

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

To devise a questionnaire using appropriate software. To reach conclusions by analysing the results.

†† Whole class and pairs.

🕒 30 minutes at the computer.

Previous skills/knowledge needed

The ability to use word processing software to devise a questionnaire would be an advantage although it is not essential.

Key background information

This activity models the larger poll investigations carried out amongst the public. Public opinion polls are useful not only as a mechanism for gauging opinions and attitudes, but also as a marketing tool for companies researching new products and so on. Using IT helps to streamline the process, allowing large amounts of information to be stored and trends to be illustrated. Usually, the questionnaire is presented in a 'yes or no' answer format for ease of data collection. The skill is in ensuring that the right kinds of questions are asked.

In this particular case, the children are investigating the food preferences (likes and dislikes) among the class. However, they could choose any other area of likes and dislikes to investigate, such as books, TV programmes, football teams, films, TV personalities, famous people (present or past) or music. The children have the opportunity to devise a poll questionnaire and set it up on the computer, thinking of sensible and effective questions which will help them to reach interesting conclusions. They can then use the appropriate software to present or illustrate the results in a meaningful way.

Vocabulary

Questionnaire, response, database, multiple choice, open ended, sample, trend.

Preparation

You will need to set up a suitable database in which the children can enter the answers from their questionnaires. The software Junior Pinpoint (Archimedes/PC) or Survey (PC) allows the design of the questionnaire to be carried out. This can then be printed out and each child asked to collect and enter the relevant data onto the paper questionnaire. This data can later be fed back into the computer for analysis using Junior Pinpoint and, where necessary, for producing graphs. However, the children may like to devise a questionnaire using word processing, collect their data and then feed their findings back into a different kind of database such as Junior Database (Archimedes) or Information Workshop (PC).

Resources needed

A computer, software such as *Junior Pinpoint* (Archimedes/PC, Longman Logotron) or *Survey* (PC, SPA) for designing the questionnaires, entering the data and producing graphs, or word processing/DTP and database software.

What to do

Talk to the children about opinion polls. Do they know what opinion polls are? Can they think of any examples of when these are used, such as at election time, in market research and so on? Now tell the children that they are going to carry out a class poll on food. Ask them to work in groups of four or five to produce separate questionnaires, each tackling a different aspect of food. Examples could include fruit, cakes, cereals, biscuits, breakfasts, lunches, suppers, Sunday lunches, picnics, Christmas dinner and birthday parties. Rather than a simple like/dislike investigation the children could also look at reasons for the given responses, such as the taste and consistency of food.

Software such as *Junior Pinpoint* allows the children to design the questionnaire on screen, then enter the collected data into the software which will in turn count up the input responses and produce graphs to illustrate the findings. If such software is not available, the children can design their questionnaire using a word processing or DTP package and enter the answers into the database software.

Once the groups of children have entered the data from their questionnaires, they can produce graphs to help them reach some conclusions. These will be fairly simple, such as, 'more children prefer toast than cereal' and 'two out of

three boys prefer a banana to an apple', but the overall process will show the children how opinions can be gathered and illustrated, and the significance of the results can be interpreted, using IT.

Suggestion(s) for extension

More able children may like to design additional questionnaires on connected topics such as sweets or ice-creams or perhaps produce a resumé of the results for a class poster or flyer.

Suggestion(s) for support

Ensure that the less confident children work with others who can support them in their group.

Assessment opportunities

This activity will enable you to assess how well the children use IT to organise and analyse the information collected from their questionnaires. Note how they devise their questions and set them out within the software. Having collected the data, with what degree of confidence do they interpret their findings? Do they use graphs to help draw conclusions? Can they spot inaccurate data?

Display ideas

The results from this investigation will make an interesting display when enhanced by the children's art work depicting favourite foods. You could add large headlines to the display stating some of the class 'poll' findings and perhaps produce a flyer giving a resumé of all the results.

