

## Expertise changes how you see things

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People who are experts in things can see differences in them that most laypeople can't. Two little black dresses that look different to fashion lovers may look nearly identical to everyone else. The same goes for birds and birdwatchers, vintage cars and car aficionados, art critics and abstract expressionist painters, and even the faces of our friends and loved ones — when we know something well, it's easier to distinguish its differences.

[A fascinating study](#) by researchers at Johns Hopkins University shows that the same principle also governs how we read and interpret language. The study finds evidence that the way we process information visually is influenced by our knowledge and experience.

The study, published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology, asked two groups of 25 university students to study the letters of the Arabic alphabet. The first group had no prior exposure to written Arabic, while the second group could read the language proficiently. The researchers flashed two letters on the screen and the study participants had to indicate whether the two Arabic letters were physically identical or not. Those who were literate in Arabic perceived different details in the letters than those who were not.

The study revealed an aspect of how we learn: that the sound and meaning of a letter automatically becomes part of our understanding of it, without us even realizing it. But it also has implications for more than language.

**Read full, original post:** [Being an expert literally changes how you see things](#)