

Instructions

STEP 1

Ask your students each to write the numbers 1-30 on a sheet of paper.

Tell them you'll be reading aloud a list of words, and you'll ask them either to "rate" or "count" each one. "Rate" means they should decide if the word is pleasant or unpleasant, then write "P" on their paper for pleasant or "U" for unpleasant. "Count" means they should count the number of syllables in the word and write down that number.

Read the following list aloud: "One... rate... storm," then "Two... count... engine," etc.

1. *rate*: Storm
2. *count*: Engine
3. *rate*: Sidewalk
4. *count*: Textbook
5. *rate*: Monkey
6. *count*: Robot
7. *rate*: Bus
8. *count*: Window
9. *rate*: Cousin
10. *count*: Bottle
11. *rate*: Hammer
12. *count*: Dancer
13. *rate*: Breakfast
14. *count*: Baseball
15. *rate*: Winter
16. *count*: Television
17. *rate*: Fire
18. *count*: Friend
19. *rate*: Doctor
20. *count*: Shoe
21. *rate*: Spinach
22. *count*: Bicycle
23. *rate*: Coast
24. *count*: Chicken
25. *rate*: Boss
26. *count*: Kitten
27. *rate*: Headphones
28. *count*: Saxophone
29. *rate*: Table
30. *count*: Sweatshirt

STEP 2 (OPTIONAL)

For better results, ask students to write down as many U.S. states as they can think of in one minute. We don't need to see their answers; this just helps to clear their minds.

STEP 3

Ask students to write down as many words from the list as they can remember.

STEP 4

Display the chart below, and ask students to count how many words they remembered from each list.

“Rate” words

Storm
Sidewalk
Monkey
Bus
Cousin
Hammer
Breakfast
Winter
Fire
Doctor
Spinach
Coast
Boss
Headphones
Table

“Count” words

Engine
Textbook
Robot
Window
Bottle
Dancer
Baseball
Television
Friend
Shoe
Bicycle
Chicken
Kitten
Saxophone
Sweatshirt

STEP 5

Ask for a show of hands of how many students remembered more “rate” words than “count” words, and vice versa. Write down the totals. If you like, discuss. Why do your students think the human brain does this? What does this tell them about how they learn?

STEP 6

Report back! Post your results in the comments section of this page:
<http://www.edutopia.org/national-lab-day-experiment>. We want to know:

- how many students of yours did the experiment
- how many of them remembered more “rate” words than “count” words.

We'll put all your numbers into one spiffy spreadsheet and publish the answer. What difference does (even a little bit of) critical thinking make? We're about to see...

Deadline for results: May 19th, 2010

www.edutopia.org/national-lab-day-experiment

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