

# Tasting colors and hearing images: integrating synesthesia in day to day life

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## **Influence of Perception: Synesthesia**

### **How synesthesia affects everyday life**

Synesthesia shares some similarities to normal perception in everyday life, as it is a form of cross-modal sensation. People experience cross modal sensations every day, but people with synesthesia experience these as real sensations. The most common type of synesthesia is colored hearing.

(Cytowic & Wood, 1981). It is speculated by some psychologists that all newborns can experience this phenomenon, but that as the brain becomes more specialized, we lose the ability to be synesthetic. (Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2014).

### **Benefits and dangers of synesthesia**

Individuals with a certain type of synesthesia may struggle with math, or it may increase the anxiety levels when they have to work with numbers that they have certain perceptions of. Another type of synesthesia may affect math as a person may associate every number with a certain color. Of course, the individual knows the answer to a simple addition problem, but with synesthesia, instead of seeing  $2+2=4$ , they see pink+pink= blue.

Although it is considered a stereotype that people with synesthesia are bad at math, certain types of people with synesthesia can be affected. Another danger of synesthesia is 'colored hearing' which can cause musicians to hear colors when a sound is played. This can lead to an inability to read their music. The different colors may cause anxiety or various physical pain, such as headaches. (Synesthi & Swaner, 2012). Of course, the most potential danger of synesthesia is that it can be manufactured by hypnosis or LSD like drugs. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, people take

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hallucinogenic drugs to “ enable them to enter into what they perceive as a more enlightened sense of thinking or being” (“ Why Do People Take Hallucinogenic or Dissociative Drugs?”, 2015). Although there are dangers associated with synesthesia, it has some benefits too. For example, researchers have linked it to creativity. It has now been revealed that some famous performers, like Lady Gaga and Pharrell Williams, have synesthesia. According to Dr Nicolas Rothen, a researcher at the University of Sussex, a form of synesthesia called grapheme-color synesthesia is linked to stronger memory functions. He is also researching the effect of synesthesia on the elderly. (Massy-Beresford, 2014).

### **Personal example of synesthesia**

A personal example of synesthesia that I have is that, when I was maybe 13 or 14, I was at my friend’s house and we decided to make frosting. It was probably one of the most interesting batches of frosting I’ve ever made, as we added random ingredients to see if it would affect the taste. I distinctly remember that it never did change the taste drastically, but we both had the same conclusion on its taste – it tasted like purple. It was the strangest thing I’d ever experienced in my 14 years of life – how could something taste like a color? It was even more bizarre that my friend had also shared this experience with me. Reading about synesthesia has now put a name to this weird experience in my life.

### **Why I chose synesthesia**

I chose this because when I read about in the textbook, I was immediately intrigued and had to research more about it, before I even chose it for the PA. I even googled “ tastes like purple” to see if I wasn’t the only one who <https://assignbuster.com/tasting-colors-and-hearing-images-integrating-synesthesia-in-day-to-day-life/>

thought something tasted like a color, to see if that fell under synesthesia. The invoking of other stimuli while another is being affected is rather fascinating to me. The book notes that there is no clear origin of synesthesia, and that more research needs to be done. (Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2014).