

Open Your Class with This Tomorrow ***Drunk Tank Pink***

To use red or not to use red? That is the question all teachers and students should be wondering about. For some students, red ink on their exams and assignments strikes fear in their heart. Schools in Australia and the United Kingdom have actually banned teachers from using red ink. It is believed that the red ink, closely linked to failure and criticism, causes students to give up. Teachers are replacing their red correcting pens with green ones to help relieve student stress.

Does red ink impact a teacher's grading?

Directions: Evaluate the essay below and point out how many words or phrases could be improved. Then provide a score from 0-100.

1. Randomly select half to use a red pen.
2. Other half will use a blue pen.

Essay

Sometimes our names can determine our destiny. For example, Carl Jung "young" studied youth and rebirth. Freud, which means joy in German, studied the pleasure principle. Usain Bolt became the fastest man in the world. If our name is easy to pronounce, it opens doors and makes us money. People tend to prefer the letters in their name. For instance, people with a name starting with K donated more for Hurricane Katrina recovery because they associated the storm with their name. Names can be powerful.

Labels also make our lives easier and help us make decisions. Color labels shape how we see the world. Our reality is also influenced by the language we speak. Language impacts our perception of personal space, physical space, and time. Sometimes even meaningless labels gain meaning and impact us. For example, north is thought of as being above. Individuals are more willing to travel five minutes south because north implies uphill and requiring more effort and gas. According to the framing effect, the wording of a statement impacts decision making. Labels can distort eyewitness memory and reshape our social interactions.

Summary

This activity was based on an experiment that found participants changed their grading based on the color of ink being used. In the original study, participants graded a different essay created by researchers. Those that used a red pen found an average of 24 errors, whereas those using a blue pen found an average of 19 errors. Another study had participants read and score an essay about the benefits of school fieldtrips. When participants used a red pen they rated it 76/100, but the same essay was rated 80/100 when scored with a blue pen.

Does red ink impact a student's performance?

Directions: Tell participants to write their school ID and then complete 15 anagram puzzles. In order to complete an anagram puzzle you must unscramble the word. For example, NIDRK forms DRINK.

1. Randomly select 1/3 to use a red pen.
2. Select 1/3 to use a green pen.
3. Select 1/3 to use a black pen.

Anagrams

nmcfloor
oorsticl
rectluu
virtonnnmee
iemtpenrxe
llbea
yermom
mnea
nmsro
ahiopb
peclbao
oalsci
gsitam
tduys
uliasv

Anagram Key

Conform
Cortisol
Culture
Environment
Experiment
Label
Memory
Name
Norms
Phobia
Placebo
Social
Stigma
Study
Visual

Summary

This activity was based on a study that found student performance is impacted by their exposure to certain colors. Students who wrote their experimenter ID number with a red pen answered an average of 22% fewer questions correctly, compared to students who used a black or green pen. A follow up study found that students earned lower test scores when the first page was red rather than gray, white, or green. They solved 18% fewer number-string completion puzzles (e.g. which number comes next: 18, 16, 19, 15, 20, 14, 21, _____. Answer is 13). They solved 37% fewer analogies (e.g., expensive is to rarely as cheap is to _____. Answer is frequently).

Why does red hurt academic performance?

The color red activates the right side of the frontal cortex. This pattern of brain activity is associated with avoidance motivation, which is when one is more concerned about failure than achieving success. Being distracted while trying to problem solve often leads to poor performance. People actually physically pull back in their chairs when presented with a test that has a red cover rather than a green one. Unconsciously, the color red sets off all types of alarms.

Can red ever be a good thing in academics?

For some intellectual tasks, red can actually be a good thing! Red primes the avoidance mind-set, which can be helpful when a task requires attention to detail. One study found students were far more vigilant when proofreading and memorizing a list of words when those tasks were presented against a red background rather than a blue background. In this circumstance, vigilance and avoidance promoted success.

So...To use red or not to use red?

The color red hurts academic achievement, but only when the task doesn't require vigilance or attention to detail. For those tasks, red improved rather than diminished performance.

Sources to Expand the Topic

Telegraph: Marking in red ink banned in case it upsets schoolchildren

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/3964683/Marking-in-red-ink-banned-in-case-it-upsets-schoolchildren.html>

Qld Govt slams "tasteless" red pen debate

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2008-12-03/qld-govt-slams-tasteless-red-pen-debate/228210>

Red Ink May Lead to Lower Grades

<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127263489>

Books for Psychology Class

<http://booksforpsychologyclass.weebly.com/>

When Grading Paper, Red Ink May Mean Lower Scores

<https://psmag.com/education/when-grading-papers-red-ink-may-mean-lower-scores-15809>

20 Ways to Provide Effective Feedback For Learning

<https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/20-ways-to-provide-effective-feedback-for-learning/>

Seven Keys to Effective Feedback

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept12/vol70/num01/Seven-Keys-to-Effective-Feedback.aspx>

Books for Psychology Class

<http://booksforpsychologyclass.weebly.com/>