

Who Made the Mess?

Mrs. Smith was in the middle of baking cookies (one of her favorite rainy day activities) when she had to stop for an appointment. When she returned, the floor was covered with flour and some of the cookies were gone. Her two sons admitted eating a few cookies, but denied making the mess.

This problem can be solved by the deductive process, which includes the relevance of the facts and the sequence in which they occurred.

- Relevance: How significant is a fact?
- Sequence: In what order did the events occur?

Try your hand at solving the mystery using the deductive process.

Procedure

- 1 Have one student from your group choose a fact set from the envelope and read the facts to the other group members. Together, decide which facts in the set are most relevant and the sequence in which they may have occurred. Then form a hypothesis about what may have happened.
- 2 Ask a second group member to choose another fact set from the envelope. Revisit your rankings of relevance and resequence and revise the facts as needed.
- 3 Repeat the procedure with the third person in your group for the final set of facts.
- 4 Have each member of your group cut his or her set of facts into separate strips, with one fact for each strip. As a group, decide the relevance and sequence of your facts by arranging them in two columns. Place the important facts in the right-hand column, starting with the first event. Place the supporting facts in the left-hand column.
- 5 Review the important facts with your group and develop an explanation for how you think the mess was made.
- 6 Test your conclusion by reviewing to see if there are any facts that don't fit.

Questions

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- 1 After looking at the first fact set, how did you think the mess was created? How did that explanation change when you looked at subsequent fact sets?
- 2 What was your final conclusion about what occurred in the kitchen? Which facts are the most relevant for your conclusion? What are the least number of facts that can be used to support the conclusion?
- 3 What other scenarios, if any, are supported by the given facts?

