

PERCEPTION EXERCISE 1

This exercise will demonstrate that as much as we think we see, we don't see it all. The fact we don't see everything the same way sometimes results in arguments.

Material

One large apple with a relatively narrow vertical slice cut on one side.

Presentation

Stand in front of the class and ask one student to stand behind you. Ask that student to remain silent until you specifically ask him/her to speak. Hold the apple up with the removed slice facing you. Make sure the student behind you has seen the slice.

Ask the class "What do we call this?" Then ask them to take turns describing it. Rotate it slightly, but avoid letting the class see the sliced portion. When the class finishes with its description, ask the student behind you to present his/her description.

Show the rest of the class the sliced area. Start asking questions about why their description and the lone student's description did not match. Who was 'right'? Who was 'wrong'? Did they report what they saw? Why is it important when people disagree to check out the facts more carefully?

How should we check out the facts? Perform a closer examination of the object. Compare our viewing point with another persons. Ask some questions of the other observer. Do they have more history than you do with similar objects? Etc.

About two weeks later perform the same exercise, but do not remove the slice. Your students may insist you are hiding something, that there is a slice, etc. It should be an opportunity for a few laughs. However, remind them that even though they expected to see a slice it did not have to exist. Just because something happens once, does not mean that it will necessarily happen again.