

You think you're clairvoyant, but your brain is just tricking you

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Have you ever felt as though you predicted exactly when the light was going to turn green or sensed that the doorbell was about to ring? Imagine the possibility that these moments of clairvoyance occur simply because of a glitch in your mind's time logs.

What happened first — your thought about the doorbell or its actual ringing? It may have felt as if the thought came first, but when two events (ringing of doorbell, thought about doorbell) occur close together, [we can mistake their order](#). This leads to the sense that we accurately predicted the future when, in fact, all we did is notice the past.

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We supposed that if some people are prone to mixing up the order of their thoughts and perceptions in this way, they could develop a host of odd beliefs. Most obviously, they might come to believe they are clairvoyant or psychic — having abilities to predict such things as whether it is going to rain. Further, these individuals might confabulate — unconsciously make up — explanations for why they have these special abilities, inferring that they are particularly important (even godlike) or are tapping into magical forces that transcend the physical world.

Such beliefs are hallmarks of psychosis, seen in mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, but they are not uncommon in less-extreme forms in the general population. Would even ordinary people who mistime their thoughts and perceptions be more likely to hold delusion-like ideas?