

How Scientists Learned to Enter People's Dreams

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Billionaires are jetting themselves into space and quantum computing lies around the corner. Yet one of the most familiar and everyday aspects of human nature remains frustratingly tricky for scientists to study – dreaming.

Theories abound, but the truth is we don't really know much about why or how we dream. A major hurdle for scientists has been the fact that when people are dreaming, they're largely closed off from the world, at least that's been the assumption for a long while. So researchers have resorted to asking people, upon awakening, what their mind was doing while they were sleeping, but that's a sketchy and unreliable approach.

“Memories of dreams can be missing some parts of dreams and can be distorted and incorrect, so if that's all we have to go on, then building a solid science of dreaming will be difficult,” says [Dr Ken Paller](#), a psychologist and dream researcher at Northwestern University.

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