Is That a Fact?

Goals
To articulate the difference between fact and opinion and to identify ways to clarify or qualify statements of opinion.

Time
30 minutes

Materials
Sets of Fact/Opinion Statement Cards (see directions below)

Fact/Opinion Statement Cards
Create sets of Fact/Opinion Statement Cards by writing the following statements on blank index cards, one statement per card. Add or substitute statements of your choice.

- Girls are smarter than boys.
- Americans are friendly.
- Some boys are good at sports.
- Utah is a state in the United States.
- The world is a better place now than it was 100 years ago.
- Wheelchair users feel sorry for themselves.
- The Nile is the longest river in the world.
- Women make better teachers than men.
- People with accents are not smart.
- Most people in Africa live in urban areas.
- The United States is the richest country in the world.
- Americans love French fries.
- Some rich people are stuck up.
- There is more farmland in the United States than in any other country.
- Homeless people are lazy.
- In the United States, the sun comes up every day.
- Men are usually taller than women.
- This is the best school in the whole town.
- Judaism is a religion.
- China is the most populous country in the world.
- Most people in Honduras are unhappy.

Introduction
Understanding the difference between fact and opinion is critical to our ability to examine our reactions to events and people. Stereotypes and prejudices are often based on opinions that are perceived as facts.

Procedure
Write three examples of facts on one side of the board and three examples of opinions on the other side of the board.

Examples of facts:
- George has blue eyes.
- This room has four windows.
- There are 50 states in the United States.

Examples of opinions:
- This room is too warm.
- Math class is boring.
- The best cars are made in the United States.

Ask participants to identify the statements of fact and the statements of opinion. Label each group.

Have participants work with partners to come up with definitions for the words “fact” and “opinion.” Choose a group definition (use a dictionary if necessary).

Divide participants into small groups of four to five people each. Provide each group with a set of Fact/Opinion Statement cards. Ask one person in each group to “deal” the cards out to the group members until all cards have been distributed.
Fact/Opinion Statement Cards

China is the most populous country in the world.

Americans are friendly.

Utah is a state in the United States.

Today is a beautiful day.

Women make better teachers than men.

Judaism is a religion.

Girls are smarter than boys.

Some boys are good at sports.

The United States is the richest country in the world.

Most people in Africa live in urban areas.

Mount Everest is the tallest mountain in the world.

Some redheads have bad tempers.

Wheelchair users feel sorry for themselves.

Some rich people are stuck up.

Men are usually taller than women.

The world is a better place now than it was 100 years ago.

Most people in Honduras are unhappy.

There is more farmland in the United States than in any other country.

Americans love French fries.

Homeless people are lazy.

This is the best school in the whole town.

The Nile is the longest river in the world.

People with accents are not smart.

The sun comes up every day.
Have each small group divide its work space into three areas, one labeled “Facts,” another “Opinions,” and the third “Need More Information.” Have participants work together to place the statements in the appropriate areas according to the definitions they agreed on earlier.

Ask participants to examine the statements in the “Need More Information” category. Have them work together to identify sources of information that would prove or disprove the statements.

**Discussion**

When the small groups have completed their work, bring the whole group back together to discuss the process. Use the following questions to check the students’ understanding of the difference between fact and opinion.

- How can you tell whether something is a fact or an opinion?
- What makes deciding if something is a fact or an opinion difficult?
- When you were working in small groups, did everyone agree on which statements were fact and which were opinion? Could any of the opinion statements be considered facts if we had more information or if the statements were more specific?
- If you’re not sure whether something is a fact, what can you do?
- Why is knowing whether something is a fact or an opinion important?

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