

## WAKE-INDUCED LUCID DREAMING

### Performing a Reality Check

There are several types of reality checks that you could try. No reality check is successful 100% of the time (such is the creativity and flexibility of the dream state), so it's useful to have a few back-up checks in your arsenal.

With all reality checking actions, it's important to follow the action with the question, "Am I dreaming now?" It's very easy to ask this question casually, but then the reality check will fail when you do this in the dream. It's important to really put the question to the test. Observe your environment; is there anything odd about it? How did you get here? Where are you going and where have you just been? Are you where you should be at this time of day? These are just some of the questions you can ask yourself as you attempt to validate whether or not you are dreaming.

Here are a few examples of reality checks. Find one or two which feel most comfortable for you. This list is by no means exhaustive, so play and invent your own check. It's important that a reality check is personal to you.

**1. Pinch your nose and breathe.** It's physically impossible to breathe through a pinched nose, but you'll breathe normally in the dream state. This is a good reality check in that it brings your awareness to your breathing, develops tactile sensations and can be done with your eyes closed.

**2. Push a finger from your left hand through your right palm.** Again, physically impossible but works in the dream. It's quite strange seeing your finger popping out the other side of your hand but it's perfectly fine and you won't feel any pain! This can be done with your eyes closed. It's important that you believe that it will work. You could even push a finger through a desk or solid wall if you prefer.

**3. Check-recheck your surroundings.** Whilst the dream environment is usually indistinguishable from waking reality, it suffers far more inconsistencies. Object permanence is one of those. This reality check involves looking at an object in the environment, then looking away for a few seconds, before turning back to look at the same object. There is a high probability that the object will have changed in some way—sometimes the difference will be huge, other times it will be more subtle. For example, if you look at a red car, look away, and look back...it might now be a blue car/bike/bus.

**4. Jump.** Do you land normally or do you float like a feather? Can you levitate?

**5. Look at your hands.** Look closely at your open hands. Do they look different? Are all your fingers there and in the right place? Turn them over and check again. Were you really wearing green nail polish?

**6. Read something.** Find a book, a sign, a car number plate; anything you can read. Read it once, turn away, and read it again. Does it change? Does it make sense?

**7. Look at your reflection.** Find a mirror and look at yourself. Do you look different? Did you have that beard yesterday? Do you look younger or older? Are your eyes a different colour? Where did this mirror come from?

**8. Look at a digital display.** Dreams have a problem with consistently showing a digital display. Often, the display will change or dance. This can be combined with a check-recheck test, but note that the dream can be very creative...there could be a power cut which explains why the display doesn't work. Check your environment at the same time. Should you even be there?

**9. Eye test.** Look through one eye only, then close it and look through the other. Does the environment change? Can you still see as if both eyes were open? Is your vision blurred or clearer than normal?

**10. Count.** Do some mental arithmetic. Count backwards in threes from 334. Is this easy or more difficult than normal? What is seven times nine? Notice if there's any sluggishness.

As mentioned, no reality check offers a 100% success guarantee. It's useful to combine reality checks so that if one is fooled, the other will catch out the dream. These checks are to be performed in the daytime at random intervals, or when you perform a particular action, e.g., pass through a doorway, see a particular work colleague, or visit the bathroom. Place Post-It notes around your daily environment and set random alarms to remind you to perform a reality check. Take your time to really test your reality and ensure that your conclusions are based on solid observations.

Training your mind to become more self-aware in the daytime (and consequently, the nighttime) is a skill which takes time to master. Only through consistent practice can this be attained, but the results are usually fast—practicing a daily reality check with enough intention will allow you to start to enter the dream state within a few weeks. The benefits easily outweigh the effort.

Pay attention to your surroundings. Question your reality. Avoid becoming a passive observer and wake up to your waking and sleeping life. And importantly...don't forget to have fun!

—Luigi Sciambarella  
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