

Activity 4: Match Wits with the Great Apes

In the film, you meet lumbu, a chimpanzee at the Primate Research Center at a Japanese university. This chimpanzee is the star pupil in a memory test developed by Professor Matsuzawa. In this test, lumbu sees a set of numbers displayed for only half a second on a computer screen, and then lumbu clicks on the number locations in order from least to greatest. Holly Carroll is surprised when she tries the same test, because she can't even see the numbers in half a second!

Try it with a partner. Cut out the numbers below and place them in a row in random order. Have a sheet of paper ready to cover the row when the time is up. Let your partner look at the numbers for 10 seconds, then cover them over. With your partner looking away, turn the slips of paper number side down and then challenge your partner to turn the numbers over in order from 1 to 9. Record how many your partner can turn over correctly on the chart below. Repeat the experiment, letting your partner look at the numbers for 5 seconds and then 1 second, and record those results. Then switch roles and have your partner record your results.



Data Collection Chart

Team _____

	Number Correct	10 seconds	5 seconds	1 second
Partner #1:				
Partner #2:				

Good science invites questions. What questions do you have about this experiment? Some wonder if the experiment simply shows that chimpanzees can recognize the shapes of the numbers, but not the numbers themselves. What do you think? Work with your partner to answer this question. Then brainstorm an updated experiment that could prove the chimpanzees recognize the numbers as quantities and not just as shapes. Record your ideas and observations here:

