

2 Thinking, bias, and how questions shape answers – Part 2

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary

Write each word three times.

English

Write it 3 times (English)

heuristic

availability heuristic

Framing

Confirmation bias

Recall

- You have guessed an answer because it “felt right” and been wrong.
- You have noticed that people remember the news stories that scared them.
- You know a question can be asked in a way that pushes you towards one reply.

New ideas

Read these first. Each idea has a short worked example. Then do the Practice below.

■ 1 Fast shortcuts

A **heuristic** is a mental shortcut that is usually right and sometimes badly wrong. The **availability heuristic** judges how likely something is by how easily an example comes to mind, which makes vivid and recent events seem more common than they are.

Worked example. People overestimate the danger of plane crashes because crashes are reported and safe flights are not.

■ 2 Framing

Framing means the same information changes a decision depending on how it is worded. A treatment described as “90% survive” is chosen more often than one described as “10% die”, although the two say the same thing.

Worked example. A shop selling “95% fat free” yoghurt sells more than one selling yoghurt with “5% fat”.

■ 3 Confirmation bias

Confirmation bias is the tendency to look for and remember evidence that fits what you already believe. It is not lying: the person genuinely does not notice the contrary cases.

Worked example. Someone convinced a friend is unlucky remembers every mishap and forgets the ordinary days.

Watch out: A heuristic is not the same as a bias. The heuristic is the shortcut; the bias is the systematic error it produces in particular situations.

Practice

2.1 Define a heuristic. [1]

2.2 Explain how the availability heuristic makes rare events feel common. [2]

2.3 Define framing. [1]

2.4 Two treatments are described as “90% survive” and “10% die”. State what the difference in response demonstrates. [2]

2.5 Define confirmation bias. [1]

2.6 Explain why confirmation bias is not the same as deliberate dishonesty. [2]

2.7 Distinguish a heuristic from a bias. [1]
