

Match that Quote

Gauge your own confidence

Here is an activity that attempts to imitate the experiments that defined the Dunning–Kruger effect. Ideally, we would have data from many people so that you could compare your confidence level with them. But let's at least experiment with the concept in a playful way.

In this activity, you must match a quotation with its author. There are eight quotes and eight authors. (The quotations used in this activity are from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunning%E2%80%93Kruger_effect)

Step One: *Guess about your own competence.*

Look at the Preview List of eight authors (page 2). Make a guess about how many you can correctly match to their quotation. Write this number down.

Step Two: *Estimate your confidence.*

How certain are you that you can make the number of correct matches in your prediction of Step One? Rate yourself as either Not Confident, Mildly Confident, or Highly Confident.

Step Three: *Make the matches.*

Look at the Matching List (page 3) and connect authors to their quotations.

Step Four: *Check your answers.*

Compare your answers to the Answer Key (page 4) and compare your score with your predicted score in Step One:

Step Five: *Dunning-Kruger effect.*

What correlation is there between your actual score (your ability) and the confidence you had in your predicted score? Was your ability low and your confidence high? Was your ability high but your confidence low?

There is nothing scientific about this activity. It's just a game. But what relevance does it add to the questions below?

What is something you have high confidence about? Is it possible you are overestimating your knowledge, skill, courage, endurance, ethical standards, analytical abilities, etc.? How might you test whether you are overrating your ability? How could you learn about what you yet need to learn?

When do you worry that you might not be as competent as you should be? Is this an instance when you need not be so concerned about your performance? How can you determine whether you are underrating your ability? Is this a situation, like the 99-Word Story, when you can determine your own definition of success?

Preview List

How many authors can you match to their quotation? Your Guess: _____

1. Confucius (551–479 BC)
2. William Shakespeare (1564–1616)
3. Alexander Pope (1688–1744)
4. Henry Fielding (1707–1754)
5. Charles Darwin (1809–1882)
6. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)
7. W. B. Yeats (1865–1939)
8. Bertrand Russell (1872–1970)

What is your level of confidence about your guess? Choose One:

Not Confident

Mildly Confident

Highly Confident

Matching List

1. Confucius (551–479 BC)	a. "A little learning is a dangerous thing."
2. William Shakespeare (1564–1616)	b. "Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance."
3. Alexander Pope (1688–1744)	c. "For men of true learning, and almost universal knowledge, always compassionate [pity] the ignorance of others; but fellows who excel in some little, low, contemptible art, are always certain to despise those who are unacquainted with that art."
4. Henry Fielding (1707–1754)	d. "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool."
5. Charles Darwin (1809–1882)	e. "Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies."
6. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)	f. "The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity."
7. W. B. Yeats (1865–1939)	g. "Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge."
8. Bertrand Russell (1872–1970)	h. "One of the painful things about our time is that those who feel certainty are stupid, and those with any imagination and understanding are filled with doubt and indecision."

Answer Key

1. Confucius (551–479 BC)	b. "Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance."
2. William Shakespeare (1564–1616)	d. "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool."
3. Alexander Pope (1688–1744)	a. "A little learning is a dangerous thing."
4. Henry Fielding (1707–1754)	c. "For men of true learning, and almost universal knowledge, always compassionate [pity] the ignorance of others; but fellows who excel in some little, low, contemptible art, are always certain to despise those who are unacquainted with that art."
5. Charles Darwin (1809–1882)	g. "Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge."
6. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)	e. Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies."
7. W. B. Yeats (1865–1939)	f. "The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity."
8. Bertrand Russell (1872–1970)	h. "One of the painful things about our time is that those who feel certainty are stupid, and those with any imagination and understanding are filled with doubt and indecision."