

Your Earliest Memory Probably Never Happened

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What is your first memory? A vivid scene may come to mind, seen from toddler eyes. Unfortunately, that scene may be a work of fiction, a new study finds.

That's because scientific literature suggests that it's not possible to have a memory from before the age of 2, said lead study author Shazia Akhtar, a senior research associate at the University of Bradford in England. Despite this, nearly 40 percent of the people in the new study claimed that their first memory occurred at age 2 years or younger, with most of the [first memories](#) falling between ages 9 months to 12 months.

This time period is actually part of the "preverbal stage" of human life, when the ability to form memories has not yet developed, Akhtar told Live Science. Because of this, scientists refer to memories from these years as "fictional," Akhtar said.

In the study, published July 17 in the journal [Psychological Science](#), more than 6,600 participants ages 11 to 100 years old were asked to detail their first memories and the age at which the memories occurred. The researchers emphasized, however, that the participants had to be absolutely certain that the memories were their own. In other words, the memories had to be based on direct experience and could not be gleaned from photographs or family stories.