Beyond the Count

Two ways to study a shared space

SS24.S.2a "Differentiate between qualitative and quantitative research methods, giving examples of each.*"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one example of evidence gathered by counting or measuring, and circle two examples of evidence gathered through people's descriptions to distinguish quantitative from qualitative research.

Who Uses the Courts?

1. At a neighborhood park, the basketball courts are crowded after school, but nearly empty on Saturday mornings. A team of student sociologists wants to know who uses the courts and what makes some visitors feel welcome. They ask one question about a shared public space, then collect two kinds of evidence. For a quantitative study, they count court users during the same hour on six weekdays and six Saturdays. They record the number of people using each court and compare the totals by day. These numbers show patterns in use, but not what visitors think about the space.

2. To learn about experiences, the team also conducts short, voluntary interviews with visitors and people who pass by. They ask open-ended questions, such as, "What affects your decision to play here?" One visitor describes feeling comfortable when friends are nearby. Another says games move too fast for beginners. The team writes down their words and looks for recurring ideas, such as friendship or skill level. This qualitative approach studies meanings and experiences rather than measuring how many people arrived. A few interviews can reveal reasons worth exploring, but they cannot show how common those views are among all visitors.

3. One visitor tells an interviewer, "I waited twenty minutes before anyone invited me to play." That statement includes a number, but the team treats it as part of a person's account of belonging, not as a standardized timing record. If the team instead timed each visitor's wait with the same rule and compared the lengths, those measurements would be quantitative data. Both approaches matter: measured wait times could show whether delays differ across days, while interviews could reveal what waiting feels like and why someone chooses to leave. The method depends on the evidence collected and how it is analyzed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why is counting court users on weekdays and Saturdays a quantitative method?

2. Why are the visitors' answers to open-ended interview questions qualitative evidence?

3. What can the court counts show, and what could the interviews reveal that the counts cannot?

4. A visitor says, "I waited twenty minutes before anyone invited me to play." Why does the team treat this as qualitative evidence? What would make waiting time quantitative data?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a school or community setting other than a park. In four sentences, state one research question, describe quantitative and qualitative data you would collect to investigate it, and explain one different insight each type could offer.

ANSWER KEY

Beyond the Count

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.S.2a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one example of evidence gathered by counting or measuring, and circle two examples of evidence gathered through people's descriptions to distinguish quantitative from qualitative research. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why is counting court users on weekdays and Saturdays a quantitative method?	**The team records numbers of users and compares the totals by day.**
2	Why are the visitors' answers to open-ended interview questions qualitative evidence?	**Their answers describe experiences and meanings, such as feeling comfortable with friends or finding games too fast.**
3	What can the court counts show, and what could the interviews reveal that the counts cannot?	**Counts can show patterns in court use by day. Interviews can reveal how visitors feel and why they may choose to play or leave.**
4	A visitor says, "I waited twenty minutes before anyone invited me to play." Why does the team treat this as qualitative evidence? What would make waiting time quantitative data?	**The team uses the statement as part of the visitor's account of belonging. Timing each visitor's wait with the same rule and comparing the measurements would produce quantitative data.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Why do some students use the school library during lunch while others do not? I would count how many students enter the library each lunch period for two weeks, which could show which days draw more students. I would ask students open-ended questions about their lunch choices, which could reveal whether noise or study needs affect their decisions. Counts would show a pattern in attendance, while students' explanations would help explain the choices behind that pattern.

Accept other accurate contrasts between numerical patterns and described experiences. A number mentioned in an interview can remain part of qualitative evidence when it is analyzed as part of a personal account rather than as a consistent measurement.