

Open Your Class with This Tomorrow

Deviate: Beau Lotto

Perceptual Sets

Teacher Instructions: In the following activity, students will be presented with two strings of words, give them only about a minute to brainstorm five three-letter words for each letter string. The words they create will likely be totally different for each set of letters even though both sets of letters contain the same letters. It is likely that students are activating prior neural networks based on the letters that are adjacent to each other in each letter set. Even if students know other languages, they likely did not use words from other languages, thus limiting the words they could create. In addition, it is likely that they did not use nonsense words even though you did not specifically indicate that either of these options was not available. Because there are so many possible word combinations, our minds come up with the “most well-travelled path” in order to answer the question with the least possible resistance. Prior experiences create an expectation for what one will experience in this situation. Few students will recognize that these are the same letters only in a different order, because different expectations are created by the order in which the letters are presented.

This demonstration can be used in the biological bases of behavior unit to demonstrate the power of activating prior neural networks. This can also be used in the sensation and perception in order to demonstrate the power of perceptual sets. It can also be used in the cognition unit to demonstrate heuristics and trial and error as a way to solve problems.

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Directions: Look at the 15-character string below and combine the letters to form five three-letter words as quickly as possible. Don't overthink it.
Ready, set, go.

A B O D T X L S E M R U N P I

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Directions: Now do the same thing again as fast as possible but using this string of letters.

L M E B I R T O X D S U A N P

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

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