

Reading Skill 4

Distinguishing facts from opinions and identifying tone and mood

Facts are pieces of information that can be proven true and supported with evidence, such as studies, statistics and surveys. Opinions are personal beliefs or judgements that are based on subjective feelings, rather than on concrete proof.

Tone refers to the writer's attitude towards a topic, which is influenced by the use of words, sentence patterns and punctuation, etc. Mood refers to the atmosphere of a piece of writing and the feeling experienced by the reader.

Example

Let's look at the most frightening study in the field of psychology so far this year.

According to a recent study, one in four people is so obsessed with a famous person that his or her daily life is affected. Researchers in the study have named this phenomenon as Celebrity Worship Syndrome (CWS). As revealed by the study's findings, those who seemed to have CWS believed that they had developed special bonds with the celebrities they admired, and for this reason, they would be willing to do anything for their idols.

To judge whether a statement is a fact or an opinion, students can pay attention to whether it makes reference to any reliable sources. For example, the last two underlined sentences report the findings of a recent study, so they are facts. As for the first underlined sentence, it contains no evidence that supports the writer's claim that the study is 'the most frightening' of the year. Therefore, it can be seen as an opinion.





Let's Practice

Part A

Underline the facts and circle the opinions in the sentences.

Who doesn't want to be a millionaire? No one would voluntarily give up the chance to be rich. According to a recent survey, there are certain qualities that are commonly found in potential millionaires.

Part B

Read the following paragraphs and choose the best answers.

In recent decades, scientists and researches have never been lazy in their search for evidence of life on Mars. Although there has not been any direct proof that life exists or has existed there, scientists have discovered that there is water on the red planet, which is an indicator of life. Will we, humans, become inhabitants on Mars one day?

1. How does the writer feel about living in Mars?

- A. He thinks it is impossible.
- B. He is curious to know whether it is possible.
- C. He doesn't care about it.
- D. He thinks it will be exciting.

Have you ever dreamt of shopping around without being surrounded by people? That is easy! Just go online and you can find thousands of shopping sites where you can get almost everything without leaving your house. Do you want an easier way of shopping? Go online and try it out!

2. What is the tone of the writer?

- A. encouraging
- B. doubtful
- C. reflective
- D. worrying