For this experiment, you will assume the role of a criminal who is often involved in various minor criminal acts. You are quite skilled, however, sometimes a witness unfortunately happens to see you close to the scene of a crime and you are therefore sometimes questioned by the police as a suspect. Here, your task will be to lie to the police when questioned. Typically, you are working with an accomplice. Of course, you want to tell this accomplice the truth and inform them about anything relevant that happened during your joint crimes, so that you can keep up your joint lie story when you are questioned by the police and do not betray yourselves. **That is, always tell the truth when asked by your accomplice and lie when asked by the police.** Both the police and your accomplice will ask you about objects that you may or may not have encountered at the scene of your crime.

The task will consist of many short blocks. At the beginning of each block, you are informed about objects you did and did not see at the crime scene. The bottom/top of the screen will be labelled with „You have seen the following objects at the crime scene:“ and „You have NOT seen the following objects at the crime scene:“ with objects displayed underneath. There will always be 5 objects in total. **Do your best to memorize which objects you have and have NOT seen at the crime scene.** You will be questioned about these objects in the following.

XXXX SAMPLE SCREEN WITH ADDITIONAL, UNUSED OBJECTS XXXX

This information about objects you did/did not see at the crime scene will be presented until you press SPACE. Please take your time to memorize the 5 objects before proceeding. The minimum presentation time of the objects will be 3 seconds. You will only be able to proceed after at least 3 seconds have passed.

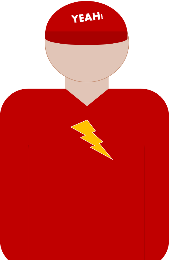
press SPACE to continue

The police or your accomplice will ask you whether you have seen an object at the crime scene (yes = seen / no = not seen – Y/N). Try your best to always correctly and truthfully answer your accomplices questions. As you do not know which objects might be informative for the police, always lie to the police about whether you did/did not see an object. **That is, when asked by the police always give the opposite answer.**

For instance, let’s assume you have seen a tomato at the crime scene. When asked by your accomplice, answer with yes/Y (= I have seen the tomato at the crime scene). When asked by the police answer with no/N (= I have NOT seen the tomato at the crime scene).

Who you are talking to will be indicated by a silhoutte in the background of the screen as well as a coloured frame surrounding the screen.

police investigators: accomplices:

+ orange or blue frame + red or green frame

🡪Lie! 🡪 Tell the truth!

press SPACE to continue

**What does the task look like in detail and how do I answer?**

There will be several short blocks. In each block, you may have to lie/tell the truth always or only sometimes. At the beginning of each run, you will only see the person asking you (police vs. accomplice) and the coloured frame around the screen. This will allow you to prepare for lying or telling the truth as soon as the object is presented. Then in the middle of the screen, either Y + N or N + Y will appear (Y for yes = object seen at the crime scene, N for no = object NOT seen at the crime scene). This will be followed by the an object. To indicate your answer (i.e. whether you have seen this object at the crime scene), press the left (S) key or right (L) key. For instance, if you want to answer with yes (= I have seen the object at the crime scene) and Y + N appears, press the left (S) key to answer with yes. Conversely, if you want to answer yes and N + Y appears, press the right (L) key to answer with yes.



**Always respond as fast and accurately as possible!** There is a response limit. If you do not respond within 2 seconds, you will receive a corresponding error message („too slow!“) and the next run will start. In case you respond before the object is presented, you will also receive a corresponding error message („too early!“).

**Remember to lie/tell the truth depending on whether you speak with a police investigator or your accomplice!** In case you respond erroneously (i.e. accidentially give your accomplice the wrong answer or tell the police the truth), you will receive a corresponding error message („error!“) and the next run will start.

**Important:** On some runs, neither Y + N nor N + Y will appear. You will only see the silhouette and frame in the background and then the object. **Do not respond on these runs!** We will use these runs as attention checks. Whenever you accidentially respond, you will receive a corresponding error message stating that you should not respond on these runs („DO NOT respond!“).

press SPACE to continue

Let’s first practice the task.

The practice will consist of 4 short blocks.

As stated on Prolific, it is essential to our assessment that all participants perform the task as fast and accurately as they can and give it their full, undivided attention.

Based on our prior studies, we determined that an accuracy score below 70% (i.e. 70% correct responses for which no error message of any kind was shown) is very atypical for a person attentively performing the task. A person attentively performing the task should always be able to reach this criterion. An accuracy score below 70% indicates that a person is not attending, is experiencing technical issues with their computer, or has misunderstood the task. As also stated on Prolific, we will therefore only grant credit to participants who reach accuracy scores of at least 70% in the main experiment.

To allow you to test whether you are doing well enough, we will also assess your accuracy score for this practice. If it is below 70%, you will be asked to redo the practice blocks. In case you do not reach an accuracy score of at least 70% when you do the practice the second time, the experiment will automatically be ended to ensure that only persons who can reach the accuracy score will spend more time on the task.

Press SPACE to see a summary and then start the practice

**Summary**

1. Memorize which objects you did/did not see at the crime scene.
2. Answer the questions posed by your accomplice/the police:

Y – yes N - no

seen at the crime scene NOT seen at the crime scene

Letter positions tell you which key (left-S, right-L) to press.

Tell the truth to your accomplice and lie to the police.

**Respond as fast and accurately as you can!**

1. If there is no Y/N, DO NOT respond. This is an attention check.

**Place your index fingers on S and L now!**

press SPACE to start

You have successfully completed the practice and will now move on to the main experiment. The main experiment will be exactly as the practice and will consist of 40 short blocks. You will see a summary of the experiment before each block. In case you need to take a break, please do so when you see the summary.

**Please continue to respond as fast and accurately as you can!**

press SPACE to start the main experiment

**block X/40**

X correct

**Please continue to respond as fast and accurately as you can!**

press SPACE to continue to summary

Great!

You have successfully completed the main experiment. In the following, we will ask you a few questions about the experiment.

Please answer these questions and then continue until you are asked to press a button to finish the experiment and register your participation with Prolific. Do not end the experiment prematurely or close the tab before you have clicked on that button. Doing so might render us unable to determine whether you have participated and we would not be able to grant you credit for your participation.

Press SPACE to continue

Questions

How well were you able to memorize which objects you did/did not see at the crime scene?

1 – not at all to 5 – very well

How well were you able to apply the instruction to truthfully answer your accomplice and lie to the police?

1 – not at all to 5 – very well

Regarding everyday situations, I am a convincing liar.

1 – do not agree to 5 - agree

Did you use a strategy when performing the task? If so, please describe your strategy.

text entry

Do you have an idea what this experiment was investigating?

text entry

Is there anything else you would like to let us know?

text entry

Thank you very much for your participation in our study!

This study aims to help us understand what happens when we lie. Several theories on lying assume that one needs to inhibit the correct answer in order to construct a lie. Here, we wanted to directly test this idea. We are actually most interested in the objects that you did not respond to when they appeared the first time. These objects were presented either with your accomplice or the police, that is, in the context of lying or truth-telling. What we want to examine is whether you associated objects you did not respond to that appeared in a lying context (i.e. that appeared with the police) with an inhibition of the correct, truthful answer. If so, you should be slower to respond when these objects appear again as compared to objects you have not responded to that appeared in a truth-telling context (i.e. that appeared with your accomplice). The other manipulations were performed to rule out alternative explanations. We hope that our research can help unravel what we do when we lie. This might be relevant for future methods of lie detection.

Again, thank you for supporting our research by participating in this study

END STUDY AND RETURN TO PROLIFIC