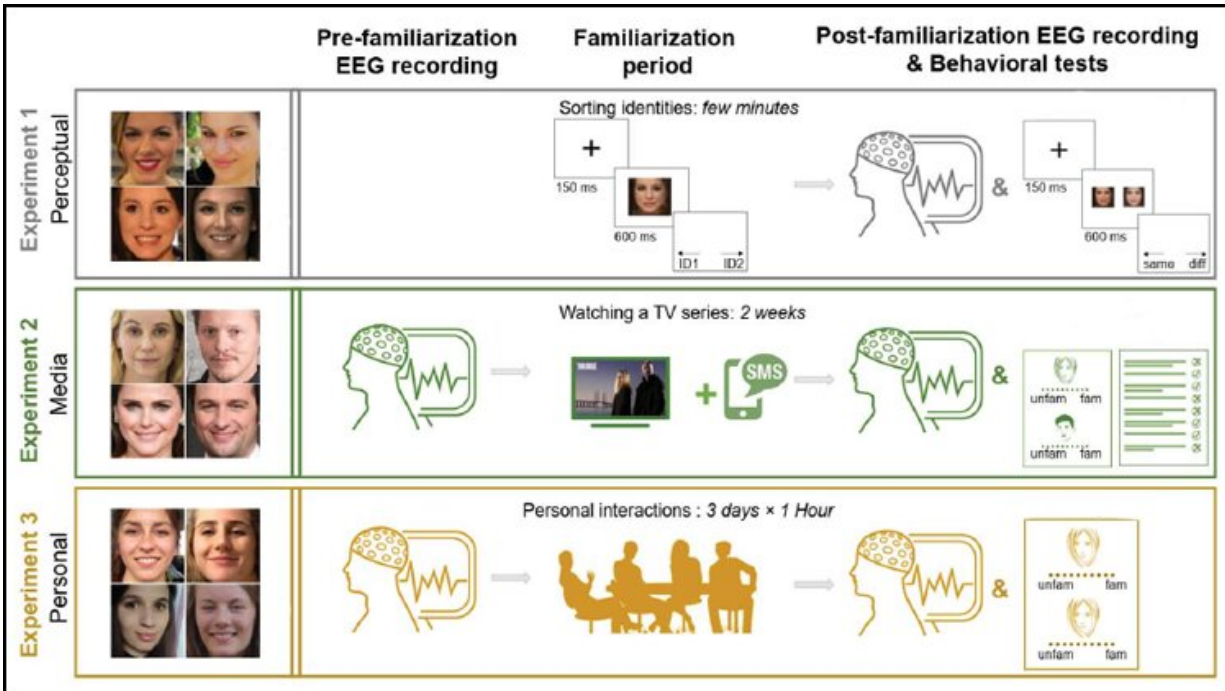


The brain learns faces fastest in person

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Experimental paradigm and EEG analysis methods. Credit: Ambrus et al., *JNeurosci* 2021

The neural representation of a familiar face strengthens faster when you see someone in person, according to a new study published in *JNeurosci*.

The brain loves [faces](#)—there's even an interconnected network of brain areas dedicated to face-processing. Despite all the research on how the brain sees faces, little is known about how the neural representation of a

face changes as it becomes familiar.

To track how familiarity brain signals change, Ambrus et al. measured participants' [brain](#) activity with EEG before and after getting to know different faces. Participants were exposed to faces in one of three ways: perceptual exposure (a sorting game), [media exposure](#) (watching a TV show), and in-person (chatting with lab members). A jolt of [brain activity](#) appeared on the EEG around 400 milliseconds after viewing a face; the strength of the signal was tied to the familiarity of the face. The type of exposure affected how much the signal changed: in-person exposure strengthened it the most, followed by media exposure. Perceptual exposure had very little impact on the familiarity signal.

These results emphasize the importance of in-person interactions when getting to know new people.

More information: Getting to Know You: Emerging Neural Representations During Face Familiarization, *JNeurosci* (2021). [DOI: 10.1523/JNEUROSCI.2466-20.2021](#)

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