

The following revision is taken from a dissertation by a Chinese-speaking student of Education:

Original	Revision
<p>However, theorists propounding egalitarian principle 1 put high priority on the fact that a school should be based on its geographical community ...</p>	<p>However, theorists propounding egalitarian principle 1 place great emphasis on the idea that a school should be based on its geographical community ...</p>

It is, I think, essential in the academic context to preserve the distinction between **facts** and **ideas**. In academic writing that distinction is shown most clearly in the choice between the expressions **the fact that** and **the idea that**. Here are six citations for **the fact that**:

1. The fact that we can know so much about the stars from a distance is one of the triumphs of science.
2. Scientists and civil servants have to face up to the fact that they can no longer be the sole arbiters of what is good and true, just and right.
3. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that most paralemniscal neurons are positive for glutamic acid decarboxylase, ...
4. The receptor derives its name from the fact that it responds specifically to the chemical N-methyl-d-aspartate acid.
5. At university, I had a brief friendship with two women, based largely on a shared passion for clothes and the fact that we all had boyfriends elsewhere.
6. Maybe, argues Kimura, the relatively low incidence of speech disorders in women with brain damage reflects the fact that the critical area is less often affected, not that speech control is less asymmetric.

And six for **the idea that**:

1. The idea that action potentials could initiate growth and development in plants is supported by other lines of research.
2. He does not subscribe to the idea that humanity arose rapidly in the late Pleistocene (about 50,000 years ago).
3. The authors rightly dismiss the idea that coral reefs could grow faster to create an important "negative feedback" to damp down the greenhouse effect.
4. Part of the appeal of the Cartesian revolution was the idea that the chaos of Nature might be controllable, and that laws could be found to understand it.
5. The venerable idea that our Universe may be just one in an endless sequence of universes has been given a new lease of life.
6. Evidence for a star orbiting a massive black hole in the centre of a galaxy has been revealed by X-ray observations. The discovery supports the idea that quasars and other bright galaxy centres are powered by gas swirling towards a black hole containing as much matter as a million or more Suns.

You might like to try the following short test. What is the missing word: **fact** or **idea**?

1. Their task is not going to be made any easier by the _____ that they have few precedents to go by.
2. Cole also rejects the _____ that there will be a so-called "demographic transition" as today's poor countries become wealthier.
3. Geneticists in the US attribute Cohen's success to the _____ that he is not chasing specific genes but concentrating on mapping entire chromosomes.
4. The venerable _____ that our Universe may be just one in an endless sequence of universes has been given a new lease of life.
5. Tonry's method exploits the _____ that a nearby galaxy looks coarse and grainy, whereas a distant galaxy looks smooth.
6. The _____ that tropical storms such as hurricanes will be bigger and more frequent in a warmer world is reinforced by an Australian computer study.
7. Well over half of the books had cover designs and illustrations that suggest they are "boy's books", in spite of the _____ that their contents should in most cases appeal to both sexes.
8. Two hundred years ago, the _____ that Europe had once been covered with ice was considered at best a fallacy – and at worst, heresy.
9. The team also rejected the _____ that harassment is a means for females to assess the "staying power" of potential mates. For one thing, males as well as females acted as the harassers. And the aggression did not stop mating.
10. Too much stress on organisational structures may obscure the basic _____ that progress in science depends on the ideas, inspiration and dedication of individual scientists not the machinations of councils, committees and departments.

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