

Designing Brilliantly Brainy Questions

Science Friday livestreams go quickly! Each question-and-answer session is 30 minutes long and our experts will only have time to answer 12 to 15 questions. How can we make the most of our time with these scientists? How can you create a great question for our scientists to answer?

With the tips below you'll design your own questions, refine them, and work with friends to select the best ones. Journalists, like the writers and producers at Science Friday, usually start with The Five W's: **who, what, when, where, and why**. They then craft open-ended questions for guests to answer. An **open-ended question** is a question that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" and instead requires a detailed, thoughtful answer, often including their own opinions, experiences, and perspectives. Take a look at the examples below.

	MAIN IDEA	EXAMPLE QUESTION
Who?	Asks about the person or people involved.	Who first discovered that different parts of the brain control different parts of the body?
What?	Asks about the event, action, or thing in question.	What happens in your brain when you learn to ride a bicycle?
When?	Asks about the time or date something happened.	When does your brain develop the most?
Where?	Asks about the location of something.	Where in your brain are memories stored?
Why?	Asks about the reason or cause behind something.	Why do some smells trigger strong memories?

- Review the questions below. Do you think these would be good questions to ask a scientist during a livestream? Why or why not? How can you make them better? Revise and share out your edits!
 - Does a human brain weigh more than 5 pounds?
 - Is the right side of your brain responsible for controlling the left side of your body?
 - Can the brain create new connections between neurons?
 - Is your brain mostly made up of water?
 - Do people really only use 10% of their brain?

2. Research the brain using our [Hack Your Brain](#) resources. Consider what you already know and what you want to learn more about. Generate a list of first-draft questions based on your research. Evaluate questions using the examples above and revise as needed. Write each question on a sticky note with your name and start organizing and forming categories or connections. What are your favorite questions?
3. Once you have finished brainstorming, join your family, group, or class to review and prioritize the questions. Ask yourself:
 - How did the research and brainstorming process go?
 - What categories did you come up with earlier?
 - Did others in the group have the same question?
4. Put the questions on a whiteboard or large piece of chart or butcher paper. Take turns sharing questions. Add post-its to your group mind map, forming categories to help group together common questions and themes. Label post-its with students' names. Group together any duplicates!
5. Finally, evaluate the group's questions. Choose group favorites and eliminate others (making sure to discuss the reasoning for each decision). Edit the list until you have your final group of questions.
- 6. Join us LIVE on March 7 from 12 to 4 pm ET on [Science Friday's YouTube Channel](#).**
7. If you cannot participate on the day of the livestream, you can submit your questions in advance using [our Google Form](#). We need your response by Wednesday, March 5. Are you an educator working with a group? Use our [handy Google Sheets template](#) to submit your questions. Just click "Make a copy." Then, add your learners' information and questions to the spreadsheet, and email it to educate@sciencefriday.com. If your learners would like to record video or audio clips of their questions, they can submit them using the form or you can send them to our email. (See guidelines, attached.)

Record your best question here:

Hack Your Brain Kick Off Experts

[Dr. J. Roxanne Prichard](#)

Dr. Prichard has designed popular courses on sleep and dreaming, led workshops for college professionals on sleep and has served on the NCAA Taskforce for Sleep and Well-being. Her TEDx talk Addressing our Children's Sleep Debt was featured in the lecture series: Transforming Education. Her research has been summarized in a variety of national media outlets including the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Teen Vogue*, and *USA Today*, among others.



[Dr. Brenna Hassinger-Das](#)

Brenna Hassinger-Das, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Pace University. Her research examines the effects of both play and digital media use on caregiver-child interactions and child learning. She is committed to translating her research for use by the public through community-based research projects as well as blog posts and commentaries featured in outlets such as *The Conversation* and *The Huffington Post*, as well as additional local outlets.



[Dr. Vikram Jaswal](#)

Dr. Vikram Jaswal is Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia. He studies how autistic people communicate and interact. The goal of his research is to find ways to better understand and support them, especially the 30% of autistic people who can't communicate effectively using speech. He runs the Vikram Lab, where they study the cognitive and social processes underlying communication and social interaction to better understand and support autistic individuals and their families



[Dr. Damien Fair](#)

Dr. Damien Fair is founding Co-Director of the Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain (MIDB) at the University of Minnesota. His laboratory focuses on mechanisms and principles that underlie child and adolescent brain development. Dr. Fair has published more than 100 articles in high-impact research journals and his work has been cited well over 17,000 times. He was the founding Director of the OHSU Fellowship for Diversity in Research and he organized the Youth Engaged in Science (YES) Initiative at OHSU.












Hack Your Brain Kick-off Schedule


Join us on March 7 for a [Brain Awareness Week](#) livestream kick-off, where we will introduce learners to our brainy week with the help of real-life neuroscientists, who can answer your questions LIVE!

When: Friday, March 7, 12 to 4 pm ET / 9 am to 1 pm PT

Where: [On SciFri's YouTube Channel \(https://youtube.com/live/aYjdWdxPo_g\)](https://youtube.com/live/aYjdWdxPo_g)

ALL TIMES LISTED ARE APPROXIMATE & IN EASTERN STANDARD (EST)

-  12:00 pm - **Brainy Kahoot!** Trivia Game with SciFri
-  12:30 pm - **Livestream** with Dr. J. Roxanne Prichard
-  1:15 pm - Brain Hack • Why Does Sleep Matter?
-  1:30 pm - **Livestream** with Dr. Brenna Hassinger-Das
-  2:15 pm - Brain Hack • What Is Muscle Memory?
-  2:30 pm - **Livestream** with Dr. Vikram Jaswal
-  3:15 pm - Brain Hack • How Can You Ease Stress?
-  3:30 pm - **Livestream** with Dr. Damien Fair
-  4:00 pm - *End of Program*

 Brain icon = LIVE portions of our event! Arrive ready during these timeslots with questions from learners.

HACK YOUR BRAIN

March 7, 2025 • Livestream Kick-off Schedule

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Science Friday Recording Guidelines

Sending a question to Science Friday? We'd love to feature you in an audio or video clip!

Tips On Recording A Great Voice Note

- Avoid background noise; turn off fans, air conditioners, and projectors. Be aware of the gym, hallway, roadway, and other background noise. If possible, try to go somewhere quiet and cozy. The best place to record is in an enclosed room with the door shut.
- For best results use headphones or earbuds with a microphone.
- Start off by telling us your first name and where you're from. We want to make sure we attribute your question to you!
- If working with children, consider writing out questions and letting learners read from the script: "Hi, my name is _____. My question is _____."
- Keep it short and sweet. We're talking 30 seconds, tops.
- Speak slowly, loudly, and clearly. If a young student cannot be clearly understood, have an older student or adult with them who repeats the question

Additional Tips For Recording Great Video

- Ensure your attire is appropriate. Avoid copyrighted characters or phrases on clothing.
- Ensure your background is appropriate and orderly. Having a poster, plants, or a book case behind you are great options. A blank wall is better than a disorganized, busy background.
- Center yourself in the frame with enough space below your chin for graphics, but not zoomed out too far.
- Choose a well-lit spot with the light source in front of you. Capture a focused, clear image.
- Film in high resolution, at least 720-1080 pixels. We prefer mp4 or MOV file types.
- Pause for 3-5 seconds before and after the question with a smile or preferred look on your face.

For more instructions on how to record a Voice Memo on an iPhone, [visit this page](#). Android users—download one of the many voice recording apps from the Google Play store (like [Voice Memos](#) or [Smart Voice Recorder](#)) to get started.

Especially if working with people under the age of 18, we recommend completing and sending a [Media Release Form](#) with your recording to educate@sciencefriday.com. We will not be able to use any audio or video recordings with your express permission.

SCIENCE FRIDAY MEDIA RELEASE FORM

I hereby grant the Science Friday Initiative (SciFri) permission to use my likeness in a photograph, video, or other digital media (“photo”) in any and all of its publications, including web-based publications, without payment or other consideration.

I understand and agree that all photos or videos will become the property of SciFri and will not be returned.

I hereby irrevocably authorize SciFri to edit, alter, copy, exhibit, publish, or distribute these photos for any lawful purpose. In addition, I waive any right to inspect or approve the finished product wherein my likeness appears. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or related to the use of the photo/video.

I hereby hold harmless, release, and forever discharge SciFri from all claims, demands, and causes of action which I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators, or any other persons acting on my behalf or on behalf of my estate have or may have by reason of this authorization.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE PHOTO/VIDEO RELEASE. I AFFIRM THAT I AM AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE, OR, IF I AM UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE, I HAVE OBTAINED THE REQUIRED CONSENT OF MY PARENT/GUARDIAN AS EVIDENCED BY THEIR SIGNATURE BELOW. I ACCEPT:

Print Name

Signature

Date

If under 18, Parent and/or Legal Guardian must sign

Individually and as Parent and/or
Legal Guardian

Date

Individually and as Parent and/or
Legal Guardian

Date