



The Dunning-Kruger Effect

A) Warm up

1. To what extent would you consider yourself to be a quick learner?
2. How accurate do you think you are in rating your own ability?

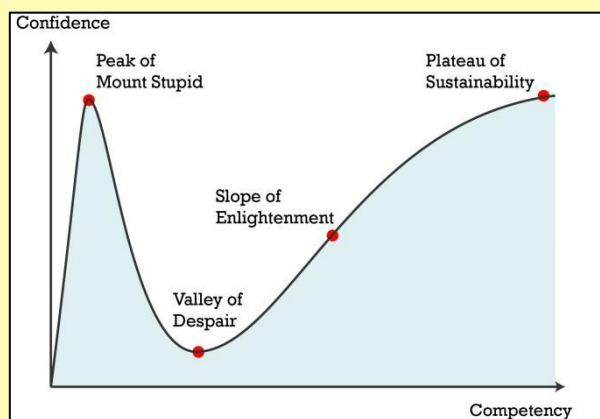
B) Adapted Text - The Dunning-Kruger Effect

The Dunning-Kruger Effect

The concept of the Dunning-Kruger effect is based on a 1999 experiment by psychologists David Dunning and Justin Kruger. Participants in the experiment were tested on their logic, grammar, and sense of humor. They were then asked to rate their own abilities in these fields. Shockingly, those who performed worst in these fields actually rated their own skills far above average, and those who performed well actually rated their ability lower than those who performed badly.

Think about it: Have you ever felt as if something was really easy at the beginning? Have you ever felt that you were a natural within hours of starting something new?

The graph on the right demonstrates the Dunning-Kruger effect. When you begin learning about something new, your confidence in your ability immediately **soars**, because when you gain a small amount of knowledge in an area, it can make you feel as though you are suddenly an expert. At this stage you are unaware of exactly how much you still don't know. Congratulations, you have reached the so-called "Peak of Mount Stupid"!



This confidence suddenly **plummets** when you learn a little bit more and you start to realise how far away you are from being competent at that skill. You then fall into the "Valley of Despair", which can **trigger** feelings of depression and frustration when you realise just how much you need to learn. After **bottoming out**, this confidence will then start to **pick up** as you **hone** your skill further. This time, however, your confidence is rising at a much more sensible rate, **aligning** much more closely with the increase in your knowledge.

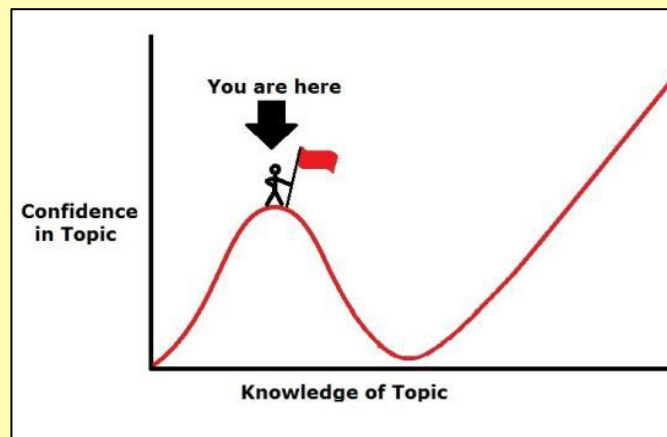
Sitting at the top of Mount Stupid can be an extremely dangerous place. Imagine you have an idea for a new product, which you think is destined for success. Despite having little business experience, you believe your invention is going to change the world, you might completely **overlook** market research, competition, and invest heavily in a product that nobody wants. Overconfidence could make you **blind to** valuable feedback, and the startup may become a spectacular failure! Sharing your “expert” knowledge with others on social media may also lead to acute embarrassment!

In order to avoid the Dunning-Kruger Effect, David Dunning himself proposes that people should challenge their knowledge and the conclusions they draw: “Try not to mistake the cautiousness of experts as a lack of understanding, and don’t be **led astray** by beginners who appear confident but have only superficial knowledge.”

Having looked at all the **pitfalls** of the Dunning-Kruger effect, are there any advantages? Well, yes! The Dunning-Kruger effect increases your confidence and makes you accept challenges despite not being ready. This pushes you out of your comfort zone and drives improvement. Often, by the time you reach the “Valley of Despair” you have already invested so much time into the activity that you are unlikely to quit, and you may have already **instilled** useful habits to get you through that difficult period.

Successful people in any field, whether it is doctors, entrepreneurs or sports stars, need overconfidence to achieve anything. If they had known how hard they would have to work to master their chosen skills, they may never have started to learn in the first place.

Congratulations, you are now an expert on the Dunning-Kruger effect.



C) Key Words from Context

Based on the context of the article, can you match the words in the box to the definitions listed below? Then add the word into the example sentence. You may need to change the form of the word to fit the meaning of the sentence.

to soar	to plummet	to trigger	to bottom out
to pick up	to hone	to align (with something)	to instil
to be blind to / to overlook		to be led astray by	pitfalls

1. To cause an emotion, an event or a situation: _____

"His comments _____ anger among the participants in the meeting."

"The pandemic _____ a short-term market crash."

2. To increase very quickly: _____

"Inflation is _____ at the moment."

3. To fail to notice something: _____

"The CEO completely _____ the competition, and started to fall behind as competitors developed superior technology. "

4. To not be conscious of something, or to refuse to notice something:

"The government is completely _____ the problems of the poorer people in our society."

5. Hidden dangers or difficulties of something: _____

"We need to consider the potential _____ of this strategy before we decide to implement it."

6. To be in a straight line with something, to be agreement with something:

"We decided to work together because our values _____ really closely."

7. To fall or decrease extremely quickly: _____

"Our company's profits _____ during the coronavirus pandemic."

8. To improve or perfect something (especially a skill or a strategy) over a period of time:

"My lessons are helping me to _____ my English skills."

9. To establish an idea, attitude or habit in someone's mind: _____

"I want to _____ a sense of confidence in my team."

10. To become better, increase or improve gradually: _____

"The weather is _____."

"Our profits are finally _____ after a difficult period."

11. To reach the lowest or worst point before beginning to rise or improve:

"The price of oil _____ last month, before picking up in the last few weeks."

12. To behave foolishly because of someone or something: _____

"We were _____ by an influencer who encouraged us to invest in very risky assets."

D) Comprehension

Can you answer the questions below about the text?

1. Why does confidence in your ability soar so quickly when you learn something new?

2. Why do people feel depression and frustration during the process of learning a skill?

3. What 2 pieces of advice does one of the psychologists behind the Dunning-Kruger experiment give?

4. When listening to people talk about a topic that you are trying to learn, what are 2 things that you should be careful of?

5. What are the 2 main reasons why people are unlikely to quit something when they reach the "Valley of Despair"?

6. To what extent do you believe that you have been influenced by the Dunning-Kruger effect, either positively or negatively?

E) Key Words in a New Context

Below you can find a paragraph. Can you fill in the gaps in the paragraph with the words from the box below? You will need to change the form of some of the verbs in order for them to fit into the sentence.

to soar	to trigger	to overlook	blind
to be led astray	pitfalls	to instil	

Become an entrepreneur in 7 easy steps!

Picture this: As an individual with a business idea and dreams of conquering the business world, you come across a very interesting online course: "Learn Entrepreneurship in 7 Easy Steps!" it declares in bold, vibrant letters. This immediately _____ intense excitement. This course is just what you have been looking for!

After covering the 7 modules in the course, you will be ready to put your idea out there. The course costs around \$1000, but once you follow the 7 simple steps, your income will start to _____ anyway, so why not dive straight in!

Here is another example of the Dunning Kruger effect in action. As someone who has never tried entrepreneurship before, it is impossible to understand what it takes to be successful. It is likely that you will be completely _____ to the numerous

_____ of this career path, and the person selling you the entrepreneurship course may conveniently _____ the years of hard work, stress, financial strain that many entrepreneurs have to come through to make their idea work.

What's more, cautious words from parents and other more experienced people might fail to _____ any sense of caution for several reasons. Firstly, cautiousness is boring; secondly, people may have extensive experience, but they are from a different era and everything has changed now; thirdly, their caution may be perceived as them failing to believe in your abilities or your idea.

The Dunning Kruger effect can therefore also cause consumers to be _____, especially for products which sell success. People marketing their own courses are fully aware that anyone buying a course doesn't know a lot about the topic, so it is easy for consumers to be seduced by promises of how something can be achieved with very little time and effort.