

The Count That Stays at Nineteen



Nussbaum Mind

Illustration coming soon

Ages 12-15



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Chapter 1: The notebook column

On Monday, Leora writes a number at the bottom of a column in her notebook.

Nineteen.

It is her best jump-rope count without stopping: nineteen turns of the rope before it catches her ankle. She is learning a speed pattern for the gym class showcase, and she has recorded her count every afternoon for two weeks.

The column reads: 7, 9, 12, 14, 17, 19.

Then, on Tuesday: 19. On Wednesday: 18. On Thursday: 19.

Chapter 2: The flat part

Leora draws a small line under the last number.

It does not look like progress. It looks like a staircase that has hit a wall.

She tells herself a story. I have reached my limit. My arms are not built for this. Everyone else will be fine at the showcase, and I will be the one who stops at nineteen.

In the next row of the gym, Ahuva, who is two weeks behind her, jumps twenty-six.

Leora closes the notebook.



Chapter 3: Coach Sheindy

On Friday, Coach Sheindy watches her try again.

Leora jumps. The rope slaps the floor. Nineteen. Then it catches.

"Okay," says Coach Sheindy. She wears a long gym skirt and a loose, long-sleeved shirt, and her hair is tucked in a tidy cap. "That is a lot of nineteens."

"I'm stuck."

"Maybe. Or maybe you are in the flat part."

"What's the flat part?"

"Almost everyone has one. You jump the same number for days. Sometimes your body figures out something new, and the number moves. Sometimes we test a change."

Leora crosses her arms. "What if it does not move?"

"Then we change something. But we do not decide in the flat part that you are finished."

Chapter 4: What stays the same

Coach Sheindy pulls a stool beside the mat.

"Show me one jump slowly."

Leora jumps slowly.



"Do your elbows move?"

"Not really. They are close to my sides."

"Do your wrists move?"

"A lot."

"Where does the rope usually catch?"

Leora thinks. "Around number nineteen. My arms get tired."

"Then the number may not be about being good enough. It may be about what your arms do at nineteen. We can test one thing at a time."

Chapter 5: One change

They try one small change.

On Saturday night, Leora watches her wrists in the mirror. She makes the circles a little smaller.

The rope catches at fourteen.

"That is worse," she mutters.

"That is a test," says Coach Sheindy, who has been watching from the door.

"You changed something. The number changed. Now you know what to try again."

Leora writes 14 in the notebook, and next to it, smaller wrists.



Chapter 6: The next days

On Sunday she keeps the smaller wrists and adds one more change: she breathes out as she jumps. The count is 16. On Monday: 15. On Tuesday: 20.

She stares at the twenty.

It is not a miracle. It is one number. On Wednesday she writes 17, and on Thursday 21.

Leora notices that her notebook is not a story about what she is. It is a list of what she tried.

Chapter 7: Before the showcase

On the day of the showcase, Leora does not know what number she will reach.

She stands on the gym floor with her rope, hears the teacher say "Ready," and breathes out at the start.

The rope turns. She keeps her elbows close. She smooths her wrists.

She counts. Twenty-three, twenty-four, and then the rope catches.

Leora laughs, which surprises her. She does not expect it.

Afterward, in the hallway, Ahuva says, "You went higher than me."



"I went higher than me," says Leora. She opens her notebook and writes the number.

Then she writes tomorrow's plan.



Notebook order

Number the cards in story order.

Leora writes nineteen again in her notebook.

Coach Sheindy names it the flat part and says not to decide she is finished.

Leora makes her wrist circles smaller and the rope catches at fourteen.

Leora writes twenty after two lower days.

At the showcase Leora writes her number and tomorrow's plan.



Fact or thought?

Mark FACT for what the story shows happened. Mark THOUGHT for the story Leora tells herself.

Statement	FACT	THOUGHT
The rope catches at nineteen.	☐	☐
I have reached my limit.	☐	☐
Ahuva jumps twenty-six.	☐	☐
My arms are not built for this.	☐	☐



Test, not verdict

Choose the sentence that treats a result as information. Rewrite one other sentence in your own words.

Sentence	Information?
☐ That is a test.	
☐ I am just not good at this.	
☐ Now I know what to try again.	

One sentence in your own words



One change at a time

Draw a path through the moves that help with a flat stretch.

Start

Change one thing.

Decide you are finished.

Write the number and what changed.

Breathe out on the jump.

Change five things at once.

Ask the coach.

A useful practice step



My practice log

Use a fictional person. Plan three tests for a skill that has stopped improving.

A fictional person's skill

Three one-change tests

What to record each time



Flat part reminders

Read the reminders with an adult. Choose one that fits. Final stickers are 2 1/4-inch squares.

**Flat is not
finished**

**Change one
thing**

**A test is
information**

**Compare with
yourself**

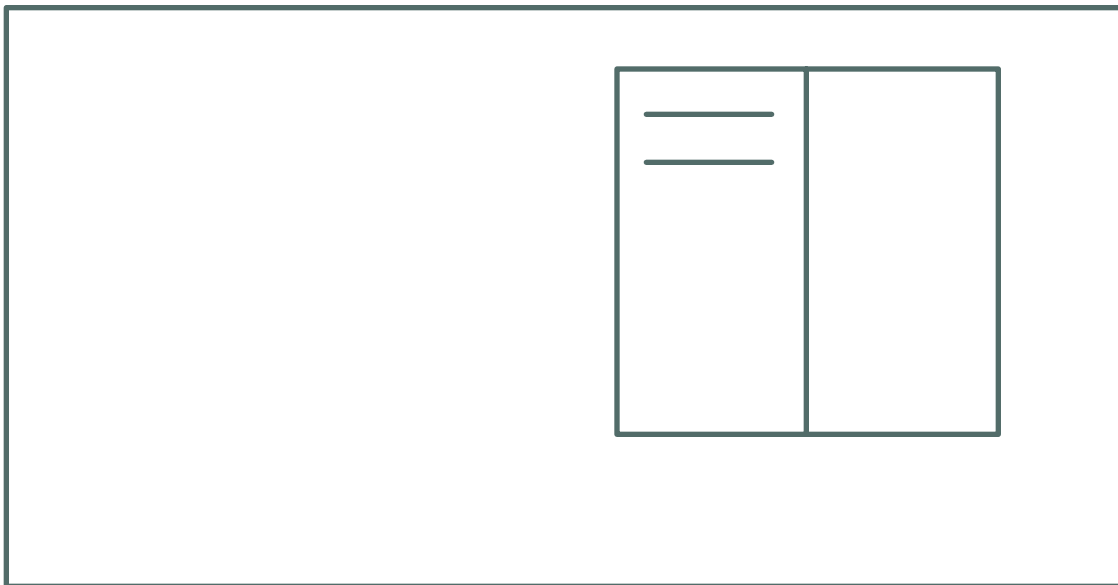
**Write what you
tried**

Breathe out



Rope and notebook

Draw a jump rope coiled on a gym mat beside an open notebook with a column of numbers.



A detail I add to the notebook or mat



Find the practice words

Find ROPE, FLAT, TEST, COACH, WRIST, COUNT, BREATHE, SHEINDY.
All go left to right. Tell one word's part in the story.

R	O	P	E	X	Q	Z	B	W	M
X	F	L	A	T	Q	M	D	F	G
Z	T	E	S	T	P	X	K	H	B
Q	C	O	A	C	H	V	D	W	N
X	W	R	I	S	T	M	Z	P	G
B	C	O	U	N	T	Q	D	F	G
X	B	R	E	A	T	H	E	M	C
S	H	E	I	N	D	Y	X	B	N
P	Q	M	Z	X	W	V	B	D	F
C	B	N	M	K	X	Q	Z	P	D

ROPE**FLAT****TEST****COACH****WRIST****COUNT****BREATHE****SHEINDY**

One word's part in the story



Parent notes and answers

Discussion questions:

What story did Leora tell herself about nineteen?

What did Coach Sheindy name the stretch where the number stays the same?

Why was fourteen called a test and not a failure?

What did Leora notice about her notebook?

What did she write after the showcase?

Parent tool: Flat stretches are normal in practice. Separate what the numbers show from what we conclude about ourselves. Change one thing at a time and record it. Do not promise a result. Compare with your own earlier numbers rather than with a friend.

1. Listed order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.
2. FACT: The rope catches at nineteen; Ahuva jumps twenty-six. THOUGHT: I have reached my limit; My arms are not built for this.
3. Information: That is a test; Now I know what to try again. Verdict: I am just not good at this.
4. Useful nodes: Change one thing; Write the number and what changed; Breathe out on the jump; Ask the coach. Not useful nodes: Decide you are finished; Change five things at once.
5. Open. Example: change one detail, record it, compare with their own earlier numbers.
6. Open. No result is promised.
7. Open. No people needed.
8. ROPE: row 1, column 1, right; FLAT: row 2, column 2, right; TEST: row 3, column 2, right; COACH: row 4, column 2, right; WRIST: row 5, column 2, right; COUNT: row 6, column 2, right; BREATHE: row 7, column 2, right; SHEINDY: row 8, column 1, right