

BRAINS

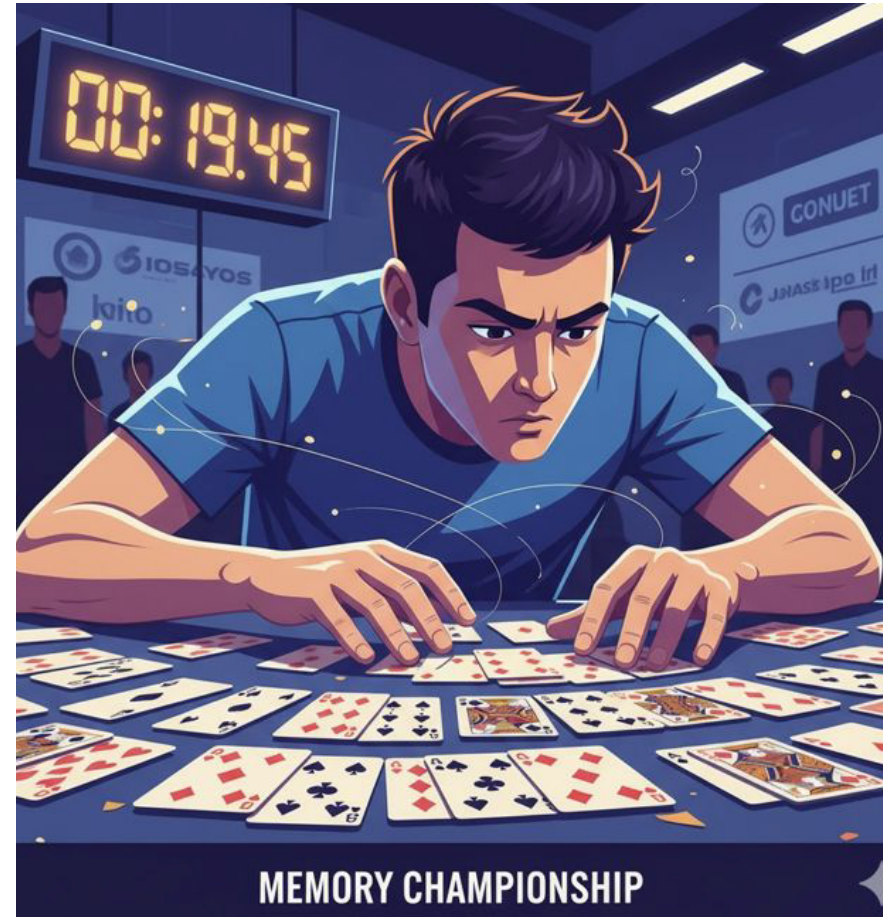
that **BREAK THE**
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Memory Champions

Think you could memorize a deck of cards in just 20 seconds? Sound impossible? Memory champions do it every single year at the World Memory Championship. These people compete to memorize hundreds of random numbers, multiple decks of cards, and faces they've never seen before. It's actually a real sport. Here's the wild part: most champions aren't born with superhero brains. They taught themselves tricks. One popular trick is called the "memory palace" where you imagine a house in your head. You mentally put stuff you want to remember in different rooms. Later, you mentally walk through the house—and everything you memorized is still there. Take Alex Mullen. Inspired by a book he read about memory methods as a college student, he started training. Just one year later, he won the World Memory Championship—becoming the first American ever to win. Mullen has won three championships in a row and also holds world records, including memorizing 3,029 digits in one hour and memorizing a deck of cards in just 17 seconds



Memory champions can memorize an entire deck of cards in just 17 seconds—and yes, it's actually real.



Ellen Bordeaux is blind and autistic. She can play any piece of music perfectly after hearing it just once

Different Brains, Different Abilities

Some people's brains work differently. They might talk, learn, or see the world in their own way. People with these patterns are often called autistic—their brains are wired differently from birth. This can create special strengths. Some are gifted artists, musicians, or mathematicians. Others are great at spotting patterns or remembering details. Take Ellen Bordeaux. She became blind as a baby, and she's also autistic. Her brain gives her special abilities. She can play any piece of music perfectly after hearing it once and has a huge number of songs in her head. Ellen also uses sounds in a special way. She makes tiny clicking sounds with her tongue, like a bat or dolphin. The sounds bounce off walls, doors, and people. Her brain uses the echoes to figure out where things are. It's like her own built-in radar that helps her move around without a cane or guide dog. Not all autistic people are the same. Some find it easy to talk, while others find it harder. But that doesn't make them any less smart or cool. Being autistic just means your brain works in its own way—and different can be wonderful.

When Senses Get Mixed Up

What if every time you saw the number 5, your brain showed you the color red? Or every time you heard the word “Tuesday,” you tasted chocolate? That’s synesthesia, and it’s real.

The word “synesthesia” comes from two Greek words: “syn” meaning “together” and “aesthesia” meaning “sensation. For people with synesthesia, their senses are wired together in unusual ways and not separately like those of most people.

Some see letters or numbers as colors. Others see numbers as having textures or shapes. For some synesthetes, they see colors when they hear music. Some even taste words when they read them.

Synesthesia isn’t a disability. Daniel Tammet is a famous synesthete who sees numbers as colors—9 looks blue to him. This switch in his brain helps him do amazing math in his head.

Scientists think synesthesia might explain why some people become great musicians or math geniuses. It’s just another example of how amazing and mysterious the human brain can be.



Imagine if you tasted chocolate every time you heard the word “Tuesday”—that’s what synesthesia is like.

Stephen Wiltshire: The Human Camera

Meet Stephen Wiltshire, an artist from England who can do something absolutely amazing. He can draw entire cities from memory after seeing them just once.

People call him the “human camera” because he remembers every single detail—buildings, streets, windows, the number of floors on skyscrapers. Everything.

When Stephen was a kid, he didn’t talk much. Doctors thought he might never communicate normally. He was autistic and had serious trouble with language.

But then something amazing happened. Stephen discovered drawing. His pencil became his voice. By age five, he was making incredibly detailed sketches of buildings and landscapes.

Today, he’s world-famous. Stephen has drawn massive pictures of Rome, Dubai, Tokyo, and New York—all from memory. His art is displayed in galleries around the world.

Stephen’s autism—the thing doctors said would hold him back—actually gave him an amazing talent. His brain is great at noticing tiny details and remembering exactly what he sees. What seemed like a problem turned out to be his greatest strength.



Stephen Wiltshire was flown around New York in a helicopter, and then he drew the entire city, by memory.



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