

Learning English podcasts ... from the  
Hellenic American Union©

Level: Advanced  
Lesson: 32  
Title: "Red Power"

**Summary:**

*Vanessa and Nick are interviewing Professor Russell Hill of Durham University who speaks about the competitive advantage of teams and athletes wearing red.*

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*In this episode of World Report, Vanessa and Nick are in the middle of a live show in a radio studio. Nick is reporting live from Durham, UK. Professor Russell Hill of Durham University also joins them. Listen to their conversation and answer the question that follows about the main idea.*

**Dialogue:**

**Vanessa:**

Hello and welcome to World Report. Nick has been talking to Professor Russell Hill of Durham University in the UK, whose research **may come as a bit of a shock** to those of you who support any red-clad teams. Professor Hill, thanks for joining us.



**Russell:**

My pleasure.

**Vanessa:**

What sports did your study cover?

**Russell:**

We chose four Olympic sports: boxing, taekwondo, Greco-Roman wrestling and freestyle wrestling. In all four, athletes are randomly assigned red or blue. That made it easier for us to track the existence of any pattern or patterns.



**Nick:** And how well did the reds do?

**Russell:** In all four sports, reds triumphed in more contests. 62% of them, **in fact**.



**Nick:** That's quite impressive. But what if your team colors are anything except red? Does that put you at a disadvantage?

**Russell:** Well, no, **I wouldn't go as far as that**. If your team's good, then wearing black or green or whatever certainly won't set you back. And if your team's no good, a red shirt won't stop you from losing.

**Vanessa:** Professor, when was the red shirt an advantage?

**Russell:** When the opponents were pretty much the same level of performance. **In contrast**, when one side was obviously better, the winning ratio was split between reds and blues.



**Vanessa:** Is there a scientific explanation for this?



**Russell:** Well, evolutionary psychologists speculate that the eyes of primates may be particularly sensitive to red.



**Nick:** So we're talking about the animal world.

**Russell:** Right. **Similarly**, in sports, humans may experience a testosterone surge while wearing red. They will feel more energetic, perhaps even more aggressive.



**Nick:** On the other hand, when facing an opponent in red...



**Russell:** ...they're likely to feel **submissive**, which may reduce their chances of winning. However, it's all a matter of context, so one shouldn't generalize.



*Now answer the following question ...*

What's the power of the color red in sports?  
It seems to give those who wear it a competitive advantage

*Now listen again to the dialogue in parts. After each part there will be 3 to 4 questions on some details...*

### Part 1

**Vanessa:** Hello and welcome to World Report. Nick has been talking to Professor Russell Hill of Durham University in the UK, whose research **may come as a bit of a shock** to those of you who support any red-clad teams. Professor Hill, thanks for joining us.

**Russell:** My pleasure.

**Vanessa:** What sports did your study cover?

**Russell:** We chose four Olympic sports: boxing, taekwondo, Greco-Roman wrestling and freestyle wrestling. In all four, athletes are randomly assigned red or blue. That made it easier for us to track the existence of any pattern or patterns.

**Nick:** And how well did the reds do?

**Russell:** In all four sports, reds triumphed in more contests. 62% of them, **in fact**.

**Nick:** That's quite impressive. But what if your team colors are anything except red? Does that put you at a disadvantage?

**Russell:** Well, no, **I wouldn't go as far as that**. If your team's good, then wearing black or green or whatever certainly won't set you back. And if your team's no good, a red shirt won't stop you from losing.

*Now answer the following questions:*

1. What does Vanessa mean when she says the professor's research "**may come as a bit of a shock**"?  
When Vanessa says the professor's research "**may come as a bit of a shock**", she means that you may find it surprising.
2. What does Russell mean when he says "**in fact**"?  
When Russell says "**in fact**", he means that he wants to clarify his point.
3. What does Russell mean when he says "**I wouldn't go as far as that**"?  
When Russell says "**I wouldn't go as far as that**", he means that he doesn't totally agree.

*Now listen again to the second part of the dialogue.*

## Part 2

- Vanessa:** Professor, when was the red shirt an advantage?
- Russell:** When the opponents were pretty much the same level of performance. **In contrast**, when one side was obviously better, the winning ratio was split between reds and blues.
- Vanessa:** Is there a scientific explanation for this?
- Russell:** Well, evolutionary psychologists speculate that the eyes of primates may be particularly sensitive to red.
- Nick:** So we're talking about the animal world.
- Russell:** Right. **Similarly**, in sports, humans may experience a testosterone surge while wearing red. They will feel more energetic, perhaps even more aggressive.
- Nick:** On the other hand, when facing an opponent in red...
- Russell:** ...**they're likely to feel submissive**, which may reduce their chances of winning. However, it's all a matter of context, so one shouldn't generalize.

*Now answer some questions...*

1. Why does Russell say "**In contrast**, when one side was obviously better, the winning ratio was split between reds and blues"?  
Russell says "In contrast", because he wants to express the contrast between two different winning cases.

2. Why does Russell say “**Similarly**, in sports, humans may experience a testosterone surge while wearing red”?  
Russell says “Similarly”, because he wants to point out that there is a similarity in the behavior of primates and humans.
3. Why does Russell say “**They’re likely to feel submissive**”?  
Russell says “They’re likely to feel submissive”, because he wants to express the contrast between playing in red and facing an opponent in red.

Please visit our site at [www.hau.gr](http://www.hau.gr) to find the transcripts, explanations and activities.

#### GLOSSARY

**Come as a shock:** If something **comes as a shock** then it surprises you.

**Primate (N.):** A **primate** is a member of the most developed and intelligent group of mammals, including humans, monkeys and apes.

**Put at a disadvantage:** If you are **put at a disadvantage** then your attempts to do something are hindered or harmed. **Set you back** is the same.

**Ratio (N.):** The relationship between two groups or amounts is called the **ratio**, and it expresses how much bigger one is than the other.

**Split (vb.):** To **split** is to divide something into two or more parts, especially along a particular line.

**Submissive (adj.):** If someone is **submissive** then they allow themselves to be controlled by other people. The opposite is dominant.

**Surge (N.):** A **surge** is a sudden and great increase.

**Track (vb.):** If something is **tracked** it is followed. We can also use ‘**keep track of**’ to mean follow.

**Triumph (N.):** a **triumph** is a very great success, achievement or victory, and / or the feeling of great satisfaction or pleasure caused by this. It can also be a verb.

## ACTIVITIES

### Activity 1

Choose the most appropriate aforementioned word or expression to fill in each blank. You may need to change the form of the word (e.g. from a noun to a verb)

1. The collapse in the stock market \_\_\_\_\_ - it was so unexpected.
2. My sister has had so many different jobs, I find it hard to \_\_\_\_\_ of what she's doing.
3. The book celebrates the hostages' remarkable \_\_\_\_\_ over appalling adversity.
4. Critics say that some students are \_\_\_\_\_ by bilingual education programs.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ of men to women at the conference was ten to one.
6. The prize was \_\_\_\_\_ between Susan and Kate.
7. An unexpected \_\_\_\_\_ in electrical power caused the computer to crash.
8. He was looking for a quiet \_\_\_\_\_ wife who would obey his every word.

### Activity 2

A. Consider the following explanations.

Russell says "In contrast, when one side was obviously better, the winning **ratio** was split between reds and blues." A **ratio** can be expressed numerically as 1:4 and pronounced 'one in four' or 'a ratio of one to four'.

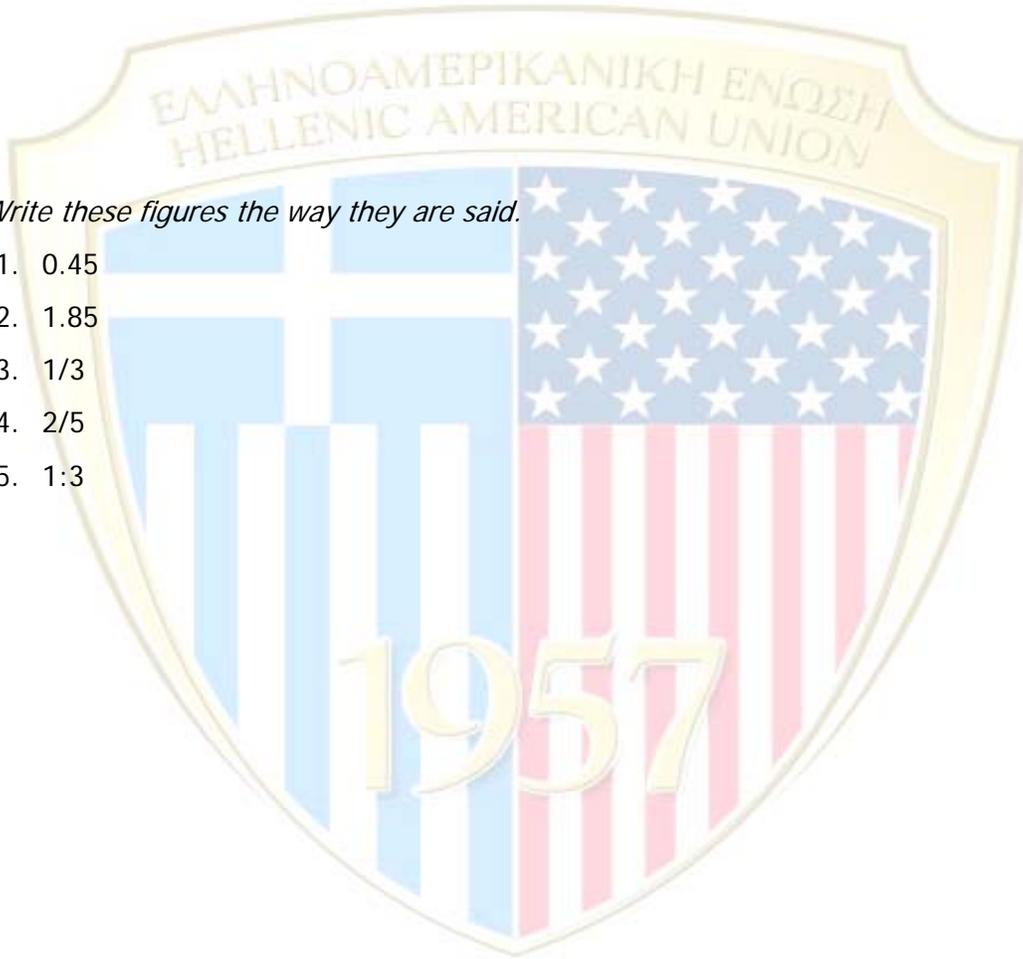
**Fractions** are expressed using ordinal numbers: a third, a quarter, a half, two fifths, three-quarters, etc.

**Decimals** are expressed using the word *point*. Each figure is pronounced separately:

	0.35	0.5	6.75
American English	Zero point three five	Zero point five	Six point seven five
British English	Naught point three five Oh point three five	Naught point five Oh point five	Six point seven five

*B. Write these figures the way they are said.*

1. 0.45
2. 1.85
3.  $1/3$
4.  $2/5$
5. 1:3



## KEY TO ACTIVITIES

### Activity 1:

1. *came as a great shock*
2. to keep track
3. triumph
4. put at a disadvantage
5. ratio
6. split
7. surge
8. submissive

### Activity 2B:

1. oh / zero point four five
2. one point eight five
3. a third / one third
4. two-fifths
5. one in three / a ratio of one to three

