

Effort Activity 1: The Peloton



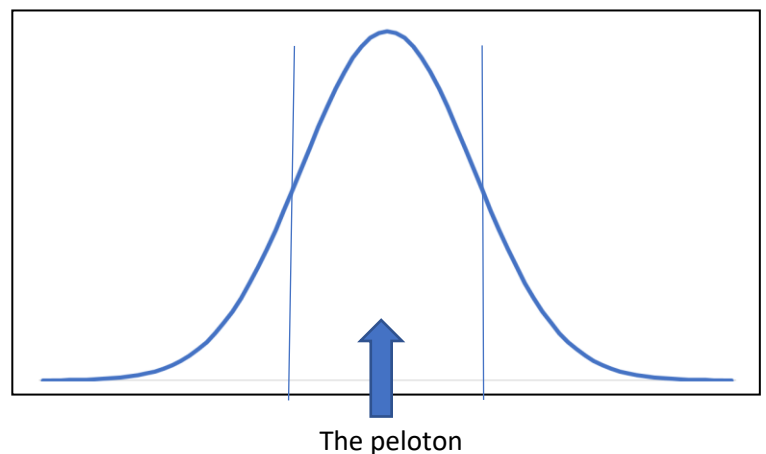
In cycling, the word peloton is used to describe a group of cyclists who ride close together. They do this to preserve energy; riding alongside others reduces the drag you get from the air so there's less wind resistance and it's easier to speed along. Apparently if you're cycling in the middle of a peloton, surrounded by other riders, you're experiencing just 10% of the drag you would if you're out on your own at the front.

In a race situation, pelotons don't last forever. There's a stage of the race where they're useful, but if everyone stuck in the peloton all the time, the pack would cross the line together. Instead, what happens is one rider eventually decides to go for it. They push hard, leave the peloton and race for the finish. Other riders follow. The peloton becomes a stretched-out line of cyclists all pedalling for the win.

We've taught hundreds of classes over the last 20 years and it's interesting to see pelotons in action in classroom situations.

Some students – just a few to begin with – are out front, working really hard. Some are at the back, doing virtually no work at all, falling further and further behind. But most stick in the peloton, working 'hard enough to get by'.

Then, as exams approach, everything changes.



Where Are You?

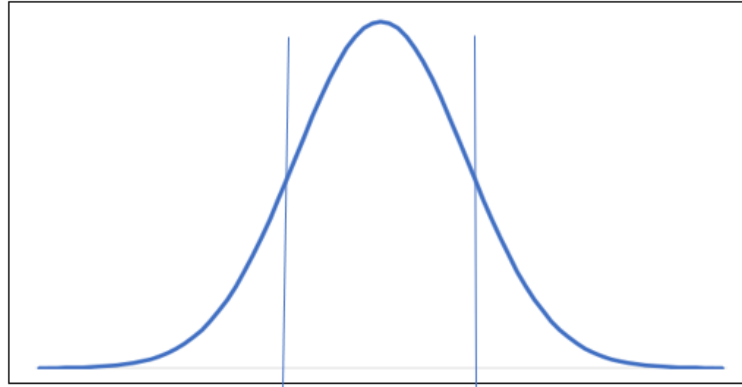
For each of your subjects, you've already chosen where to be in the pack of riders. In some subjects you might be the cyclist out front, pedalling hard. These might be subjects you love, with teachers you get on well with, or topics that interest you. In others, you might be out at the back. In some you'll be in the peloton.

Consider your current position in each of your subjects. Think carefully. Sometimes it's tempting to put yourself at the back because you're feeling bad. But in order to do this accurately you have to consider yourself honestly against the other riders.

- Who's out in front? How do you know? What are they doing differently?

- Who's 'average', sticking in the peloton, preserving their energy and biding their time? How do you know? What are their typical behaviours?
- Who's currently towards the back, and how do you know?

Once you've thought about this you can more accurately consider your position in the pack and label it below...



Some riders win the race by being out at the front right from the start. Some win by sticking towards the front of the peloton and timing their charge for the finish perfectly. Some surprise everyone by speeding ahead from out of nowhere. There are lots of ways to do it.

- What would you need to do to move up the pack?
- Choose one, two or three actions which might push you further forward and make a note of them.
- Now schedule one of them... and get it done.