# About the IAT

The IAT measures the strength of associations between concepts (e.g., black people, gay people) and evaluations (e.g., good, bad) or stereotypes (e.g., athletic, clumsy). The main idea is that making a response is easier when closely related items share the same response key.

When doing an IAT you are asked to quickly sort words into categories that are on the left and right hand side of the computer screen by pressing the "e" key if the word belongs to the category on the left and the "i" key if the word belongs to the category on the right. The IAT has five main parts.

In the first part of the IAT you sort words relating to the concepts (e.g., fat people, thin people) into categories. So if the category "Fat People" was on the left, and a picture of a heavy person appeared on the screen, you would press the "e" key.

In the second part of the IAT you sort words relating to the evaluation (e.g., good, bad). So if the category "good" was on the left, and a pleasant word appeared on the screen, you would press the "e" key.

In the third part of the IAT the categories are combined and you are asked to sort both concept and evaluation words. So the categories on the left hand side would be Fat People/Good and the categories on the right hand side would be Thin People/Bad. It is important to note that the order in which the blocks are presented varies across participants, so some people will do the Fat People/Good, Thin People/Bad part first and other people will do the Fat People/Bad, Thin People/Good part first.

In the fourth part of the IAT the placement of the concepts switches. If the category "Fat People" was previously on the left, now it would be on the right. Importantly, the number of trials in this part of the IAT is increased in order to minimize the effects of practice.

In the final part of the IAT the categories are combined in a way that is opposite what they were before. If the category on the left was previously Fat People/Good, it would now be Fat People/Bad.

The IAT score is based on how long it takes a person, on average, to sort the words in the third part of the IAT versus the fifth part of the IAT. We would say that one has an implicit preference for thin people relative to fat people if they are faster to categorize words when Thin People and Good share a response key and Fat People and Bad share a response key, relative to the reverse.

See the Frequently Asked Questions (faqs.html) for information about other explanations for IAT effects.

# Preliminary Information

Whichever IAT you do, we will ask you (optionally) to report your attitudes toward or beliefs about these topics, and provide some general information about yourself. These demonstrations should be more valuable if you have also tried to describe your self-understanding of the characteristic that the IAT is designed to measure. Also, we would like to compare possible differences among groups in their IAT performance and opinions, at least among those who decide to participate.

Data exchanged with this site are protected by SSL encryption, and no personally identifying information is collected. IP addresses are routinely recorded, but are completely confidential.

**Important disclaimer**: In reporting to you results of any IAT test that you take, we will mention possible interpretations that have a basis in research done (at the University of Washington, University of Virginia, Harvard University, and Yale University) with these tests. However, these Universities, as well as the individual researchers who have contributed to this site, make no claim for the validity of these suggested interpretations. If you are unprepared to encounter interpretations that you might find objectionable, please do not proceed further. You may prefer to examine general information about the IAT (iatdetails.html) before deciding whether or not to proceed.

**I am aware of the possibility of encountering interpretations of my IAT test performance with which I may not agree. Knowing this, I wish to proceed using a touchscreen (selectatouchtest.html) OR using a keyboard (selectatest.html).**

TAKE A TEST (/IMPLICIT/TAKEATEST.HTML)     ABOUT US (/IMPLICIT/ABOUTUS.HTML)     EDUCATION (/IMPLICIT/EDUCATION.HTML)     HELP (/IMPLICIT/HELP.HTML)
CONTACT US (/IMPLICIT/CONTACT.HTML)     DONATE (HTTPS://SECURE3.4AGOODCAUSE.COM/PROJECT-IMPLICIT/GIFT.ASPX?ID=1)

COPYRIGHT 2011 (/IMPLICIT/COPYRIGHT.HTML) ALL RIGHTS RESERVED     DISCLAIMER (HTTPS://WWW.PROJECTIMPLICIT.NET/DISCLAIMER.HTML)     PRIVACY POLICY (/IMPLICIT/PRIVACY.HTML)

# Ethical Considerations

Because the Implicit Association Test (IAT) sometimes reveals troubling aspects of human nature, it poses the possibility of causing discomfort. If you are considering using the IAT in your research, your research plan should take this possibility into account. Project Implicit urges careful consideration of the costs associated with misuse. The IAT has potential for use beyond the laboratory; however, there are problems with using it outside of the safeguards of a research institution.

First, people may use the IAT to make decisions about themselves (e.g., what should I buy, where should I go to school?). Second, people may use it to make decisions about others (e.g., does this potential job candidate have racial bias?).

On the surface these might seem like acceptable uses; however, we assert that the IAT should not be used in any such ways. We cannot be certain that any given IAT can diagnose an individual. At this stage in its development, it is preferable to use the IAT mainly as an educational tool to develop awareness of implicit preferences and stereotypes. For example, using the IAT to choose jurors is not ethical. In contrast, it might be appropriate to use the IAT to teach jurors about the possibility of unintended bias. Using the IAT to make significant decisions about oneself or others could lead to undesired and unjustified consequences.

TAKE A TEST (/IMPLICIT/TAKEATEST.HTML)     ABOUT US (/IMPLICIT/ABOUTUS.HTML)     EDUCATION (/IMPLICIT/EDUCATION.HTML)     HELP (/IMPLICIT/HELP.HTML)

CONTACT US (/IMPLICIT/CONTACT.HTML)     DONATE (HTTPS://SECURE3.4AGOODCAUSE.COM/PROJECT-IMPLICIT/GIFT.ASPX?ID=1)

# Frequenty Asked Questions

- What is an attitude?
- What are implicit and explicit stereotypes?
- How does the IAT measure implicit attitudes and stereotypes?
- What does it mean that my IAT score is labeled 'slight', 'moderate', or 'strong'?
- What does it mean that my feedback says that there were too many errors to determine a result?
- What does it mean if I take the test more than once and get different results?
- Could the result be a function of the order in which I did the two parts?
- Could the result be a function of handedness or hand-eye coordination?
- Might my preference for one group over the other be due to differences in familiarity with the groups?
- Might my preference for one group over another be a simple ingroup preference?
- Do black participants show a preference for black over white on the race attitude IAT? Do gay participants show a preference for gay over straight? Do older participants show a preference for old over young?
- If my IAT shows that I have an implicit preference for one group over another, does that mean I am prejudiced?
- Where do implicit attitudes come from? Is it me or my culture?
- What can I do about an implicit preference that I don't want?
- How can I support the research done at Project Implicit?

## What is an attitude?

An attitude is your evaluation of some concept (e.g., person, place, thing, or idea). An explicit attitude is the kind of attitude that you deliberately think about and report. For example, you could tell someone whether or not you like math. Implicit attitudes are positive and negative evaluations that are much less accessible to our conscious awareness and/or control. Even if you say that you like math (your explicit attitude), it is possible that you associate math with negativity without being actively aware of it. In this case, we would say that your implicit attitude toward math is negative.

## What are implicit and explicit stereotypes?

Stereotypes are the belief that most members of a group have some characteristic. Some examples of stereotypes are the belief that women are nurturing or the belief that police officers like donuts. An explicit stereotype is the kind that you deliberately think about and report. An implicit stereotype is one that is relatively inaccessible to conscious awareness and/or control. Even if you say that men and women are equally good at math, it is possible that you associate math more strongly with men without being actively aware of it. In this case we would say that you have an implicit math + men stereotype.

## How does the IAT measure implicit attitudes and stereotypes?

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) measures the strength of associations between concepts (e.g., black people, gay people) and evaluations (e.g., good, bad) or stereotypes (e.g., athletic, clumsy). The main idea is that making a response is easier when closely related items share the same response key. We would say that one has an implicit preference for straight people relative to gay people if they are faster to complete the task when Straight People + Good / Gay People + Bad are paired together compared to when Gay People + Good / Straight People + Bad are paired together.

## What does it mean that my IAT score is labeled 'slight', 'moderate', or 'strong'?

If you respond faster when Flowers + Good / Insects + Bad are paired together compared to when Insects + Good / Flowers + Bad are paired together, we would say that you have an implicit preference for flowers relative to insects. The labels slight, moderate and strong reflect the strength of the implicit preference – how much faster you respond to Flowers + Good / Insects + Bad versus Insects + Good / Flowers + Bad.

## What does it mean that my feedback says that there were too many errors to determine a result?

The IAT requires a certain number of correct responses in order to get results. If you made too many errors while completing the test, then you will get the feedback that there were too many errors to determine a result. This is different from the result saying that you show little or no association between concepts.

## What does it mean if I take the test more than once and get different results?

Although the IAT is a well-validated measure of implicit attitudes, no test is perfectly accurate and some variation is to be expected. We encourage you to take a test more than once. If you get similar feedback more than once, you can be more certain about the accuracy of your results. If you get somewhat dissimilar feedback two times you can simply average the results. It is somewhat unusual for someone to get very different feedback but, if you do, you can think of your test results as being inconclusive.

## Could the result be a function of the order in which I did the two parts?

Yes, the order in which you take the test does have some influence on your overall results. However, the difference is small. So if you first pair Gay People + Bad / Straight People + Good and then pair Gay People + Good / Straight People + Bad, your results might be a tiny bit more negative than they would be if you had done the reverse pairing first. One way that we try to minimize this order effect is by giving more practice trials before the second pairing than we did before the first pairing. It is also important to know that each participant is randomly assigned to an order, so half of test-takers complete Gay People + Bad / Straight People + Good and then Gay People + Good / Straight People + Bad, and the other half of test-takers get the opposite order.

## Could the result be a function of handedness or hand-eye coordination?

There is no evidence that handedness influences IAT scores. When thinking about the influence of hand-eye coordination or cognitive ability, keep in mind how the test works. In a gay-straight IAT we measure how long it takes people to categorize items when Gay People + Good / Strait people + Bad are paired together versus when Strait People + Good / Gay people + Bad are paired together. People who have better hand-eye coordination or higher cognitive ability might be generally faster to respond, but there is no reason to think that they would be faster in one category pairing versus the other. For this reason we do not think that hand-eye coordination will influence IAT scores.

## Might my preference for one group over the other be due to differences in familiarity with the groups?

Research shows that IAT scores are not influenced by familiarity with the individual items to be categorized. Also, faces used in the IATs here should all be equally unfamiliar to everyone. That said, this is a tough question. Classic research in psychology shows that people tend to like things that they are familiar with. So, there may be a role for familiarity in liking of the categories. But also people avoid things that they don't like, so it is possible that implicit bias is what leads to unfamiliarity.

## Might my preference for one group over another be a simple ingroup preference?

A simple preference for the ingroup might partially explain implicit bias for White respondents, the majority of whom show an implicit preference for White people. However, it is also more than that. For example, about a third of Black participants show an implicit preference for White people relative to Black people which can't be explained as an ingroup bias. In addition, there are plenty of tests on which people prefer one group or the other

even when they do not belong to either group. For example, Asian participants tend to show an implicit preference for White people relative to Black people. In this sense the IAT might also reflect what is learned from a culture that does not regard Black people as highly as White people.

## Do black participants show a preference for black over white on the race attitude IAT? Do gay participants show a preference for gay over straight? Do older participants show a preference for old over young?

Results from this website consistently show that members of stigmatized groups (Black people, gay people, older people) tend to have more positive implicit attitudes toward their groups than do people who are not in the group, but that there is still a moderate preference for the more socially valued group. So gay people tend to show an implicit preference for straight people relative to gay people, but it is not as strong as the implicit preference shown by straight people. We think that this is because stigmatized group members develop negative associations about their group from their cultural environments, but also have some positive associations because of their own group membership and that of close others.

## If my IAT shows that I have an implicit preference for one group over another, does that mean I am prejudiced?

Many people use the word 'prejudice' to describe people who report negative attitudes toward social groups. By this definition, most people who show an implicit preference for one group (e.g., White people) over another (e.g., Black people) are not prejudiced. The IAT shows biases that are not necessarily endorsed and that may even be contradictory to what one consciously believes. So, no, we would not say that such people are prejudiced. It is important to know, however, that implicit biases can predict behavior. If we want to treat people in a way that reflects our values, then it is critical to be mindful of hidden biases that may influence our actions.

## Where do implicit attitudes come from? Is it me or my culture?

Implicit preferences for majority groups (e.g., White people) are likely common because of strong negative associations with Black people in American society. There is a long history of racial discrimination in the United States, and Black people are often portrayed negatively in culture and mass media. However, even if our attitudes and beliefs come from our culture, they are still in our own minds. Subtle psychological biases of all stripes can influence our behavior if we are not vigilant to their influence.

## What can I do about an implicit preference that I don't want?

It is well-established that implicit preferences can predict behavior. But, there is not yet enough research to say for sure that implicit biases can be reduced, let alone eliminated, or whether implicit bias reduction will lead to behavior change. Therefore, we encourage people not to focus on strategies for reducing implicit preferences, but to focus instead on strategies that deny implicit biases the chance to operate. One such strategy is ensuring that implicit biases don't leak out in the first place. To do that, you can "blind" yourself from learning a person's gender, race, etc. when you're making a decision about them (e.g., having their name removed from the top of a resume). If you only evaluate a person on the things that matter for a decision, then you can't be swayed by demographic factors. Another strategy is to try to compensate for your implicit preferences. For example, if you have an implicit preference for young people you can try to be friendlier toward elderly people. Although it has not been well-studied, based on what we know about how biases form we also recommend that people consider what gets into their minds in the first place. This might mean, for example, going out of our way to watch television programs and movies that portray women and minority group members in positive or counter-stereotypical ways.

## How can I support the research done at Project Implicit?

You can make a donation here. (https://secure3.4agoodcause.com/project-implicit/gift.aspx?id=1)

TAKE A TEST (/IMPLICIT/TAKEATEST.HTML)     ABOUT US (/IMPLICIT/ABOUTUS.HTML)     EDUCATION (/IMPLICIT/EDUCATION.HTML)     HELP (/IMPLICIT/HELP.HTML)

CONTACT US (/IMPLICIT/CONTACT.HTML)     DONATE (HTTPS://SECURE3.4AGOODCAUSE.COM/PROJECT-IMPLICIT/GIFT.ASPX?ID=1)