

# Study reveals wanted objects are seen as closer

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We assume that we see things as they really are. But according to a new report in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, if we really want something, that desire may influence how we view our surroundings.

Psychological scientists Emily Balcetis from New York University and David Dunning from Cornell University conducted a set of studies to see how our [desires](#) affect [perception](#). In the first experiment, participants had to estimate how far a water bottle was from where they were sitting. Half of the volunteers were allowed to drink water before the experiment, while the others ate salty pretzels, thus becoming very thirsty. The results showed that the thirsty volunteers estimated the water as being closer to them than volunteers who drank water earlier.

Our desire for certain objects may also result in behavioral changes. In a separate experiment, volunteers tossed a beanbag towards a gift card (worth either \$25 or \$0) on the floor, winning the card if the beanbag landed on it. Interestingly, the volunteers threw the beanbag much farther if the gift card was worth \$0 than if it was worth \$25 — that is, they underthrew the beanbag when attempting to win a \$25 gift card, because they viewed that gift card as being closer to them.

These findings indicate that when we want something, we actually view it as being physically close to us. The authors suggest that "these biases arise in order to encourage perceivers to engage in behaviors leading to the acquisition of the object." In other words, when we see a goal as

being close to us (literally within our reach), it motivates us to keep on going to successfully attain it.

Provided by Association for Psychological Science

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