

Did Neanderthals have their own language?

Did Neanderthals have language? Before trying to answer that, I should admit my bias: I'm team Neanderthal. As an anthropologist who studies our [evolutionary cousins](#), I've seen plenty of [evidence](#) suggesting Neanderthals were competent, complex, social creatures. In light of their apparent cognitive abilities, I'm inclined to believe they had language.

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The best researchers can do is to analyze Neanderthal fossils, artifacts and genes, looking for physical and cognitive traits considered necessary for language. And even after scrutinizing this same body of evidence, experts have come to different conclusions: [Some](#) say language is unique to our species, Homo sapiens; [others](#) contend Neanderthals also had the gift of gab.

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[M]ost researchers agree Neanderthals were capable of emitting and hearing complex vocalizations. However, they disagree over the implications. While some consider the findings indicative of speech-based language in Neanderthals, others propose these features could have evolved for other reasons, like [singing](#). Neanderthals may have lacked the cognitive abilities for language, but possessed the physical anatomy for musical calls to attract mates or sooth infants.

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As scholar [Sverker Johansson put it](#), "Once upon a time our ancestors had no language, and today all people do." Determining Neanderthal language capabilities will help us understand when and how our incredible communicative abilities emerged.

Read full, original post: [The Ongoing Debate Over Neanderthal Language](#)