# rabbit–duck illusion sparks fresh debate on creativity versus logic in the brain



An intriguing optical illusion that has captivated viewers for over a century has resurfaced, rekindling discussions on personality interpretation and cognitive style. This particular visual, known as the Rabbit–Duck Illusion, challenges observers to see either a rabbit or a duck, and proponents claim that what they perceive first offers insight into whether they are more creative or logical individuals.

The concept of optical illusions as windows into human psyche has gained traction, particularly through social media platforms. A chief contributor to the revival of interest is psychologist Marina Neuralean, who shared her thoughts on TikTok. In her video, she posed the question: do you see the rabbit or the duck first? According to Neuralean, those who spot the rabbit immediately are more likely to demonstrate traits associated with the left hemisphere of the brain, possessing strong analytical skills often admired in mathematical or structured fields. She explained, “You excel at tasks requiring precision, such as writing, reading and calculating,” asserting that such individuals crave clarity and structured environments.

Conversely, those who see the duck first tend to exhibit characteristics linked with creativity and intuition, reflecting right-brain thinking. Neuralean noted, “You love to express emotions through visuals… inspired by music, painting and other forms of self-expression.” Commenters on the post provided mixed feedback, with some unable to discern both creatures, highlighting the subjective nature of perception in this context.

The origin of this optical illusion dates back to 1899, attributed to American psychologist Joseph Jastrow, who aimed to illustrate the complex interplay between perception and mental activity. His research suggested that the ease with which individuals switch between seeing the rabbit and the duck could signify enhanced cognitive function and creativity. This perspective aligns with contemporary studies, such as one from the University of Alberta, which confirmed that approximately half of participants struggled to perceive both images without cues.

Context plays an essential role in how this illusion is interpreted, as demonstrated in academic discussions surrounding its implications. The research emphasises that perceptual shifts can be guided by environmental cues, underscoring the brain's active role in constructing visual reality. For instance, when participants were provided the context of "a duck eating a rabbit," they were more likely to perceive both animals, demonstrating how prior knowledge can shape perception.

Such findings contribute to the broader conversation on multistable perception, where an ambiguous stimulus evokes various interpretations depending on the viewer’s cognitive context and expectations. This idea encapsulates the essence of the Rabbit–Duck Illusion and its value as a psychological tool for exploring how humans perceive their world.

As online discussions unfold, the illusion continues to prompt theorisation about the nuances of human perception. Delving into the dichotomy of creativity versus logic, the Rabbit–Duck Illusion remains not just a playful paradox but a doorway into understanding individual differences in cognitive processing.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/real-life/animal-you-see-first-optical-10224984), [[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbit%E2%80%93duck_illusion)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/real-life/animal-you-see-first-optical-10224984), [[3]](https://www.ualberta.ca/en/science/news/2018/march/optical-illusion-gives-insight-into-how-we-perceive-the-world.html), [[5]](https://mathworld.wolfram.com/Rabbit-DuckIllusion.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://mentalbomb.com/duck-rabbit-illusion/), [[4]](https://psychology.tips/rabbit-duck-illusion/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbit%E2%80%93duck_illusion), [[3]](https://www.ualberta.ca/en/science/news/2018/march/optical-illusion-gives-insight-into-how-we-perceive-the-world.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.ualberta.ca/en/science/news/2018/march/optical-illusion-gives-insight-into-how-we-perceive-the-world.html), [[4]](https://psychology.tips/rabbit-duck-illusion/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/real-life/animal-you-see-first-optical-10224984> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbit%E2%80%93duck_illusion> - The Rabbit–Duck Illusion is an ambiguous image that can be perceived as either a rabbit or a duck. First published in the German humour magazine Fliegende Blätter in 1892, it was later popularised by psychologist Joseph Jastrow. The illusion demonstrates how perception is influenced by cognitive factors, such as context and expectation. Studies have shown that individuals who can easily switch between seeing the rabbit and the duck tend to exhibit higher creativity. The illusion has also been used to illustrate philosophical concepts, such as the distinction between 'seeing that' and 'seeing as'.
3. <https://www.ualberta.ca/en/science/news/2018/march/optical-illusion-gives-insight-into-how-we-perceive-the-world.html> - Research from the University of Alberta explored how context influences the perception of the Rabbit–Duck Illusion. The study found that approximately half of participants couldn't see both images at first glance. However, when prompted with a cue like 'duck eats rabbit', participants were able to perceive both images. This suggests that our brain's interpretation of ambiguous figures can be guided by contextual information, highlighting the active role of the brain in constructing reality from visual cues.
4. <https://psychology.tips/rabbit-duck-illusion/> - The Rabbit–Duck Illusion serves as a tool for understanding the malleability of human perception. Psychologist Joseph Jastrow used this illusion to demonstrate that perception is not solely a product of the stimulus but also of mental activity. The ability to switch between seeing a rabbit and a duck reflects the flexibility of human perception and its susceptibility to bias and interpretation. This phenomenon exemplifies multistable perception, where an ambiguous stimulus can be perceived in multiple ways, providing insight into the processes of perception and cognition.
5. <https://mathworld.wolfram.com/Rabbit-DuckIllusion.html> - The Rabbit–Duck Illusion is an ambiguous figure where the brain alternates between seeing a rabbit and a duck. First noted by psychologist Joseph Jastrow in 1899, the illusion illustrates that perception involves mental activity beyond the mere stimulus. The original image was based on a drawing from Harper's Weekly, which itself was inspired by an earlier illustration in the German humour magazine Fliegende Blätter. The illusion has been used to study the malleability of human perception and its susceptibility to context and expectation.
6. <https://mentalbomb.com/duck-rabbit-illusion/> - The Duck–Rabbit Illusion is an optical illusion where the brain switches between perceiving a duck and a rabbit. This phenomenon highlights how the brain organizes visual information and interprets relationships between different features. The illusion is one of the oldest examples of an ambiguous image and demonstrates the importance of context and prior knowledge in perception. It also relates to the concept of 'perceptual set', where the brain focuses on specific aspects of an image depending on the context, and 'top-down processing', where prior knowledge influences interpretation of visual information.
7. <https://tracycornish.com/Pages/rabbit-duck%2520illusion.html> - The Rabbit–Duck Illusion is an ambiguous figure where the brain alternates between seeing a rabbit and a duck. First noted by psychologist Joseph Jastrow in 1899, the illusion illustrates that perception involves mental activity beyond the mere stimulus. The original image was based on a drawing from Harper's Weekly, which itself was inspired by an earlier illustration in the German humour magazine Fliegende Blätter. The illusion has been used to study the malleability of human perception and its susceptibility to context and expectation.