

Previously claimed memory boosting font Sans Forgetica does not actually boost memory

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Sans Forgetica

Credit: University of Warwick

It was previously claimed that the font Sans Forgetica could enhance people's memory for information, however researchers from the University of Warwick and the University of Waikato, New Zealand, have found after carrying out numerous experiments that the font does not enhance memory.

The Sans Forgetica font has received much press coverage, after researchers in Australia claimed they had designed a new font that would boost [memory](#) by making [information](#) that appeared in the new [font](#) feel more difficult to read—and therefore remembered better.

The original team carried out a study on 400 students, and found that 57% remembered facts written in Sans Forgetica, whereas 50%

remembered facts written in Arial.

But a team of scientist led by the University of Waikato, New Zealand, and involving the University of Warwick, has just published their new findings in the paper 'Disfluent difficulties are not desirable difficulties: the (lack of) effect of Sans Forgetica on memory', in the journal Memory. After four experiments, they found no evidence of memory-boosting effects.

The four experiments included:

1. Establishing the extent to which material written in Sans Forgetica feels difficult to process
2. Comparing people's memory for information displayed in Sans Forgetica and Arial
3. Analysing the extent to which Sans Forgetica boosted people's memory for information in educational text
4. Testing people's understanding of concepts presented in either Sans Forgetica or Arial.

Across the four experiments with 882 people, this scientific team found that in Experiment One, Sans Forgetica feels harder to read compared to Arial.

In Experiment Two, they found that when they showed people pairs of words in Sans Forgetica or Arial, people recalled fewer Sans Forgetica pairs than Arial pairs.

In Experiment Three, they found that when people were shown some educational information in Sans Forgetica and Arial, and were then tested on what they could recall of the information, there was no evidence that Sans Forgetica improved their performance.

Finally, in Experiment Four, they found that when testing people's understanding of educational passages presented in Sans Forgetica or Arial, people had equal understanding of information presented in Sans Forgetica and Arial, and there was no proof that Sans Forgetica improved their understanding.

Dr. Kimberley Wade, from the Department of Psychology comments:

"After conducting four peer-reviewed experiments into Sans Forgetica and comparing it to Arial, we can confidently say that Sans Forgetica promotes a feeling of disfluency, but does not boost memory like it is claimed to.

"In fact, it seems like although Sans Forgetica is novel and hard to read, its effects might well end there."

Andrea Taylor, from the University of Waikato, New Zealand adds:

"Our findings suggest we should encourage students to rely on robust, theoretically-grounded techniques that really do enhance learning, rather than hard-to-read fonts."

More information: Andrea Taylor et al. Disfluent difficulties are not desirable difficulties: the (lack of) effect of Sans Forgetica on memory, *Memory* (2020). [DOI: 10.1080/09658211.2020.1758726](https://doi.org/10.1080/09658211.2020.1758726)

Provided by University of Warwick

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