

Feeling chills in response to music

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Most people feel chills and shivers in response to music that thrills them, but some people feel these chills often and others feel them hardly at all. People who are particularly open to new experiences are most likely to have chills in response to music, according to a study in the current *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

Researchers Emily Nusbaum and Paul Silvia of University of North Carolina at Greensboro asked students about how often they felt chills down their spine, got goose bumps, or felt like their hair was standing on end while listening to music. They also measured their experience with music, and five main dimensions of personality: extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Of all these dimensions, only openness to experience was related to feeling chills. People high in openness are creative, curious about many things, have active imaginations and like to play with ideas, and they much more frequently feel chills in response to music.

Why might people high in openness to experience report feeling chills more often? Surprisingly, people high in openness didn't have chills because they tended to listen to different kinds of music. Instead, people with a lot of openness to experience were more likely to play a [musical instrument](#) themselves and they rated music as more important in their lives than people low in openness. Not surprisingly, people high in openness also spent more time listening to music.

"There are a lot of ways in which people are basically alike, but the experience of chills isn't one of them," said the authors. "Some people

seem to have never experienced chills while listening to music—around 8% of people in our study—but other people experience chills basically every day. Findings like these are what make the study of personality and music interesting—[music](#) is a human universal, but some people get a lot more out of it."

More information: The article "Shivers and Timbres: Personality and the Experience of Chills From Music" in *Social Psychological and Personality Science* is available free for a limited time at spp.sagepub.com/content/early/.../386810.full.pdf+html

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