

Test your memory in world's biggest experiment

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Today researchers at the University of Cambridge launch what could be the world's biggest ever memory experiment.

Yasemin Yazar, Dr. Zara Bergström and Dr. Jon Simons from the University of Cambridge's Department of Experimental Psychology, along with Dr. Charles Fernyhough from Durham University, have teamed up with the Guardian to run an online experiment for members of the public to test their memory abilities and find out how they stack up against their friends.

“We're hoping that thousands of people from all walks of life, and from all over the world, will go to the website and take part,” said Dr. Simons, who is leading the research. Anybody can participate by clicking www.guardian.co.uk/memorystudy; to go to the Guardian experiment website and test their memory abilities for free from the comfort of their own homes.

The experiment, which will take just a few minutes to complete, investigates features of long-term memory (our ability to remember events we have experienced). Participants will study words presented on the screen and different aspects of their memory for the words will be assessed. All data will be collected anonymously and participants will be able to find out how their memory scores compare to those obtained by previous participants. They will also be able, should they wish, to share their score with friends via Facebook or Twitter.

“With this experiment, we aim to understand how it is that we’re typically able to remember [experiences](#) that may be quite similar to one another without getting them confused. Related events often share features but, usually, we’re pretty good at distinguishing those events from each other. Our experiment is designed to study the impact of overlapping memory features on remembering, so errors on the task are entirely normal and nothing to be worried about! ” said Dr. Simons.

“There’s so much we still have to learn about how we remember the things we see,” said Dr. Simons. “Hopefully, taking part in the experiment will be interesting and fun for participants, but in addition, the anonymous results we obtain will contribute a large amount of useful data to our research and will, we hope, provide a real advance in our knowledge about memory.”

The experiment is part of the Guardian’s Memory Week, which culminates in a free guide, “Make the most of your memory”, available with the Guardian newspaper on Saturday 14 January, which includes articles and memory tips from Dr. Simons, Dr. Fernyhough and a number of other memory experts.

“Remembering is one of the most fascinating and complex functions that our minds perform,” said Dr. Fernyhough. “With this study we hope to shed further light on how the brain fits together the different bits of information that go to make up a memory.”

Please note that although this test will help further our understanding in this area of research, it is not intended to be used as a diagnostic tool for [memory](#) problems.

Provided by University of Cambridge

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