

Zachary Tanner

Junior Division Behavioral & Social Sciences

Rock, Paper, Scissors: A Game Of Chance?

My project is about rock, paper, scissors to try and discover any patterns. Many people think that rock, paper, scissors is just a game of chance and that there is very little thinking or patterns going on. To test this, I started an experiment to test different ages and genders. I went to a retirement home, my school, a first grade class and a library to test. I explained all of the rules to each subject and then I played each one in seven games of rock, paper, scissors. After testing 44 subjects I did not find any patterns between ages or gender, but I did find patterns for everybody as a group. People played the move that beat their own last move about 48 percent of the time. I also tested to see if they beat my last move, but they only beat their own when playing. Teenagers have the highest percentage of moves that beat their last move, possibly because they are more egocentric and are thinking more about themselves when they are playing. One possible explanation for people playing the move that beats their last move is the recency effect. If a bunch of moves are played we will be thinking about the last one that happened and naturally try and beat it. When playing rock, paper, scissors we are thinking about ourselves instead of our opponent.