

How good are your senses?

We are surrounded by all sorts of foods with different colours, smells, flavours and textures. But how good are you at telling them apart? Sometimes the colour of a food or even the colour of its packaging can fool our senses into thinking we're tasting something we're not.

Try these activities with a partner.

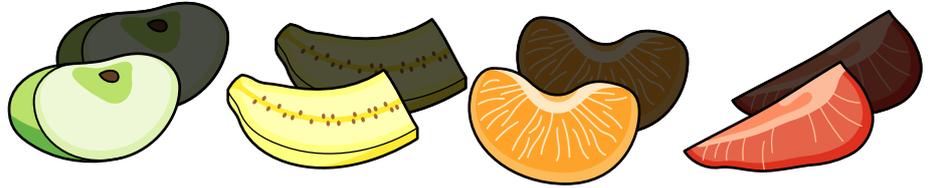
1) Looks can deceive

You will need:

8 small plastic cups

4 different soft fruits, e.g. strawberry, cherry, raspberry or peach

Black food colouring



Instructions:

1. Individually, label your cups 1-4.
2. Put a small piece of a different fruit into each cup. Make sure you know which is which, (you could make a note somewhere). Keep the fruits out of sight – we don't want any clues!
3. Add a little black food colouring to each fruit then mash it up as finely as you can. This should make all of the fruits look almost the same.
4. Ask your partner to taste each fruit. Can they identify the flavour?
5. Now do the same again but this time do not add the food colouring.
6. Ask your partner if they can identify the tastes now. Is there any difference? Was it easier to identify the fruits when you could see the colours?

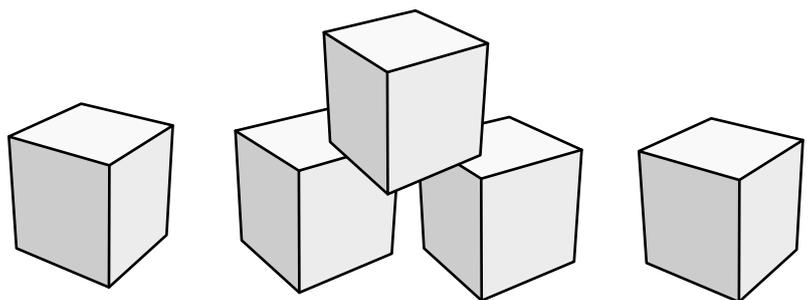
You could try taste tests with other sorts of foods to find out who has the best sense of taste in your class. Try tasting different flavours of potato crisps with your eyes closed. How accurate are you?

2) Dry taste buds

You will need:

Kitchen roll

Sugar cubes



Instructions:

1. Dry your tongue with a piece of kitchen paper.
2. Place a sugar cube on your tongue, keeping your mouth open – then remove the sugar cube.
3. Can you taste the sugar on your tongue?

How good are your senses?

4. Close your mouth so that it gets covered in saliva again.
5. Place the sugar cube on your tongue and close your mouth.
6. Is it easier to taste the sugar now?

Explanation:

Saliva is vital for tasting food. In wiping away your saliva on kitchen paper, you will realise how important saliva is for tasting food. Saliva dissolves molecules, allowing them to penetrate the pores of your taste buds. Without saliva, molecules do not bind to your receptors so no information is conveyed to the brain.

3) The sense of smell

You will need:

- Four flavours of fruit juice
- Water
- Plastic cups



Instructions:

1. Choose four flavours of fruit juice (e.g. orange, apple, peach, apricot).
2. Pour each juice into a cup and pour water into a 5th cup.
3. Ask someone to taste one of the juices with their eyes closed and guess the flavour.
4. Get them to rinse their mouth with water between each cup.
5. Is it easy to identify the flavours?
6. Repeat the experiment, this time pinching your nose when you taste each juice.
7. Is it easier or harder to identify the flavours?

Explanation:

Your tongue can only recognise tastes such as the sweetness of the apple, but some foodstuffs taste similar. It's your nose that helps you distinguish between them. Smell therefore plays a key role in recognising and enjoying food.