evidence to change the opinion of the audience. Remember, providing evidence is very important to support your opinion.

Now practice writing some facts and opinions. Complete each sentence below.
If you don't know a fact about any of the topics below, you may look up
information on the Internet or at the library.

> **Example***: **Penguins:***
>
> *I think that <u>penguins are the cutest animal.</u> (opinion)*
>
> *I know that <u>penguins cannot fly.</u> (fact)*

11. The sun:

    I think that _____.

    I know that _____.

12. Dinosaurs:

    I think that _____.

    I know that _____.

13. Space exploration:

    I think that _____.

    I know that _____.

14. Fruit:

    I think that _____.

    I know that _____.

15. Vegetables:

    I think that _____.

    I know that _____.

16. Motorcycles:

    I think that _____.

    I know that _____.

Write five facts. Follow each fact with some evidence.

       Example*: This pie is hot. It just came out of the oven.*
                       (fact)   (evidence)

17. _____

_____

18. _____

_____

19. _____

_____

20. _____

_____

21. _____

_____

Now, write two opinions. Follow each opinion with some evidence.

       Example: *Sulfur smells bad. It smells like rotten eggs.*
                     (opinion)   (evidence)

22. _____

_____

23. _____

_____

Much like an opinion, a **generalization** is a statement that cannot be proven. Generalizations usually include words like *all, always,* and *never*. These words allow for no exceptions. Often times there are exceptions to most statements.

Example: *Never trust little boys.*

This statement is a generalization and it is false. There may be little boys you should not trust, but there are also little boys who you can trust.

When a general statement is followed by a specific example, a logical conclusion can be drawn. The example must be true in order to draw a conclusion that is true. If the example is false, the conclusion will be false.

<u>Formula</u>: ***General statement. + Specific example. = Conclusion.***

Example: *All engines make noise. + Cars have engines. = Cars make noise.*

From the general statement and specific example, a logical conclusion was drawn.

If the statement were:

All engines make noise. + Bicycles have engines. = Bicycles make noise.

The *specific example* is false, which then makes the conclusion false.

Complete each formula below. The statement is written for you. Write a specific example and draw a conclusion. The first one is done for you.

24. All dogs bark. + _____ Dachshunds are dogs. _____ . =

    _Dachshunds bark._____ .

25. All candy is sweet. + _____ . =

_____ .

26. All vegetables are healthy. + _____ . =

_____ .

27. All wild animals are dangerous. + _____ . =

_____ .

28. All flowers are beautiful. + _____ . =

_____ .

29. Plants need water to grow. + _____ . =

_____ .

30. All math is hard. + _____ . =

_____ .

There are other ways to draw conclusions when you read. Drawing conclusions is similar to making an inference. Making an inference is when you use information that is stated directly to figure out a message that is unstated or hinted at in the text. However, when drawing a conclusion you use what you have read along with your own personal experiences.

Formula: *Stated facts + Implied facts + Personal experience/knowledge = Conclusion.*

Example: *History shows us that many people mistreat dogs. They have felt that dogs do not feel emotions. Some people have made a living forcing dogs to fight to their death. Dog fighting rings are still found today. People bet money on which dog they think will survive the fight.*

There is much evidence of dogs showing human emotions. For example, some dogs are trained to warn their owners if they are going to have a seizure. It has been documented that dogs appear to grieve over the loss of a friend, whether animal or human. Some studies have shown dogs being able to sense when their owner is sad or ill. Dogs can also be very curious animals; some might even call them nosey. Often times dogs will want to show owners what they have found.

So, what conclusion can be drawn about the emotions of dogs?

Stated facts:

- Dogs can be trained to warn their owners before a seizure hits.

- Dogs grieve over the loss of a friend.

- Dogs can sense when their owner is sad or ill.

Implied facts:

- Dogs are curious and want to communicate with their owners.

Personal experience/knowledge:

- My dog is excited to see me when I get home and he is sad when I leave.

Conclusion:

- I believe dogs feel human emotions such as happiness, sadness, grief, and curiosity.

It is important to remember that the conclusions you draw may be different from conclusions drawn by other readers because you may have different personal experience and knowledge. What you bring to your reading is just as important as the information you gather while you are reading.

This report on herbs was written by Humberto Vasquez, a migrant worker. Read the report and answer the questions on the next page.

An herb is a low-growing plant that has a fleshy or juicy stem when it is young. The stems of some herbs develop hard, woody tissue when they grow old. Most herbs are perennials. The tops die but the roots remain alive and produce new plants year after year. Some herbs are annuals though. They die completely each year. These the gardener replaces by planting new seeds. The word "herb" comes from the Latin word "herba," meaning grass, green stalks or blades. Botanists use the word to mean any plant with soft, succulent tissues. But many people use the word to mean only herbs with some economic value.

Some herbs are used in cooking, to flavor foods. Others give scents to perfumes. Still others are used for medicines. Some herbs, like balm and sage, are valued for their leaves. Saffron is picked for its buds and flowers. Fennel seeds are valuable in relishes and seasoning. Vanilla fruit pods yield vanilla flavoring. Ginseng is valued for its aromatic roots.

People often grow herbs in their gardens. The plants grow well with little care. Gardeners plant the herbs in good soil that has been well-cultivated. They choose a sunny spot that is easily accessible. When the herbs begin to grow, the gardener keeps the soil loose and free from weeds. When the plants are grown, the leaves, stems, or seeds are dried. These are pounded to a fine powder, placed in airtight containers, and then stored for later use.

Although herbs have little food value, they make food tasty and more flavorful. Cooking with herbs has become a culinary art, and it adds great interest to any menu.

Decide whether each statement is true or false based on what you have read about herbs. Write a **T** for true and an **F** for false.

____   **31.**   Perennials are plants that produce new plants year after year.

____   **32.**   The word "herba" is a Greek word meaning soft plants.

____   **33.**   Herbs can be used for cooking, perfumes, and medicine.

____   **34.**   Planting herbs takes a lot of time and energy.

____   **35.**   Herbs do not need to grow in sunny areas.

____   **36.**   Cooking with herbs has become a culinary art.

37.   Write three stated facts about herbs:

_____

_____

_____

38.   Write one implied fact about herbs:

_____

39.   What personal experience do you have with herbs?

_____

_____

_____

40.   Write one conclusion you can make about herbs:

_____

☞ Answer Key

1.	F	**4.**	F	**7.**	O	**10.**	F
2.	F	**5.**	O	**8.**	O		
3.	O	**6.**	F	**9.**	F		

For numbers **11-16**, you should write what you think about each topic and what you know about each topic. Here are some examples:

Sun:
I think the sun beautiful.
I know the sun is a large ball of gas.

Fruit:
I think fruit is yummy.
I know fruit is healthy.

Dinosaurs:
I think dinosaurs are scary.
I know dinosaurs are prehistoric animals.

Vegetables:
I think vegetables are gross.
I know vegetables are healthy.

Space exploration:
I think outer space is mysterious.
I know that men have walked on the moon.

Motorcycles:
I think motorcycles are fun.
I know motorcycles are dangerous.

For numbers **17-21**, you should write five facts that are supported with evidence. Use the example as a guide.

For numbers **22-23**, you should write two opinions that are supported with evidence. Use the example as a guide.

Here are some possible answers to questions 24-30.
24. All dogs bark. + Dachshunds are dogs. = Dachshunds bark.
25. All candy is sweet. + Chocolate is candy. = Chocolate is sweet.
26. All vegetables are healthy. + Carrots are a vegetable. = Carrots are healthy.
27. All wild animals are dangerous. + Tigers are wild animals. = Tigers are dangerous.
28. All flowers are beautiful. + Roses are flowers. = Roses are beautiful.
29. All plants need water to grow. + Trees are plants. = Trees need water go grow.
30. All math is hard. + Algebra is math. = Algebra is hard.

| 31. T | 33. T | 35. F |
| 32. F | 34. F | 36. T |

There are multiple answers for the questions below. Here are some possible answers.
37. Herbs can be used in cooking.
   Herbs can be used in perfumes.
   Herbs can be used in medicine.
38. Herbs have many purposes.
39. Adding herbs to my dinner makes the food taste better.
40. Herbs can be used in many aspects of our lives, from cooking, to perfume, to medicine.