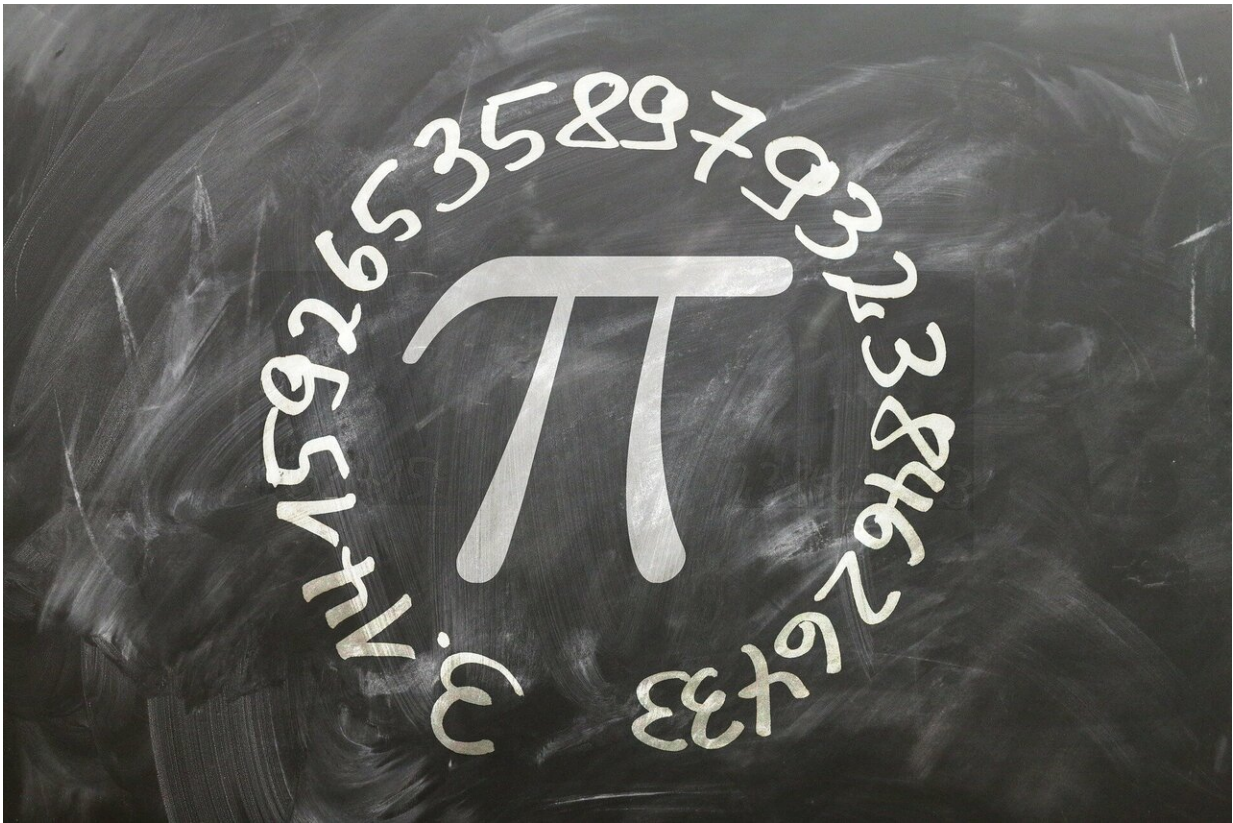


Search is on for 'super memorizers' to help scientists unlock the secrets of memory

May 3 2023



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Cambridge scientists are today launching a search to find people who have exceptional memory, as they attempt to understand why some people are much better at remembering than others.

Anyone who believes they have an exceptional memory is invited to take an [online survey](#) and [memory test](#). Based on their performance, some people will be invited to Cambridge to have a brain scan so that the origins of exceptional memory can be explored in detail.

The team will also be exploring whether people who are autistic or neurodiverse are more likely to have an exceptional memory.

It's long been known that people differ in their memory ability, with some having seemingly infinite memory. For example, essayist and writer Daniel Tammet, who the Cambridge team have worked with previously, set the European record in 2004 for reciting the number pi from memory after recalling it to 22,514 digits. He is both autistic and has synesthesia, where the senses are interconnected, which may go some way to explaining his talents.

Professor Jon Simons from the Department of Psychology at the University of Cambridge said, "Memory is one of the best understood psychological processes in terms of brain networks and yet we still don't really know why some people have exceptional memories. That's why we're inviting people to take part in our study."

Professor Sir Simon Baron-Cohen, Director of the Autism Research Center at Cambridge University, and lead investigator of the study, said, "You don't need to have won any competitions to take part or to consider yourself neurodiverse—and you certainly don't need to be able to recite pi to 22,000 digits! We're looking for anyone who thinks they might be a 'super memorizer' to try out our memory tests."

Anyone who wants to take part will need to take three brief online memory tests, such as memorizing a phone number or patterns on a chess board. Anyone who scores highly on one or more of these tests could be invited to come to Cambridge for a brain scan using an MRI

scanner. All expenses will be paid.

The Cambridge scientists want to know whether the brains of people who have exceptional memory show differences in how they are structured or how they function compared to those who do not: in short, how do they achieve their remarkable feats of memory? The team also want to investigate if autism gives rise to a greater likelihood of exceptional memory.

Dr. Carrie Allison, also from the Autism Research Center, added, "We hope that people will enjoy taking part in this study, and in the process contribute to helping us understand more about memory and whether exceptional [memory](#) is related to autism. For decades, [autism](#) research has focused on disability, but this study is a wonderful opportunity to focus on strengths."

To take part you must be between the ages of 16 and 60 years old.

More information: Take the survey and memory tests here:
[cambridge.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe ... m/SV_eFYFJCUtGpbc3RA](https://cambridge.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eFYFJCUtGpbc3RA)

Provided by University of Cambridge

Citation: Search is on for 'super memorizers' to help scientists unlock the secrets of memory (2023, May 3) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-05-super-scientists-secrets-memory.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.
