Facts v Opinions!

- **Facts** are verifiable statements that something is truthful.
- Measles is a potentially deadly disease.
- **Opinions** are personal judgments which cannot be substantiated beyond any doubt and is, therefore, debatable.
- All children should be vaccinated against measles.
- There are two types of opinion: supported and unsupported.
Supported v Unsupported Opinion!

- Example opinions from *The Concise Wadsworth Handbook*:
  - **Unsupported**: All children in Pennsylvania should be vaccinated against measles. (78)
  - **Supported**: Despite the fact that an effective measles vaccine is widely available, several unvaccinated PA children have died of measles each year...states that have instituted vaccination programs have had no deaths in the same time period. For this reason, all children in PA should be vaccinated against measles. (78)

- The more details, the better your argument.
How To Support Opinions!

- **Examples**, like this one taken from *The Concise Wadsworth Handbook*:

- The ACLU is an organization that has been unfairly characterized as left wing. It is true that it has opposed prayer in the public schools, defended conscientious objectors, and challenged police methods...however, it has also backed the antiabortion group Operation Rescue in a police brutality suit and presented a legal brief in support of a Republican politician accused of violating an ethics law. (78-79)
More Ways To Support Opinions!

- **Statistics**, also from *The Concise Wadsworth Handbook*:

- A recent National Institute of Mental Health study concludes that mentally ill people account for more than 30% of the homeless population (Young 27). Because so many homeless people have psychiatric disabilities, the federal government should seriously consider expanding the state mental hospital system. (79)
Even More Ways To Support Opinions!

- **Expert opinion**, like this one from *The Concise Wadsworth Handbook*:

- Clearly no young soldier ever really escapes the emotional consequences of war. As William Manchester, noted historian and World War II combat veteran, observes in his essay “Okinawa: The Bloodiest Battle of All,” “The invisible wounds remain” (72).

- Beware of experts!
• Pause.
• Take a breath!
• Questions?!
Evaluating Evidence

- Examples, statistics, or expert opinion you use is called evidence. The more reliable evidence is, the more willing readers will be to accept a statement. Evidence should also be relevant...

- Evidence is accurate if it comes from a reliable source. This is an exact quote and not out of context.

- Evidence is sufficient if there is an adequate amount. You need more than one example, expert, etc.

- Evidence is representative if it reflects a fair range of sources and viewpoints. Acknowledge other views on your issue and cite from them.
Detecting Bias!

- **Bias** is a tendency to base conclusions on preconceived ideas rather than on **evidence**.
- **Writer's Stated Beliefs**: a writer who declares themselves an opponent of _____ may not present a balanced view.
- **Sexist or racist language**.
- **Slanted Language**: language that contains value judgments to influence reaction. (Dvorak example)
- **Bias In Evidence or Experts**: Omitting alternative points of view or commentary.
Inductive Reasoning moves from specific facts, observations, and experiences to a general conclusion. Also known as “burying the lead.”

Deductive Reasoning moves from a generalization believe to be true to a more specific conclusion. This is used for non-controversial statements or supportive audiences.