

Human concentration study is reported

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A U.S. study suggests multitasking is no problem for most people, but listening to more than one communication can be problematic.

Cornell University Assistant Psychology Professor Morten Christiansen and Christopher Conway, a National Institutes of Health research fellow at Indiana University, found people are pretty good at perceptual multitasking -- except when multiple sources of incoming stimuli are of the same type.

Participants in the study experienced little difficulty learning complex structures streamed at them simultaneously, such as tones and colors or even tones and speech.

"However, performance dropped when the two sets of sequences were from the same perceptual class of stimuli, such as two sets of speech stimuli," said Conway. "Overall, these results show humans have a powerful learning system that is capable of learning sequential patterns simultaneously from multiple environmental sources -- provided each source is perceived as being distinct."

The study will appear in the October issue of the journal *Psychological Science*.

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