

Name _____ Date _____ Time taken _____

What this sheet trains

Divided attention - holding a second rule in mind while your main attention is busy elsewhere. This is the skill behind listening to a teacher while taking notes, or checking your working while solving the next step.

Strategy: anchor and sweep. Give the main task your focus and let the second task run as a quick, automatic check - do not swap your full attention back and forth.

1 Read and tally

Main task: read the passage once. Second task: the counting rule below.

Counting rule

Every time you read the word locust or locusts, make one tally mark in the box at the foot of the page. Do not go back and re-read. One pass only.

The desert locust spends most of its life as a shy, solitary insect, scattered thinly across the dry belt from Mauritania to western India. In that state it avoids its own kind, and a farmer could walk through a field of locusts without noticing them. An unusual run of rain changes the arithmetic. Damp sand lets seeds germinate, the green flush supports far more locust eggs than the desert allows, and as the vegetation dries back the survivors are driven together onto the last green patches. Crowding is the trigger. Repeated contact with the hind legs of a neighbour raises serotonin levels in the locust nervous system, and within hours the animal changes colour, feeds more broadly, and seeks company rather than avoiding it.

This shift is called gregarisation, and although reversible in a single insect it is very hard to reverse in a population. Once gregarious, the locusts form bands on the ground and then swarms in the air, and the problem stops being entomological and becomes logistical. A swarm travels with the wind, can cross the Red Sea in a day, and eats close to its own body weight daily, so a moderate infestation can remove the food of tens of thousands of people in an afternoon. Control therefore depends on surveillance rather than response. Survey teams work remote, often insecure breeding country, spraying locust bands while they are still bands.

The great upsurge of 2019 is usually explained by weather, by cyclones that soaked the Arabian interior where nobody was watching. That explanation is too kind to us. What failed first was the surveillance system, and it failed in the quiet years, when locust units were defunded because they had nothing visible to do and the empty desert read as proof the money was wasted. Preventive institutions are punished for their own success: the better they work, the more they look like an unnecessary expense. If that is right, locust control belongs with standing defence commitments, insulated from annual review, rather than with farm spending that must justify itself each season.

Tally here - one mark per locust or locusts

Make the marks as you read, then write your total before turning the page.

Total

1 Questions - cover the passage first

Answer from memory. Do not look back at the passage.

My tally total

From page 1

Q1. What physical experience turns a solitary desert locust into a gregarious one?

Q2. Why is surveying and spraying bands preferred to attacking swarms once they fly?

Q3. Why might a country with no recent outbreak be the most likely place for the next one to begin?

Q4. The writer blames institutions rather than weather. What does that argument assume about the 2019 rains?

2 Grid sweep with a running count

Main task: cross out targets. Second task: keep a count in your head.

Rules - read both before you start, then start the timer

Main: cross out every number that is a multiple of 13.

Second: count - silently, no marks - how many numbers end in 0. Write the total in the box only when you have finished the whole grid.

830	243	573	222	758	367	775	284	826	317	454	385
494	930	512	175	943	195	945	843	759	942	978	266
701	475	977	705	699	459	369	620	857	892	485	963
514	932	414	711	585	144	810	881	930	398	626	902
598	251	213	970	899	704	948	155	915	524	990	879
286	100	101	471	832	823	224	384	282	912	656	673
303	888	403	325	108	611	372	532	134	332	961	117

Stop the timer when the grid is finished, not when you write the total.

Numbers ending in 0

Write it once the grid is done

3 Copy and total

Main task: copy each row of digits. Second task: keep a running total.

Rules

Main: copy each five-digit group into the box beside it, in order.

Second: add the second and third digits of every row to a running total as you go.

Write the running total in the box at the end of each row - from memory, not by going back and adding up at the end.

	Copy here	Running total
8 4 7 1 6		
7 2 3 5 5		
7 4 3 3 3		
3 9 5 5 2		
4 4 9 1 7		
4 5 8 5 1		
3 7 3 9 3		
8 6 3 5 8		
4 4 2 8 1		
6 4 6 4 6		
4 8 1 3 9		
5 2 9 7 3		

4 Bridging - answer in a sentence each

Where this shows up outside the sheet.

Q1. Which of the two tasks slipped first while you read this, and what do you think tipped it?

Q2. In a three hour examination paper, how long can you hold the question requirements in mind while writing a long answer?

Q3. Do you ever keep a quiet background count of time, pages or marks while working, and does it help or cost you?

Answer key

Task 1 · tally
locust or locusts

8

Task 2 · crossed out
multiples of 13

10

Task 2 · counted
ending in 0

8

Task 3 · final total
second and third digits

118

Task 1 - suggested answers

Q1. Repeated crowding and contact with other locusts, which raises serotonin and changes its colour, feeding and sociability within hours.

Q2. Bands are grounded, local and small, so treatment is cheap; a flying swarm moves with the wind and is far more expensive to control.

Q3. Quiet years remove the political case for funding survey teams, so the monitoring thins out exactly where an outbreak could start unseen.

Q4. That the rains were foreseeable enough, or at least detectable enough, for a funded survey system to have found the breeding in time.

Notes for the parent or teacher

- Mark the two tasks separately. A student who scores well on the main task and loses the count has not failed - that is the normal pattern, and it is the thing worth discussing.
- Do not prompt or remind during a task. The reminder is the skill.
- An untimed run is a valid run. Record the time only if the student wants to beat it next week.
- Repeat the sheet after a week rather than straight away. Spacing is what makes the gain stick.
- This is attention practice, not an assessment. It does not diagnose anything, and no sheet of this kind should be read as a measure of ability.