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By Matt Cantor, Newser Staff
Posted Apr 13, 2014 2:30 PM CDT

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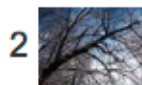
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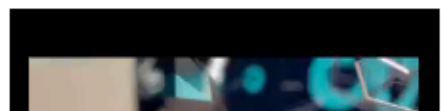
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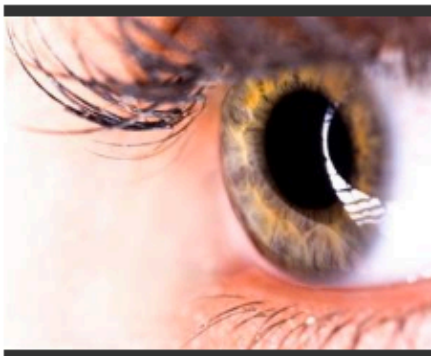


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(NEWSEr) — If you're aiming to live in the present, you'll want to restrict yourself to the last 15 seconds—because that's how long we perceive the current moment, a study suggests. A group of US researchers say it's not just a split second: Instead, our minds seem to blur together what's happening right now with what's happened over that brief period, Quartz reports. In other words, "what you are seeing at the present moment is not a fresh snapshot of the world but rather an average of what you've seen in the past 10 to 15 seconds," study author Jason Fischer explains, per the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The researchers came to this conclusion using Gabor patches—small arrangements of lines. Twelve participants were shown the patches as they flashed onto a screen; one appeared every five seconds. Subjects then said which direction the lines tilted, but got them slightly wrong, influenced by lines they had seen over the past 15 seconds. "It's a trade-off the visual system makes," Fischer tells *California Magazine* of these short, slightly blurred snapshots of reality. Imagine, he says, trying to read a street sign while driving in the rain: "If you were sensitive to every little fluctuation in vision you'd have a very difficult time reading the sign."

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