Evidence parent guide

You do not need to be an expert to read this book together. Your job is to ask how the explanation works and give the learner room to think.

What this book helps explain

Ask whether a comparison supports a causal explanation.

Three short conversations

First, ask: A parcel company changes its packaging and damage falls. Does that alone prove the packaging caused the change?

Next, read “The before-and-after trap” together. Ask the learner to draw the idea and explain one unfamiliar term. Use the glossary rather than guessing.

Then use the activity below. Let the learner try before reading the answers on the next page. Ask what information would change the answer.

Try it together

Two comparable fictional groups each contain 200 parcels. Ten in the old-packaging group are damaged; six in the new-packaging group are damaged. Calculate the rates, then list what you need to know about how the groups were formed and measured.

1. What are the damage rates?

2. What is the absolute difference and relative reduction?

3. What could weaken a causal claim?

A small activity at home

Compare two invented headlines about the same numbers. Ask which includes the denominator and what information both omit.

Evidence conversation notes

Answers to discuss

1. Old: 10/200 = 5%. New: 6/200 = 3%.

2. The absolute decrease is 2 percentage points. Relative decrease is (5 - 3)/5 = 40%.

3. Different routes, handling, parcel contents, selection, missing outcomes or inconsistent damage definitions could distort the comparison. Sampling uncertainty also matters.

Listen for this distinction

A large relative percentage may accompany a small absolute difference. Random assignment and random sampling answer different questions.

Useful follow-up

Propose random assignment of suitable parcels, consistent outcome definitions and a plan to record all outcomes before inspecting results.

When the explanation is unclear

Ask “Which part are we sure about?” and “Can you show me with a smaller example?” Say when you do not know. Read the relevant chapter together and check its sources if the question goes beyond the example.

Signs of understanding

The learner can explain the idea in their own words, use a diagram or example, and say one thing the example does not prove. Repeating the book word for word is not the goal.

Keep the conversation comfortable

Use fictional people and amounts. Do not require personal disclosures. Short sessions are enough; stop before frustration turns reading into a test.

Reading route

The before-and-after trap; Random selection is a different job; Absolute and relative change

Companion to Evidence: NOW It Makes Sense by Sonny Saggar. First edition. This guide uses original supplementary teaching examples.