

Fact vs. Opinion Tools

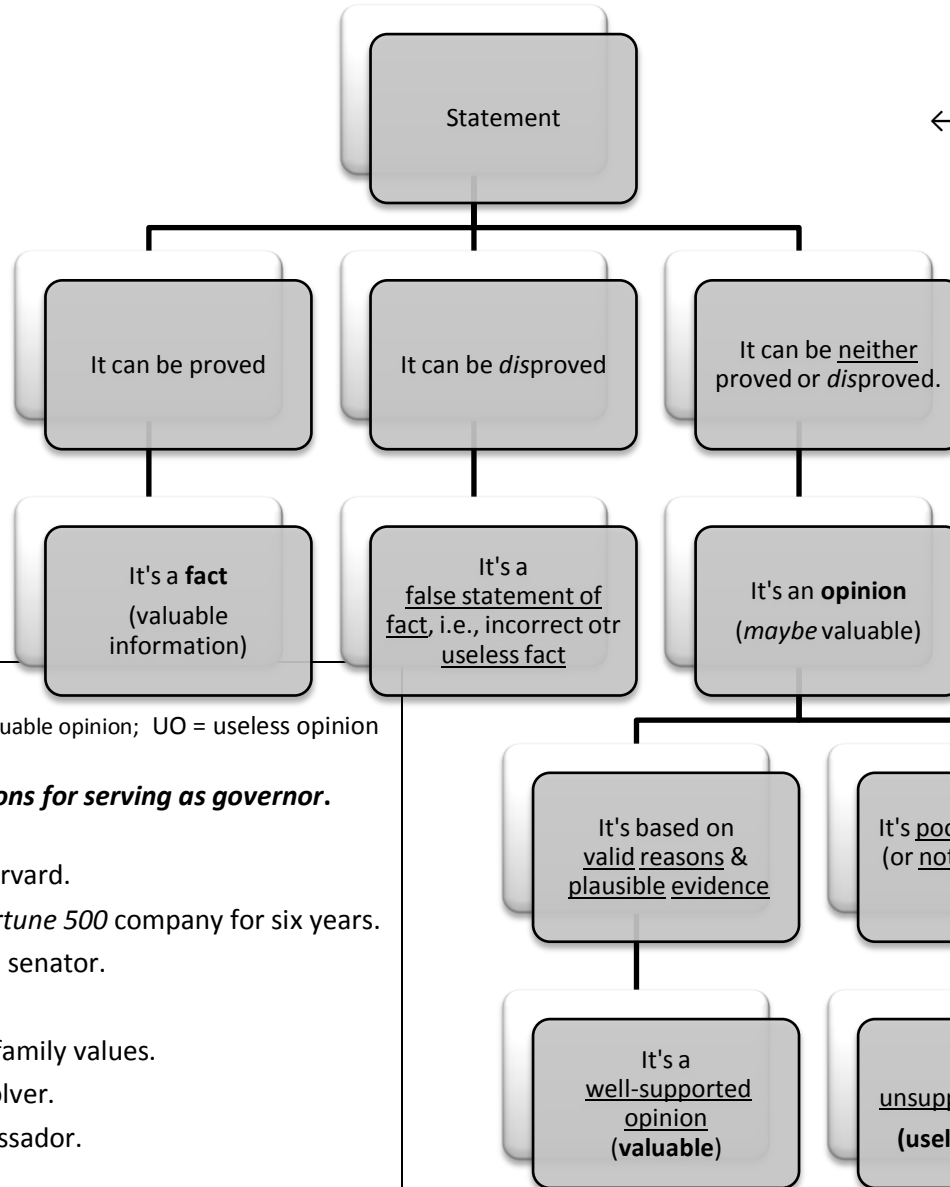
← Fact vs. Opinion Decision Tree

Value judgment words that signal a *(potentially valuable)* opinion:

better	interesting
more	outdated
less	beautiful
safer	wealthy
most	incompetent
greatest	successful
worst	irresponsible
best	dangerous
excellent	fascinating
harmful	effective

Moderating words that signal a *(potentially valuable)* opinion:

perhaps	apparently
presumably	one possibility is
in our opinion	many experts believe
in our view	many people think
it seems likely	this suggests that



Evaluate this statement step by step:

VF = valuable fact; UF = useless fact; VO = valuable opinion; UO = useless opinion

Anna Garcia has excellent qualifications for serving as governor.

- ___ 1. She has a law degree from Harvard.
- ___ 2. She was chief counsel of a *Fortune 500* company for six years.
- ___ 3. She served 12 years as a state senator.
- ___ 4. She is extremely ethical.
- ___ 5. She is strongly committed to family values.
- ___ 6. She is an effective problem solver.
- ___ 7. Her father served as an ambassador.
- ___ 8. Her brother is a millionaire.
- ___ 9. She has been married to the same man for 20 years.
- ___ 10. She has smart, beautiful children.
- ___ 11. She is attractive.
- ___ 12. She comes across well on TV.

Making Inferences & Drawing Logical Conclusions

1. Please don't spend a lot of money on my birthday present. I'm just thankful to have such a wonderful mother and father. I'll just use the little money I have to buy myself an inexpensive coat. And if I can only find coats that cost more than what I have saved up, I'll just continue wearing the coat I have, even if the zipper is broken. What is the message?
 - a. I don't want a gift.
 - b. Buy me a coat.
 - c. The zipper on my coat is broken.

2. Jessica called Amy Wednesday after school and told her she would be available to work on their school project after dinner. After dinner, Amy rode her bike over to Jessica's house. When Amy arrived she rang the bell, but there was no answer. Amy got back on her bike and went home. What has Amy concluded?
 - a. Jessica changed her mind and did not want to meet up to work on the project.
 - b. No one was at Jessica's house.
 - c. Amy changed her mind and decided to go home.

3. Which conclusion is best supported by this sentence: "The Golden Gate Bridge spans the San Francisco Bay, connecting northern California to the peninsula of San Francisco."
 - a. The bridge enables many people to go from San Francisco to northern California
 - b. The bridge has the longest span of any other suspension bridge
 - c. The bridge is the most popular bridge in the Bay Area

4. "Rain lashed against the windows as Jane stamped up and down the room stopping only to check the time on the mantle clock every five minutes. Her book, bought with such enthusiasm the day before, was flung carelessly in the corner beside the abandoned picnic basket. Jane stamped her feet and began to repeat her earlier tedious complaints against nature. Emily merely smiled to herself and carried on reading the newspaper without as much as a nod of the head."
 - a. How would you describe Jane's mood? What part of the excerpt made you think this?

5. "The men walked down the streets to the mine with their heads bent close to their chests. In groups of five or six they scurried on. It was impossible to recognize individuals from the small gaps between their caps, pulled down over their eyes, and the tightly bound scarves tied over the bottom half of their faces."
 - a. What was the weather like as the men walked to the mine? What part of the passage made you think this?

Use Fact vs. Opinion Tools to Help You Decide if the Following are Facts, Opinions, or Possibly Both

1. Birthdays are fun to celebrate.
2. Dogs often growl when someone takes their bones away.
3. Teenagers are younger than adults.
4. Students get a better education in smaller schools than in larger schools.
5. Houses are often built from wood.
6. Chocolate milk tastes better than plain milk.
7. Pepsi is the best kid of soda pop to drink.
8. Chocolate ice cream has a better flavor than butter pecan ice cream.
9. Summers are warmer than winters in most parts of the world.
10. Macintosh computers are easier to use than Windows computers.
11. Spiders have eight legs.
12. Horses eat hay and oats.
13. Coffee tastes better if you add cream and sugar.
14. Pumpkin pie needs to be part of Thanksgiving dinner.
15. The traffic in big cities is awful.
16. Cats catch mice and eat them.
17. People who are 40 or older are considered old.
18. Abraham Lincoln's birthday is on February 18.
19. It would be fun to visit Disneyland or Disneyworld every week.
20. If you have a cold, you should stay home from school.
21. More people own blue cars than pink cars.
22. It's fun playing computer games.
23. It's easy to learn how to speak Spanish.
24. Pencils are easier to write with than pens.
25. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on March 17.
26. Some schools have 200 students in them.
27. Reading is the most important subject in school.
28. Ice cream is kept cold in a freezer.
29. We get milk and other dairy products from cows.
30. Summer is the best season because school is out.
31. In 1787, the British Government sent a fleet of convicts to colonize Australia.
32. America's treatment of the homeless is a disgrace.
33. In 1763, the Treaty of Paris divided France's North American Empire between Britain and Spain.
34. Poetry and politics just don't mix.
35. Because of a newly formed and largely incompetent national weather service, the city of Galveston, Texas was practically destroyed in a horrifying hurricane that left thousands dead.
36. In 1852, the President of the United States, Franklin Pierce, was greedy to expand U.S. influence, and he formally offered to buy the island of Cuba.
37. On July 2, 1822, the brilliant ex-slave and rebel leader Denmark Vesey was captured by South Carolina authorities, who had discovered Vesey's planned rebellion and were determined to hunt him down.
38. Writer and researcher Rachel Carson will always be remembered as the mother of modern ecology.
39. Between 1945 and 1960, the number of cars in the United States increased by 133 percent.
40. Those opposed to government spending conveniently forget how much the GI Bill—a program that allotted billions of dollars to help veterans of World War Two—helped expand America's postwar economy.
41. There are many different species of insects in the world.
42. Many people order pepperoni on their pizzas.
43. Saturdays are the best day of the week.
44. It is important to read newspapers to keep up with what is going on in the world.
45. Farmers grow many different kinds of crops.
46. Jumping rope is a form of exercise

Evaluating an Author's Argument

Apply Critical Reading Skills and Ask:

1. What is the author's *purpose*?
2. What is the author's *intended audience*?
3. What is the author's *point of view*?
4. What is the author's *tone*?
5. What is the author's *intended meaning*?
6. Does the author include *facts, opinions, or both*?
7. What *logical inferences* (conclusions) can you make?

AND

Move through the Evaluation of the Author's Argument:

Step 1. Identify the Issue

What controversial topic is this about?

Step 2. Determine the Author's Argument

What is the author's position, bias, point of view?

Step 3. Identify Assumptions on which Author Bases Argument

What assumptions does the author take for granted?

Step 4. Identify the Types of Support the Author Presents

What types of support does the author present? Facts or opinions? Data? Statistics? Arguments?

Step 5. Decide Whether the Support is Relevant

Does the support pertain directly to the author's argument?

Step 6. Determine if the Argument is Objective & Complete

- *Is the argument based on facts or opinions?*
- *Is the author missing any information that might weaken or disprove his/her position?*

Step 7. Evaluate the Overall Validity & Credibility

Is the argument logical & believable? Are the conclusions logically drawn?

Exercise: Evaluating a Writer's Purpose, Audience, Point of View, and Tone to Determine Credibility:

Evaluate the following excerpt from an argument against gun control written by a newspaper columnist who once served as a public relations specialist for the National Rifle Association. Evaluate it for credibility based on these factors:

- Does the writer support the claim(s) with evidence?
- Does the writer reveal how and where evidence was obtained?
- Does the writer recognize that other points of view may be legitimate?
- Does the writer use sarcasm or make personal attacks on opponents?
- Does the writer reach a conclusion that is in proportion to the amount of evidence provided?
- Does the writer have credentials that invest the work with authority?
- Does the writer seem biased?

¹The gun control issue, then, is never a question of what the government "allows" us to own.

²The Constitution states that the government has *no authority* over the firearms ownership of the people. ³The people, not the government, possess the absolute right in the area of gun ownership. ⁴If you or I want to own an AR-15 or any other gun, it is none of the government's business *why* we want it, and certainly none of its business to presume that we may be up to no good. ⁵In a free society, the salient question is *never* whether the government can trust the people but always whether the people can trust their government. ⁶The history of the Second Amendment makes this point ever so clear. ⁷You could spend a lifetime studying the writings of the Founding Fathers and would never find among any of them the kinds of sentiments expressed by our 20th-century gun controllers – sentiments that reflect a profound distrust for a free people. ⁸You would not find a single person among all the founders of our nation who was worried about firearms in the hands of the citizenry. ⁹The very idea is preposterous. – Roger Koopman, "Second Defense"

More Practice: Do p. 568-571 in *Opening Doors*