

Ten-minute online test estimates 'Face-Name Memory IQ'

October 7 2012, by Gerry Everding



(Medical Xpress)—How skillful are you at remembering faces and names? Researchers at Washington University in St. Louis are inviting the world to take part in an online experiment that will allow participants to see how their individual scores on a face-name memory test compare with those of other test takers.

The [test](#), which can be taken from a computer, smartphone, [iPad](#) and other [mobile devices](#), is part of a growing "[crowd](#)-sourcing" trend in [science](#), which harnesses the Internet to gather massive amounts of research data while allowing individual [study participants](#) to learn a little something about themselves.

To take part, just visit the test website at experiments.wustl.edu.

"It's a [simple test](#) that only takes about 10 minutes to complete," says research team member David Balota, PhD, professor of psychology in Arts & Sciences. "We're finding that people really seem to enjoy being tested this way."

By participating, individuals both contribute to the science of memory and also receive feedback about their own face-name memory performance in comparison with others who have participated. By placing the test online, researchers are hoping to obtain a wealth of data on how a very diverse sampling of the human population performs on a simple memory performance task.

After completion of the test, users will be provided with a rough estimate of their "Face-Name Memory IQ" score, which simply reflects how their score stacks up against others who have taken the test.

Designed to be both fun and informative, the test also is easy to share among friends—users are given the option of clicking an embedded "like" button that will auto-post a reference to the test in the news feed of their Facebook pages.

Development of the online experiment has been a team effort involving faculty, staff and students from the university's Department of Psychology in Arts & Sciences and the Department of Computer Science & Engineering in the School of Engineering & Applied Science.

Mary Pyc, PhD, a postdoctoral research associate in psychology, collaborated with Todd Sproull, PhD, a lecturer in computer science, to develop the online presentation of the face-name [memory test](#). Students from the university's Internet Technologies and Applications (ITA) internship program also assisted in system development.

Other members of the Washington University research team include

Henry L. "Roddy" Roediger III, PhD, the James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor, and Kathleen B. McDermott, PhD, professor of [psychology](#), both in Arts & Sciences.

The research team is exploring the use of social media and other options to spread word about the experiment in hopes of getting as many people as possible to take the online test.

Balota recently took part in a similar international online experiment that utilized an iPhone app to test how quickly participants could identify whether a string of presented letters represented a real word or some made-up non-word, such as "flirp."

"The word-recognition study was conducted in seven languages, and, in four months, we collected as much data as a more laboratory-based version took three years to collect in a single language," Balota says. "At one point, it was the fifth-most downloaded word game app in the Netherlands."

Provided by Washington University in St. Louis

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