

The “Stroop Effect” Challenge

Look at the colors below and say the name of each color aloud. Don’t read the words—just say the names of the colors the words are printed in.

Ready? Go!

Red

Blue

Yellow

Blue

Green

Yellow

Red

Yellow

Green

That was surprisingly hard, wasn’t it? Did you make any mistakes? At the very least, it probably took you longer than you thought it would. That’s because your brain wanted to read the **word** instead of paying attention to the **color** of the font.

Now try it again, but this time read the **words** aloud, ignoring the color. That was much easier, right? And you probably didn’t make any mistakes.

Understanding the Stroop Effect

This little exercise is a demonstration of the Stroop effect, which is named after the researcher who came up with the study in 1935. In the study, it took most participants more than twice as long to say the font colors as it did to read the words.¹

The Stroop effect shows that, for literate adults, word recognition can be even more automatic than something as basic as color recognition. Reading the words doesn’t require conscience effort. In fact, it is difficult *not* to read the words! And that’s what we want for our students—for reading to become as effortless and unconscious as breathing!

¹ Stroop, J.R. (1935). Studies of interference in serial verbal reactions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 18, 643-662.

