Fact vs. Theory vs. Opinion vs. Bias

**Fact:** “A thing that is indisputably the case.”

Indisputable: “Unable to be challenged or denied.”

http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/fact

“...can be observed and/or measured....”


Examples:

- My pants are black.
- The adult human body has 206 bones.

**Theory:** “A supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained.”

http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/theory

“When used in non-scientific context, the word “theory” implies that something is unproven or speculative. As used in science, however, a theory is an explanation or model based on observation, experimentation, and reasoning, especially one that has been tested and confirmed as a general principle helping to explain and predict natural phenomena.”


Examples:

- Newton’s theory of gravity (i.e., two particles of matter attract one another…)
- Erickson’s theory of psychosocial development (i.e., personality develops through a series of stages and is impacted by social experiences)

**Opinion:** “A view or judgment formed about something, not necessarily based on fact or knowledge.”

http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/opinion

“A personal belief or judgment that is not founded on proof or certainty.”

http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/opinion
Look for descriptive or subjective terms. Words may describe feelings or thoughts.

**Examples:**

Abraham Lincoln was the most eloquent writer of all the U.S. Presidents.

Low taxes are best for job growth.

**Bias:** “Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.”


**Look for:**

- Criticism; strong point of view
- Emotion-laden or inflammatory words; exaggeration
- Unique perspective or style; sarcasm
- Absolute modifiers, such as “always,” “never,” or adverbs like “obviously,” “only,” or “clearly.”
- Single point of view
- Attempts to persuade or sell