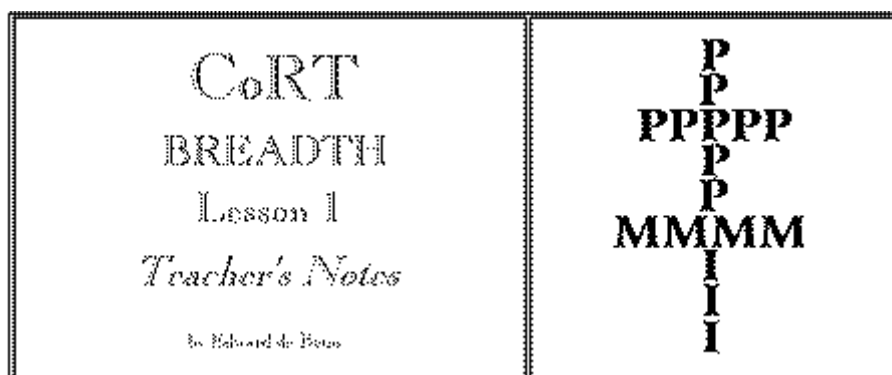




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## PMI: Plus, Minus, Interesting

### THE TREATMENT OF IDEAS

The **PMI** is a crystallisation of the open-minded attitude into a tool that can be used deliberately. This is a very basic lesson which is introduced right at the beginning so that the **PMI** process itself can be used as a tool in the course of subsequent lessons. Instead of just deciding whether or not you like an idea, this thinking operation has you make an effort to find the good points (**P = Plus**), the bad points (**M = Minus**) and the interesting points (**I = Interesting**) about an idea. The interesting points are those which are neither good nor bad but are worth noticing. The **PMI** is a way of treating ideas, suggestions and proposals. The natural reaction to an idea is to like or dislike it, to approve or disapprove. If you like an idea, it is very unnatural to look for the negative or minus aspects. If you dislike an idea it is very unnatural to look for the positive or plus aspects. It is equally unnatural to pick out the merely interesting aspects of an idea.

Using the **PMI** as a deliberate operation gives students a means of by-passing the natural emotional reaction to an idea. Their objectives change from emotional reactions to carrying out with skill a formal operation.

Once the **PMI** has been practised as a tool it can be asked for in subsequent lessons: "Do a **PMI** on that idea."

**The PMI is never intended to prevent decision or commitment but to ensure that this happens after both sides of the matter have been considered and not before.**

In simple terms the **PMI** operation enlarges the view of a situation; without it, emotional reaction to an idea narrows the way we look at it.

**P = Plus** - The good things about an idea - why you like it  
**M = Minus** - The bad things about an idea - why you don't like it  
**I = Interest** - What you find interesting about an idea

Instead of just saying that you like an idea, or don't like an idea, you can use a **PMI**. When you use a **PMI** you give the good points first, then the bad points and then the points that are neither good nor bad but are interesting. You can use a **PMI** as a way of treating ideas, suggestions and proposals.

### EXAMPLE

**Idea:** All the seats should be taken out of buses.

- P:**
- *More people can get into each bus.*
  - *It would be easier to get in and out.*
  - *Buses would be cheaper to make and to repair*
- M:**
- *Passengers would fall over if the bus stopped suddenly.*
  - *Old people and disabled people would not be able to use buses.*
  - *It would be difficult to carry shopping bags or babies.*
- I:**
- *Interesting idea that could lead to two types of buses, one with and one without seats.*
  - *Interesting idea that the same bus would do more work.*
  - *Interesting idea that comfort may not be so important in a bus.*

### Further example:

Windows should be made of transparent plastic instead of glass.

- P:** They would not break as easily.  
Would not be as dangerous when broken.
- M:** Plastic would be more expensive than glass.  
Plastic would get scratched very easily.
- I:** Perhaps windows could be of all colours if they were plastic.  
Perhaps we take it for granted that glass is best since we are used to it.

## PRACTICE

**See suggested Practice section of student's notes (PMI\_lb.html)**

Normally practice items 1, 2 and 3 are used one after the other. But a teacher may choose to substitute items 4-7 for any of these. The students work in groups as usual.

- \*4. *Every adult should spend one week a year in the police force.*
5. *There should be a special TV channel for young people only.*
6. \*\* *In many countries there is a jury system in which ordinary people assess whether an accused person is guilty or not. Some other countries do not have juries but have three judges who do all the assessment themselves. Do a **PMI** on this three judge system.*
7. \*\* *Do a PMI on the system which allows a lawyer to sue on behalf of a client and then take a percentage of the damages awarded by the courts. If the lawyer does not win the case, then he charges no fee.*

### PRACTICE ITEM 1:

**By law all cars should be painted bright yellow.**

Here each group does a full PMI for 3-5 minutes. One group is then designated to give its Plus points and the other groups or individuals can add further points. Another group is then designated to give its Minus points and finally a further group is designated to give its Interesting points.

**Suggestions:**

- P:**
- Yellow cars would be easier to see at night or in fog so there would be fewer accidents.
  - Car showrooms would be able to let you have the car immediately instead of your having to wait for the colour you want.
  - Cars would be more likely to be treated as a means of transport that as status symbols.
- M:**
- It would be rather boring.
  - Paint manufacturers and advertisers would have a hard time.
  - It would be difficult for the police to chase a particular car or trace stolen ones.
- I:**
- Should the car colour be of use to the owner or to everyone else?
  - Do people drive different coloured cars differently?

**PRACTICE ITEM 2.**

*People should wear badges showing whether they are in a good mood or a bad mood that day.*

Here each group again does a full **PMI** but this time the objective is to try to guess the two Plus points the two Minus points and the two Interesting points which the teacher holds. Time allowed is 3-5 minutes at the end of which each group can offer one suggestion at a time for either **P**, **M**, or **I** points when a group guesses one of the target points given below the teacher indicates this. When no more points are forthcoming the teacher gives out the remaining target points.

**Target Points:**

- P:**
- You could steer clear of people in a bad mood.
  - People might make more of an effort not to be in a bad mood if it was going to show.
- M:**
- People would not be honest about wearing the right badge.
  - People in a bad mood who needed cheering up would be avoided instead.
- I:**
- With some people you can tell their mood from their faces anyway.
  - Do people prefer to hide their moods or to show them?

**PRACTICE ITEM 3:**

*\* All student should spend 3 months every year earning money.*

Here individual groups do either **P** points **M** points or **I** points as instructed by the teacher. Time allowed is 3 minutes. One group is then designated to give the **P** points another to give the **M** points and another to give the **I** points. In each case the other groups can add further points as they wish.

## PROCESS

See *Process* section of student's notes ([PMI\\_la.html](#)).

### Discussion

- *When is a PMI most useful?*
- *Does one always look at the good and bad points of an idea?*
- *Does a PMI waste time?*
- *Is it easy to do a PMI?*

Open discussion with the class as a whole acting as individuals rather than groups.

This discussion should last about five minutes before the class moves on to the next section.

## PRINCIPLES

See *Principles* section of student's notes ([PMI\\_la.html](#))

- A. The **PMI** is important because without it you may reject a valuable idea that seems bad at first sight.
- B. Without a **PMI** you are very unlikely to see the disadvantages of an idea that you like very much.
- C. The **PMI** can show that ideas are not just good or bad but can also be interesting if they lead to other ideas.
- D. Without a **PMI** most judgements are based not on the value of the idea itself but on your emotions at that time.
- E. With a **PMI** you decide whether or not you like the idea after you have explored it instead of before.)

The groups look at the list of principles given in the student notes. They are asked to pick out the principle they think is the most important. The groups can also be asked to criticise any one of the principles or to make up a principle of their own.

## PROJECT

See *Project* section of student's notes ([PMI\\_lb.html](#))

1. *All cars should be banned from city centres so that people can walk about freely.*
2. *Every young person should adopt an old person to care for.*
- 3.\*\* *People should be allowed to work 10 hours a day for 4 days and have the rest of the week free, instead of working 8 hours a day for 5 days.*

In the context of an IDEELS simulation, the simulation takes the place of the project. The project items can be used as essay topics or given to students to work on in their own time in schools where this is customary. In longer lessons the groups can work on a project item chosen by them or the teachers as described in the standard lesson format section.




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