

Picky preschoolers: Young children prefer majority opinion

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When we are faced with a decision, and we're not sure what to do, usually we'll just go with the majority opinion. When do we begin adopting this strategy of "following the crowd"? In a new report in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, psychologists Kathleen H. Corriveau, Maria Fusaro, and Paul L. Harris of Harvard University describe experiments suggesting that this tendency starts very early on, around preschool age.

In this study, three- and four-year-old [children](#) watched as a small group of people (either three or four members) named a novel object. The majority of [group members](#) would use the same name for the object; the lone dissenter would pick a different name. The children were then asked what they thought the object was called.

The results revealed that majority rules when it comes to influencing the opinion of preschoolers. The children in the study would consistently select the name that was used by the majority of the group members. And even more interesting, in a follow-up experiment in which only two members (someone from the [majority group](#) and the dissenter) remained in the room and named a different object, the children would still go with name that was provided by the majority group member.

These results indicate that children as young as age three and four are able to recognize and trust a [consensus](#). In addition, [young children](#) are good at remembering who was and was not a part of the majority group. The authors note that children are not always faced with agreement

during interactions with people and these "findings provide initial evidence that young children navigate that [social variation](#) with the help of a simple but powerful strategy."

More information: "Going with the Flow: Preschoolers Prefer Nondissenters as Informants," *Psychological Science*.

Source: Association for Psychological Science

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