

Frequency Analysis (continued)

Finding out which letters are most common

Extension Activity

3. When doing frequency analysis, the longer the passage that you count, the more accurate the answers (especially for the less common letters) in the sense of being a better match to English as a whole.

A way that would be quicker if you were trying to count the letters in a whole book would be to share the work. For example, you could split the book into three parts with a different person counting the letters in each part. Then you can just add up the three answers to give a total for each letter.

Try doing it that way with the three sentences below. In groups of three, each person should tally the letters for one sentence. Each use the Tally Sheet to do this. Copy the answers on to a single total sheet. Add the answers for each letter on the total sheet.

Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin.

It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it.

And then he feels that perhaps there isn't. Anyhow, here he is at the bottom, and ready to be introduced to you. Winnie-the-Pooh.

Splitting up work like this is called **decomposition** by computer scientists. It allows work to be shared. When computers do this it is called **parallel processing**.