

r/AskReddit

Deaf people of Reddit, If you were born deaf and have never heard the English language, is your inner monologue in sign language? If not, what is it?

u/shitusername_taken

528 Comments

... | ↑ 3134 ↓

Best ▼

Write a comment

✓ Caoranach · 3h

I was born deaf, and my inner monologue tends to be in mostly images, with the occasional ASL signs and written words mixed in. Honestly it can be a little bit of a chore to translate my thoughts into conveyable language!

← ... | ↑ 3372 ↓

✓ shitusername_taken · 3h

Thanks for replying, so kinda like flashbacks of objects and situations? Do you talk to yourself like you would talk to someone else? Sorry, I Don't really know how to properly articulate that question.

← ... | ↑ 760 ↓

✓ Caoranach · 3h

I wouldn't say flashbacks, but I'll certainly visualize an event playing out, or an interaction happening in my head. It's usually mixed with *feelings* that kinda represent the way in which I'm considering the topic. For instance, if I thought about whether or not I could climb up a bookshelf without it falling over, I might imagine myself climbing it, while feeling a distinct sense of uncertainty about the idea. I'm not sure how normal this is, for *anybody*, but it's how a large part of my thought process works.

← ... | ↑ 736 ↓

✓ jazir5 · 3h

How do you think about more complex ideas, like philosophy or complex mathematical concepts?

← ... | ↑ 155 ↓

✓ Caoranach · 3h

Abstract topics like philosophy and ethics tend to be a lot more *feelings* and a lot less defined imagery. I'm really not sure how to describe *what* my thought process for them is like, since nebulous emotional nuances are hard to put into words. On the other hand, mathematical things tend to match pretty closely with the style of equations and diagrams you might find in textbooks. As I work through a problem, I tend to see the diagrams and equations drawn or written in, as if an invisible pen were scribbling away!

← ... | ↑ 347 ↓

✓ S0ny666 · 2h

Would talking about philosophy in sign language require more spelling than signing compared to everyday use? And is it more required to spell words with regards to philosophy than history or biology for instance?

← ... | ↑ 60 ↓

✓ Caoranach · 2h

I guess that depends on how clinical I want to be about it! If I'm just describing my opinions on philosophical thought experiments, it's probably not gonna be much different than my everyday. If I'm trying to be Ms Fancypants and use lots of proper names, and referencing specific studies and such, then you bet I'll be spelling a lot more out! I suck at names. Names suck!

← ... | ↑ 130 ↓

• ✓ 3shirts · 13m

Off topic slightly, more generic on signing but, do you sign names that are also nouns as that noun? For Jeff Bridges, would you do the sign for a bridge?

What about Tony Hancock? Would you do the signs for a toe, a knee, a hand, and a... chicken?

← ... | ↑ · ↓

• • ✓ Caoranach · 5m

Haha, no, not usually. Names are often just spelled out, which can be a hassle. If we're good friends, you might get what's called a 'name sign' though! Basically, it's usually a mashup of signs that describe you and/or your personality to make it easier on us than always spelling out your name all the time!

← ... | ↑ · ↓

• • • ✓ 3shirts · 2m

Ooh, do you ever have sneaky ones that you and your signing friends know but the person doesn't? Like a bit of a bitchy in-joke about them?

← ... | ↑ · ↓

• • • > [More Comments \(1\)](#)

• • ✓ yooooooooo solo · 7m

You're thinking of "Charades"

← ... | ↑ · ↓

• • ✓ hrisex · 6m

You just asked if there are emojis in sign language

← ... | ↑ · ↓

✓ Cupa42 · 45m

I think non-deaf people don't realize how similar they think to you. I am not deaf, and actual words are in my thoughts as sort of "fillers", not the basis of thought

← ... | ↑ · ↓

✓ white_genocidist · 23m

Yeah basically. I've never thought that language was essential to my thought process, though obviously it comes in at some point if I must formulate it.

Granted, OP did specify inner monologue, which is more specific than "thought" and implies language.

← ... | ↑ · ↓

• ✓ Forsyte · 16m

Cognition allows language. Language allows more complex cognition

EDIT: Not just spoken language

← ... | ↑ · ↓

• • > [More Comments \(1\)](#)

• ✓ aninconvenienttartan · 11m

My brain is imploding trying to describe exactly what my thoughts are like, and I'm not deaf.



➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ jazir5 · 2h

I'm trying to think how to phrase this, how do you reason through problems? As in, you are trying to find an answer to a problem, and cognitively you come to what you think is the solution, then you think harder and you go "that couldn't work". I'm unsure what puzzling something out would be like for a deaf person. Thanks for the response



✓ Caoranach · 2h

Ultimately it's a whole lot of back and forth with imagery, emotions, floating words, signs, and the occasional impression of a smell. I tend to visualize *everything* I read, whether my brain is trying to translate it to ASL or otherwise, and when I'm thinking through things it's much the same. I have to visualize everything if I want to understand it, including when I'm trying to solve a problem!



• ✓ I_post_stuff · 15m

This is the sort of thing I've wondered about for years and years but have never had the opportunity to actually learn about.

Thank you for answering all these questions.



• ➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

➤ [More Comments \(3\)](#)

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ yourdadsototherkid · 2h

I remember reading a book on neuroscience once. My main takeaway was that the great bulk of cognition is something that's almost automatic and purely emotional. Language, images, sounds, whatever are just our brain attempting to put those thoughts into some sort of rationally comprehensible form



✓ Caoranach · 2h

It's good to know I'm not *totally* bizarre! Even images aren't totally comprehensible, sometimes, and I'll have to go through a dozen refinements on a thought before it makes any sense in a form I can share with people. I would be lying if I said I never worried about whether I'm making *no goddamn sense* to other people!



✓ ben0318 · 48m

Possibly odd question... I don't have a lot of exposure to deaf people, and I guess I always assumed that you/they tend to be fairly succinct in communications. Your comments have shaken up this assumption (not complaining... I love having arbitrary assumptions challenged and dismissed). Do you tend to be "talkative" in ASL as well, or mainly in text format? To clarify, by "you", I mean you *personally*... not asking you to speak for all hearing impaired people.



✓ Caoranach · 38m

I am very much *not* talkative in person! Most of my friends are not deaf, and even though most of them *have* learned a good amount of ASL, I just prefer *being* with people and doing stuff, rather than talking.

As for my verbosity, many of my friends whose primary language *is* ASL have trouble adapting to the complexities of English grammar. I'm far from unique in how well I adapted, but it's not uncommon for us to have trouble getting past cave-person speak when writing in English.

• > [More Comments \(2\)](#)

✓ yourdadsotherkid · 2h

Think of it this way: I type the word "apple", you see the word, you picture an apple, you remember what it was like to eat an apple, you (probably) like the taste of an apple, etc etc...

The actual word, "apple", is nothing. It's just some shapes (to you, anyway, to me it's just shapes with the added bonus of sounding like shapes, whatever that means).

"Apple" is just a symbolic representation of a lifetime of experiences and recollections. If you stripped away the word there would still be left an impression and a full understanding, just one that's not capable of being expressed. Strip everything away and it's just a bunch of synapses sparking at each other in our skulls 24/7.

I suppose that's the reason I found OP's question kind of funny. "How does X person think?"

Answer: "Same way as you dumbass"

← ... | ↑ 27 ↓

✓ Everydaypsychopath · 1h

Great now I'm going to have an existential crisis about apples

← ... | ↑ 23 ↓

• > [More Comments \(2\)](#)

> [More Comments \(1\)](#)

> [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ blazer965 · 3h

Now that u obviously have a mastery of English, dont you just think in words? English is my 2nd language and I think in English for the most part. I was semi fluent in a 3rd language and sometimes dream in it and at the time kinda/sorta could think in it.

← ... | ↑ 10 ↓

✓ Caoranach · 2h

There's a fair bit of visualizing English words, but even now I still tend to predominantly think in (usually text-free) images. I find myself sometimes thinking more in written words, and those times are often accompanied by panic and the feeling that I'm swimming in letters. Even as fluent as I am, it still overwhelms me on occasion!

← ... | ↑ 30 ↓

✓ Whale_Bait · 2h

Knowing what the language looks like isn't very helpful if you've never heard any of the sounds that it consists of.

It's crazy to try to use your inner thought process without words, but I guess they have to do it somehow.

← ... | ↑ 11 ↓

✓ blazer965 · 2h

I was tempted to say sound is irrelevent, but then i realized that sounds also play a big role in the connotation people associate w some words

← ... | ↑ 5 ↓

✓ ThatLexxyFellow · 1h

Like how you can stress a different word in a sentence and create an entirely new meaning:

/ didn't screw your sister.

I *didn't* screw your sister.

I didn't *screw* your sister.

I didn't screw *your* sister.
I didn't screw your *sister*.

← ... | ↑ 31 ↓

• ✓ WiseOctopus • 16m

I did not screw her, it's not true. It's bullshit! I did not screw her! I did nawt.

← ... | ↑ • ↓

• ➤ [More Comments \(2\)](#)

✓ sinner_in_the_house • 2h

I think the difficulty here is that us hearing folk can just hear the words in our heads, while there is no audio counterpart, so the words, I would assume, are more visual cues? (Someone correct me here if needed). So it would be like just seeing the words, like reading your own dreams. I think he is more thinking in ideas, word-meanings, and such.

← ... | ↑ 7 ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ Jesse_BER • 58m

I'm very drunk right now (New Years eve in Australia) and find it so mind blowing that I read your response and its in perfect English but you have no idea how the words are said and or pronounced. (Honestly no disrespect if I have caused any)

← ... | ↑ • ↓

✓ Tynte • 49m

This is exactly how my head works too! I've never been able to put it into words like this.

There is no sound (unless I'm thinking of songs), and when I try to plan something I don't tell myself "I should go to the bus now or I'll be late", I rather imagine myself running to the bus.

I am, however, not deaf.

← ... | ↑ • ↓

✓ Caoranach • 45m

I admit this is far from the first time I've been asked a question like this, so that's why my answers aren't totally scattered half-thoughts! It always seems to surprise people when they find out, even though it's totally reasonable if you think about it. Have you been asked to explain your way of thinking much?

← ... | ↑ • ↓

✓ Tynte • 35m

I never actually realised that I don't have an inner monologue voice until I read a thread about it on reddit a month or so ago. I answered that thread in as you say a scattered mess, but I learned something about myself that day.

I study maths for a living, and a way I found to compare my thoughts is instead of reading "six" I just see the number 6 on a sheet.

So no, I haven't had to answer the question many times, only today and that day.

← ... | ↑ • ↓

➤ [More Comments \(7\)](#)

➤ [More Comments \(4\)](#)

✓ AkashicRecorder • 3h

Do you see the images pretty solidly or are they just flashes? Apparently people have differences as to how much they are able to see in their mind's eye. I only see flashes :(

← ... | ↑ 19 ↓

✓ Caoranach • 3h

They're pretty concrete images! If I'm concentrating on my thoughts particularly hard, I might not even see anything that's *actually* happening around me, instead favoring the imagined scene. It's gotten me in trouble more than once!

← ... | ↑ 38 ↓

✓ Tawneey · 2h

Not sure how to word this, but can you read what you wrote? Like the paragraph of yours I'm replying to for example, if you were to read that in your head is that possible? Or you just sort of know what each word is? I personally almost say each word in my head as I type them, just wondering how that goes on to your side of things

← ... | ↑ 11 ↓

✓ Caoranach · 2h

I guess that depends on why I'm reading it, what mood I'm in, how tired I am, and whether I've been reading a lot that day or have been out and about. As a little girl growing up I would probably have had to translate it bit by bit into ASL, but now that I'm older I have a better idea of what the words are and what they mean, intuitively. If I've been out and about and signing all day, though, I'm probably going to slip back into translating it more. My brain is weird.

← ... | ↑ 28 ↓

✓ Tawneey · 2h

That's amazingly difficult to even comprehend having to do all the time, my hats off to you

← ... | ↑ 14 ↓

✓ Haywood_Jablowmi · 1h

Not for nothing, but your responses are pretty eloquent compared to the average redditor. I wonder if any part of that could be attributed to learning written English without verbal instruction. Or perhaps you are just naturally articulate?

← ... | ↑ 9 ↓

✓ Caoranach · 1h

I hadn't thought of that! I always just assumed it was because *written* communication was vastly more important to me growing up than my hearing friends. I didn't have much of a social life outside of the internet until I was a teenager, so I spent *a lot* of time online, chatting in games! You pick up all sorts of things when your largest source of communication is written, rather than in-person communication. Subtleties can't be expressed with body language or variations in pacing when it's text.

I still resent the rise of voice chat in games, though. It's slowly been edging me out of the more action-oriented gaming communities.

← ... | ↑ 16 ↓

✓ 45632454343243124312 · 1h

I have no internal imagery whatsoever.. The only way I think is sub-vocally in the English language. My "mind's eye is complete blackness." This is known as aphantasia.

← ... | ↑ 2 ↓

✓ Caoranach · 57m

This to me is the most interesting and incomprehensible thing! Just like some people are telling me they can't imagine not hearing a voice narrating their thoughts, I can't imagine what it would be like to think without visualization. We're on two opposite sides of a great ocean, and have no idea how to build a boat!

← ... | ↑ • ↓

✓ yardglass · 2h

I can't see images at all, only just learned people can. Sounds like you possibly have aphantasia.

✓ gtsomething · 2h

This might be confusing...

But when I read things, including your comments, and when I type things, I hear myself (or I guess, a voice that I think is myself cause I always think I sound different) reading it out in my head.

Do you have anything like that? Or what plays through your mind when you're reading?

✓ Caoranach · 2h

Well, reading your comment I started off confused, then had a distinct image of a little me inside my head with a book, reading, and then ended with an inquisitive feeling and a sensation of something bouncing around inside my brain.

I visualize almost literally *everything* that I read, which can get awkward sometimes!

✓ gtsomething · 2h

That's so crazy and cool! I'm so intrigued! Sorry.

Because you emphasized the word *everything* and so when my brain read it to me in my head, it dragged out with the emphasis but then... I dno. I'm just so curious as to how an emphasis would work visually. Sorry that everyone is asking so many questions, myself included.

✓ Caoranach · 2h

I've noticed people tend to emphasize certain words with more emphatic gestures and other body language. For the most part, it's actually very straightforward! For the small part that isn't so simple, I've basically just kinda gotten a decent sense for what people *might* emphasize in a sentence, based on the meaning of it! I spent *so much time* on the internet growing up, which is largely what I thank for my ability to understand written English as well as I do.

➤ [More Comments \(2\)](#)

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ zismahname · 3h

Us who aren't deaf or mute have the same problem. We struggle to say the right words to express feelings or to describe a thought out experience.

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ mechanicalgrip · 1h

Thank you for what appears to be the only genuine reply on here.

✓ Caoranach · 1h

Haha, I try to answer most questions as though they've got a serious tag! Unless they're totally silly questions to begin with, but whatever.

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ NahWey · 1h

This has been an incredible read, thank you for taking the time to reply as much as you have, it's been insightful!

I have a question... When it comes to talking to yourself, how does that work?

✓ Caoranach · 1h

I'm terribly inconsistent about conversations with myself. Sometimes I see myself signing as if I'm another person, and other times it's from my own perspective and I'm just leading myself visually through a visualization of whatever topic I'm talking about!

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ fletchindubai · 2h

When you watch a film with a famous actor, do you assign a voice to them that is consistent throughout all their films?

I'd love to know what you do internally when you see Michael Caine talk in a film, or Samuel L Jackson, for example.

And do you have you own idea of a Russian accent? Or a British accent if you know the person is playing a British person?

As a side note, my German friend says that when films are dubbed into German they have the same person doing to voice for Robert DeNiro in all the films for consistency.

✓ Caoranach · 1h

While I may be absolute *garbage* at lip-reading for comprehension purposes, I can say with *absolute certainty* that everybody has a distinct 'accent' when it comes to how they move their lips while speaking. I've come to associate those styles with particular actors. As for actual accents, they *tend* to also have a particular flair to their facial movements, though it's sometimes hard to tell.

✓ Elissa_of_Carthage · 1h

The dubbing thing is also true for Spain. There is one dubbing actor per real actor, and it feels off whenever the dubbing actor can't work and his voice is replaced by someone else. There are also a handful of voice actors (I mean, there are plenty, but protagonists often have the ssme ones), so many characters from different films share the same voice (like Keira Knightley's and Anne Hathaway's), but we're used to it. It's mainly when they introduce a new voice actor that it can become a bit jarring (like with Jennifer Lawrence), or, as I said before, when the usual dubbing actor is unavailable for some reason and his assigned actor is dubbed by someone else.

✓ blazer965 · 3h

Language kinda dictates our thoughts. For example most ppl use "hate" for stuff they dont like. Imagine if ppl were fluent with 100 different words (shades) of hate. They would be a lot more exact in their communication.

Maybe that can describe the difficulty (however slight) in conveying your thoughts.

✓ Caoranach · 2h

That's a good point! Having the *right* words to describe what you want to say can be really hard, especially if you haven't grown your vocabulary significantly. Even so, it can be hard to take a hazy image and emotion in my brain and turn it into a sentence, especially if the image isn't particularly based on any concrete concept in reality.

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

➤ [More Comments \(25\)](#)

✓ CuteDeath · 1h

I became deaf at age 2 so I have no memory of hearing or hearing myself talking, but my inner monologue is in words. It probably helped that I went to speech therapy and learned to speak and I don't hang out with other deaf people very much. Despite having 100% loss I hang out with hearing people as a matter of course.

My dreams are also like that - in my dreams I can hear and talk normally. I am 37 now.

← ... | ↑ 253 ↓

ohyeahyeahnahrighto · 18m

That's fucking mind blowing

← ... | ↑ · ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

lemonzoidberg · 14m

That's fascinating that you can hear in your dreams. Thanks for the response.

← ... | ↑ · ↓

➤ [More Comments \(6\)](#)

shitusername_taken · 3h

From some of these comments,

TIL not everyone has an inner monologue. Deaf or not.

← ... | ↑ 478 ↓

chill_chihuahua · 2h

How the heck do you function without an internal monologue? I can't find the comments lol

← ... | ↑ 319 ↓

MasterOfComments · 1h

I don't have one. Thoughts are more abstract, the only time I think in words is when I read it, or before wanting to say something/counting.

Wouldn't know how else to do it obviously

← ... | ↑ 118 ↓

sarah-xxx · 10m

I don't have an inner monologue myself either.

yes, you do

No, shut up.

whatever, now quit procrastinating and do something

Just one more AskReddit thread..

← ... | ↑ · ↓

pastrknack · 3m

oh hi Sarah

← ... | ↑ · ↓

sarah-xxx · 1m

Wow, my inner monologue has a Reddit account now, too!

← ... | ↑ · ↓

Mr-xe23 · 6m

This thread has my head fucked up. Once my thought process goes back to normal I'm gonna pay attention to "how" I'm thinking rather than the usual "what" I'm thinking.

The human mind is a fascinating, scary, beautiful thing.

← ... | ↑ · ↓

➤ [More Comments \(2\)](#)

✓ mimimi31 · 1h

What is this inner monologue even supposed to be?

Is there some voice in your head that narrates everything you do as you're doing it? Or does it say what you're going to do?

← ... | ↑ 39 ↓

✓ elk-87 · 37m

Its just like talking to yourself. Like if I cant sleep at night It'll go something like "Cant sleep... its too hot...too lazy to get up and turn on the fan" Or when Im running on the treadmill it'll be like "So boring...just 5 more minutes you can do it...almost there...I did great today"

← ... | ↑ · ↓

✓ PROBABLY_POOPING_RN · 28m

Huh TIL. I honestly don't have this. My thoughts are more abstract, I don't speak to myself in my head. I think more in sounds or images.

← ... | ↑ · ↓

✓ Anlaufr · 20m

Jesus, I'm completely the opposite. It requires a lot of focus for me to visualize something. My memories mostly exist as still images and just, what happened is just completely abstract. It's hard to describe, but it's probably most similar to a screenplay.

← ... | ↑ · ↓

✓ C-Gi · 15m

i don't have images or monologue. i just do things

← ... | ↑ · ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ 42Obunny · 8m

This is the strangest thread I've ever read. I'm shocked that everyone doesn't talk to themselves in their head. I genuinely thought all humans did this.

← ... | ↑ · ↓

✓ Destanio9357 · 6m

Honest question - how do you solve problems if you don't talk internally?

Sure I could imagine "It's hot" in abstract. But If I have a tough decision, I usually think "well if I do this then *insert events* but if I do this, then *insert alternating events*"

Granted, I think much faster than I talk - as anyone would. A question like "how are you doing today" is thought of in a millisecond, we don't speak out loud unless we know what we're going to say. So if by "abstract thinking" you mean thinking 5 sentence concepts in 5 seconds then I have a closer idea as to what you mean.

← ... | ↑ · ↓

➤ [More Comments \(3\)](#)

✓ nfsnobody · 9m

Yeah, that's why a lot of motivation stuff doesn't work for me. A lot of it is about using your inner monologue to push yourself. I don't have one, I just do things or don't do them.

← ... | ↑ · ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ Phoenix591 · 49m

Think its pretty much your thoughts in word form. Like when I think consciously think its pretty much full sentences. I also seem to have a rare thing I do with math, when doing mental math I can easily imagine the math problem as it would be written and do it step by step exactly as I would on paper (usually with division or multiplication since addition and subtraction are too quick to benefit in most cases)... No idea why it seems to be rare because how else would one do mental math.



elizabnthelizabeth · 11m

Personally the way I do mental math is in words. If I wanted to multiply 45 by 25, I would first think '25 by 40 is 1000' and '25 by 5 is 125', adding to a total of '1125'. I have to recall each previous step before coming to the answer.

For me this works relatively well, I can go up to a complexity of 3 digits by 3 digits, before I start forgetting previous calculations and it becomes too complicated.



Nexus88 · 51m

It doesn't narrate what I'm gonna do, but it... for me is like someone is there giving me an idea of what to possibly say or do I guess I can say, and it is relayed to me in a "spoken voice" that just so happens to be my voice.

There are times it totally "shuts off" though as well, I have a Sim racing setup and when I'm pushing a car hard at my personal limits there is nothing at that point it just becomes instinct.



IAmARedditorAMAA · 45m

I don't have an inner monologue either and the thought of having one sounds creepy as shit.



[More Comments \(1\)](#)

xmnstr · 31m

What's amazing to me is that you think it's needed. Definitely mindblowing to me!



kholto · 10m

Supposedly it is pretty common not to have one with ADHD (but don't go thinking that means everyone without one definitely has ADHD!).

As for functioning without one... Not very well! But I don't think that's the lack of a monologue.

When you don't have one it is kind of amazing to imagine one, your entire life is an old detective movie perhaps? Supposedly it can be helpful to have one, I do my best thinking out loud and perhaps that wouldn't be the case if I had an inner monologue. I can sort of think out loud inside my head if I really want to, but it isn't the same.



[More Comments \(1\)](#)

[More Comments \(3\)](#)

Kywie · 1h

Wtf I assumed everyone had an inner monologue, especially because I live alone so a lot of the day is spent discussing things with myself.

"I need to go and check on the veggies on the stove so they don't boil over... man the tv is too loud, where's that remote?..."



dracovich · 44m

yeah it's kinda nice to see this thread, I don't have an internal monologue and every time I tell people (it comes up since I'm bilingual and people ask me what language my monologue is in), they get weirded out, still haven't

met someone that's the same, nice to see this thread with the topic.



failingtolork · 20m

How did you type that then? Did you say that out loud as you typed?



[More Comments \(2\)](#)

ErikNavkire · 16m

There's dozens of us!



[More Comments \(2\)](#)

ShishKabobJerry · 2h

Awesome question dude.



shitusername_taken · 2h

Thanks



MotorCookie · 2h

What is an inner monologue?



shitusername_taken · 2h

Think of J.D. from Scrubs, but dial it way way back and make it more mundane and less witty. For me it's basically stuff I say aloud when I'm alone, but say in my head when I'm around people. Stuff like "okay so I need this, this and that from the store... oh and I'll make that for dinner!" Or planing out something difficult is usually planing step by step aloud or in my head



theimmortalcrab · 1h

Aaaand now I'm questioning whether I have one. I always thought I did, but mine is rarely actually made up of words, it's more like knowledge of what I have to do but not generally formulated in a particular language. My thoughts only use words when I'm concious of thinking, if that makes sense.



MasterOfComments · 1h

From what I gathered, you don't. I have the same.



[More Comments \(2\)](#)

fletchindubai · 2h

If I'm reading quotes from someone and I don't know what they sound like then I hear it in my voice. If I know the person I hear it in their voice.



[More Comments \(6\)](#)

LifeBeforeInternet · 3h

My mom is deaf, I have asked her this before and she said she thinks and dreams in sign language. Weird.

✓ bamburito · 15m

yep. Both my parents are deaf and say the same.

✓ KifKef · 7m

Does she see hands just floating around or are they attached to arms? A body?

Are they her hands or someone else's? I guess it depends on the dream. Maybe she sees cartoon gloves signing at her sometimes?

Does she see more than one pair of hands at a time?

Does it have to be *hands* signing at her? Could it be just some *thing* in the shape of a word?

➤ [More Comments \(2\)](#)

✓ Addicted_To_Spanking · 3h

My cousin is deaf, never heard English before. She's read enough lips and tried to speak enough words that she just thinks in her own interpretation of English, which is how it looks from reading lips.

✓ Caoranach · 2h

Oh, *screw lip reading*, seriously! I've always been abysmal at it, and it gives me the *worst* headache. I have nothing but respect for people who can get more than the occasional fragment of a conversation out of it.

✓ Upchuck_Lad · 28m

Apparently only about 30% of english can actually be lipread so even those that are great at it are still missing most of the conversation.

✓ Caoranach · 25m

It's a lot easier to learn if you lost your hearing *post-language*, too. I'm not in that demographic, so it's especially hard for me. Either way, some of my worst headaches have been when trying to follow a conversation via lipreading, even when I *know* what subject they're talking about!

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ rxpharmd · 4h

I think this is my favorite AskReddit question that I've read. I hope it gets some serious answers.

✓ [shitusername_taken](#) · 4h

Me too. I hope it's not too late of an hour.

Edit: fixed it

✓ spicypepperoni · 4h

There are probably still some deaf people alive.

shitusername_taken · 4h

Yeah, I thought about that after I posted it. I could have worded it different.

← ... ↑ 34 ↓

IIIHeir · 4h

What was it pre typo? Asking for research purposes

← ... ↑ 25 ↓

shitusername_taken · 4h

Me too. I hope it's not to late.

← ... ↑ 56 ↓

IIIHeir · 3h

😂 love it

← ... ↑ 15 ↓

JamesGlimm · 1h

Second 'to' should be 'too' as well in your original comment

← ... ↑ 2 ↓

➤ More Comments (1)

JohnDoe_2408 · 2h

*too

← ... ↑ 12 ↓

kenoswild13 · 1h

Can confirm. Am alive.

← ... ↑ 6 ↓

NiDonnaNaiz · 2h

Yeah, this is a great question, OP. I'm not deaf, but I don't have inner monologue. . .I always thought inner monologues were an illustrative device used by authors, to give the reader/viewer an insight into a character. I didn't realize people actually have them. It seems as though it would be annoying. . .English is is my third, but most fluent, language; it always catches me off guard when I think in one of my other languages . Fascinating topic, OP!

← ... ↑ 15 ↓

shitusername_taken · 2h

And I had no idea other people didn't have an inner monologue. A lot of TIL.

← ... ↑ 12 ↓

NiDonnaNaiz · 2h

Apparently, I'm in the minority. I think the whole topic is fascinating. So, when you are reading silently do you hear your voice or another voice? I don't "hear" anything. Also, does your inner monologue narrate your actions? As in does your inner monologue say "I'm thirsty; I should get a drink", "Wow that guy/girl is hot", etc? I just "think" stuff, no inner voice, hard to describe.

My husband is a pediatric neuropsychologist and he has done some cool research on the topic (but I would be lying if I said I completely understand it).

← ... ↑ 6 ↓

✔ [shitusername_taken](#)  · 2h

From another reply, I think it says it best

It's not like a constant narrative of every second of your day. Think of J.D. from Scrubs, but dial it way way back and make it more mundane and less witty. For me it's basically stuff I say aloud when I'm alone, but say in my head when I'm around people. Stuff like "okay so I need this, this and that from the store... oh and I'll make that for dinner!" Or planing out something difficult is usually planing step by step aloud or in my head - "if I start with this here then that should work." I hope that helped and made sense. It's way past my bedtime so I kind of rambled on.

← ... | ↑ 13 ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

➤ [More Comments \(2\)](#)

✔ [777TheOneAndOnly777](#) · 1h

That's actually fascinating to me. Personally, I've always had a sort of live commentary of whatever I might be doing. Somewhat similar to a narration, though always in first-person perspective. It's interesting to see how different people vary in some of the most inconsequential ways that you never normally consider. Also, it would be interesting to know if there is actually any specific cause known for such phenomenon, or if it's one of countless aspects of human psychology that doesn't currently have any discernible source or reason.

← ... | ↑ 5 ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✔ [Defavlt](#) · 50m

to late of an hour

The clock was roughly 09 (am) when you wrote that.

Point being, there's other places than wherever you are!

← ... | ↑ • ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✔ [rydan](#) · 3h

Unfortunately OP neglected to put [Serious] in the title so this is definitely going to get some funny answers.

← ... | ↑ 5 ↓

➤ [More Comments \(2\)](#)

✔ [MauriCEOMcCree](#) · 1h

This probably gets buried but anyway. **You can't change the volume of your inner voice.** Go ahead, try to scream.

← ... | ↑ 169 ↓

✔ [josiah_93](#) · 52m

Holy shit.

← ... | ↑ • ↓

✔ [nutsaur](#) · 18m

I still get the impression of screaming.

Whispering in my head feels quieter and screaming feels like it takes up more room.

← ... | ↑ • ↓

✔ [rachh90](#) · 8m

wow you described it perfectly.

Belgand · 29m

What's weird is that as a child I would occasionally have the problem that my inner voice *was* screaming. There was nothing I could do to stop it either. It would subside with time, but I just had to wait it out. Eventually it stopped happening as I grew older.

CthulusFinanceMan · 19m

y-you ok...?

mikey_lolz · 14m

Not sure if this is right or not, but is that not something akin to schizophrenia?

cheesepusher · 14m

I still have this problem. It gets really loud sometimes to the point of me not being able to concentrate on what's going on. People assume I'm being introverted or depressed (all good assumptions if you were to meet me) but it's just like I'm suddenly in a crowded subway.

[More Comments \(1\)](#)

EmeraldxWeapon · 16m

I just laughed so hard at myself trying to scream in my own head

Septic_Elbow · 21m

I did though... just now. Does that not happen for you?

dedasdude · 12m

is it weird that i can? screaming gives me a headache though.

liam12345677 · 21m

I can make it whisper though.

[More Comments \(7\)](#)

psychoopiates · 43m

A little off topic but I think it's worthwhile and you'd enjoy this, and I hope I'm not breaking any rules. If you are born deaf and get schizophrenia later in life, you would tend to see disembodied hands signing when people who could hear would hear voices.

[More Comments \(2\)](#)

Iziam94 · 4h

If I remember correctly I remember someone saying (typing) their inner monologue is in words and images but everyone is different

shitusername_taken · 4h

This post came from a comment I read that said sign language is a completely different language than English and a lot of deaf people don't learn to spell well or be able to form sentences the same way we do in English. I was just wondering if that was true.

← ... ↑ 41 ↓

notFranklero · 4h

Yeah, the grammar/way sentences are phrased can be pretty different. For example, in English I would say "I went to the store last Saturday." In American Sign Language I would sign "past Saturday go-to store I."

Interestingly, ASL actually has roots in French Sign Language!

← ... ↑ 37 ↓

AppleDane · 2h

There are generally two schools of sign language. Broadly it's top down (hearing people in charge making a language for deaf people) or the *German school*, and bottom-up (deaf people's language being codified into a language by hearing people) or the *French school*.

UK sign language is German school, while ASL is French, which is why American deaf have a hard time understanding UK deaf.

← ... ↑ 13 ↓

Zipperskin · 2h

So an American deaf person is almost always multi-lingual - ASL and English at a minimum.

← ... ↑ 5 ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

S_Defenestration · 3h

"Sign language" also isn't a single language. There are many sign languages, and they're as diverse as spoken languages. They're also proper languages in their own right, and not just a "signed version" of whatever the majority language in the region it's used in is. As [/u/notFranklero](#) said, ASL has roots in French Sign Language, and Auslan has its roots in British Sign Language. Someone who uses solely ASL would not be able to effectively communicate with someone who uses solely Auslan, despite the US and Australia both having English as their predominant spoken language.

← ... ↑ 26 ↓

shitusername_taken · 3h

I Have opened a can of worms I had no idea even existed.

← ... ↑ 23 ↓

S_Defenestration · 3h

Nah mate, you just opened a can of linguist bait, and all lingthusiasts from amateurs, to undergrads, to academics came swarming.

← ... ↑ 13 ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

AppleDane · 2h

There is an "international" [generalized sign](#) language, that almost noone uses, except for sporting events like the Olympics.

← ... ↑ 5 ↓

Ninjinius · 3h

I suppose it depends on the country's version of their English, as they may have different syntactical structures than proper English. For instance, I'm currently learning Auslan (Australian sign language), and from what I've been able to learn and interpret the structure is mostly similar. What does make comprehension difficult for Auslan would be the omission of certain words, or signs for a words don't exist so you're forced to either spell it

out letter by letter or point at it and hope it works.

For instance, their really isn't a sign for the word 'it'. The closes thing is you point at something like you're trying to say 'that', but outside of such context I don't think I've encountered it yet, and 'it' is a commonly used word.

← ... ↑ 6 ↓

✓ IEat_IceCream · 4h

I keep trying to ask this deaf kid at my school but he just keeps waving at me

← ... ↑ 488 ↓

✓ shitusername_taken · 4h

Like he's throwing up gang signs or something

← ... ↑ 313 ↓

✓ IEat_IceCream · 4h

No you're thinking of sign language. This kid literally just waves at me all the time

← ... ↑ 83 ↓

✓ Kords · 4h

Reminds me of that courage the cowardly dog episode where courage looks out his house and sees a shadow of some dude waving and he keeps staring until eventually the dudes head fell off. I was shooketh for a week.

← ... ↑ 21 ↓

✓ Mouskegamer · 3h

Reminds me of that Courage the Cowardly Dog episode where Courage runs to Muriel and Eustace and waves his arms frantically for a long time

← ... ↑ 18 ↓

✓ BigBrotato · 2h

Reminds me of that Courage the Cowardly Dog episode which traumatised me

← ... ↑ 14 ↓

✓ poopellar · 1h

So every episode.

← ... ↑ 12 ↓

• > [More Comments \(3\)](#)

> [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ _jenesaipas · 23m

I laughed too hard at this

← ... ↑ · ↓

> [More Comments \(2\)](#)

✓ Guygenist · 3h

This is something I probably would have never thought of asking but now I'm genuinely interested

← ... ↑ 88 ↓

✓ shitusername_taken · 3h

Me either, it came from reading a comment about the subject, and now I really want to know.

← ... ↑ 25 ↓

✓ AppleDane · 2h

Next up: What do blind people "see" in dreams?

← ... ↑ 12 ↓

✓ TheRedUnderYourBed · 1h

[Tommy Edison has you covered](#) (check out his other videos if you've ever had questions about the life of blind people). They see nothing for obvious reasons, instead they experience dreams through sound, smell, taste and touch

← ... ↑ 6 ↓

✓ Sean_O_Clock · 3h

Deaf kid at school said (in sign language) that his inner monologue is in sign language.

← ... ↑ 33 ↓

✓ negot8or · 23m

Is he signing to himself? Is someone else signing? Or does he just see disembodied arms moving?

← ... ↑ · ↓

✓ varro-reatinus · 4h

Not deaf, but here's a good lay article from people who study them:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-voices-within/201401/do-deaf-people-hear-inner-voice>

One participant states, 'I have a "voice" in my head, but it is not sound-based. I am a visual being, so in my head, I either see ASL [American Sign Language] signs, or pictures, or sometimes printed words.' For this respondent, sound is not a feature of the experience. Another respondent experiences a mix of modalities: '[M]y inner voice is figuratively speaking to me and I hear it as well as lipread it.' In this case, the experience has both auditory and visual properties.

[...]

According to Vygotsky's theory, the process of internalization of linguistic exchanges results in many of the acoustic properties of language being stripped away, resulting in what I have termed 'condensed inner speech'. Arguably, condensed inner speech sounds like a voice, but a voice with nothing very 'speechy' about it.

← ... ↑ 40 ↓

✓ EnIdiot · 2h

My son is deaf (with cochlear implants). In researching some of the challenges and interesting things the brain does, I found that the auditory area of pre-lingually deaf children's brain gets appropriated for visual processing if it doesn't get utilized for sound. This (along with the other comments) would make me think that a visual inner monologue is most likely for most deaf, un-implanted people who were born without hearing.

← ... ↑ 10 ↓

✓ sarahkatenoel · 3h

Disclaimer: I'm roughly 0% qualified to talk about this, just laymen speculation

Here's a cypasta from a similar-ish askreddit I answered:

Some people think in words, some people think in pictures, some people think in concepts. A lot of people are a mix. There might be other ways to think I haven't heard of. Picture/concept people often end up being faster readers because they don't have to translate written words into speech in their mind's voice.

I majorially think in spoken word, the weird thing though, when I was studying ASL more intensely some of my words started being hand signs. It was weird and neat having physically quiet thoughts for the first time ever.

So I think Deaf "word" thinkers would, but Deaf picture/concept people wouldn't

Not everyone has an "inner monologue" to begin with, and being Deaf wouldn't change that. For people that do think in monologues naturally, but are raised in ASL would think in ASL.

✓ TOKEN_MARTIAN · 3h

I'm hearing and I don't have anything I'd describe as an inner monologue. Do all you people just constantly narrate what you're doing in your head or what?

✓ shitusername_taken · 3h

I talk to myself constantly. I ran through this reply a couple of times before typing it.

You don't?

✓ TOKEN_MARTIAN · 3h

I sometimes talk to imaginary people if there's no one around but that's more like... acting out situations that have happened or might happen. My thoughts don't come to me in the form of pre-made sentences.

✓ _All_Username_Gone_ · 26m

The same for me. Have a look at [r/aphantasia](#)

✓ littlelovedpuppy · 14m

I'm constantly acting out possible conversations in my head when I'm alone. I'm very funny and charming in these scenarios.

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ bag_of_grapes · 2h

When you read things to yourself, that's kinda an inner monologue.

✓ TOKEN_MARTIAN · 1h

When I read things it's as close as I ever get to hearing anything in my head, but I don't usually hear a voice when reading either because reading at speaking pace would be incredibly slow.

✓ rapparapta · 1h

You must read really quickly. For me, I typically read texts at the speed of speech (at least it feels that way) because my inner voice is actually reading it with/to me. But this voice doesn't normally apply to signs or short notifications.

Though, in saying this I've suddenly become less certain of the behavior and consistency of that voice.

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

➤ [More Comments \(2\)](#)

✓ Debzone · 3h

Sometimes my inner voice narrates in dialogue, like a novel

➤ [More Comments \(3\)](#)

✓ notthecrystalskull · 2h

What a great question, really has me thinking!

← ... | ↑ 5 ↓

✓ Hi_Im_zack · 3h

OP should've posted this in caps

← ... | ↑ 29 ↓

✓ shitusername_taken · 3h

I actually laughed out loud at that one.

Also put long pauses in between words.

← ... | ↑ 14 ↓

✓ thegur90 · 2h

You magnificent, terrible person

← ... | ↑ 7 ↓

✓ kenoswild13 · 1h

I'm deaf and yes I when I think up a sentence , I do see it in ASL. I also have a inner voice along with signing since I grew up speaking while signing.

← ... | ↑ 5 ↓

✓ mikey_lolz · 9m

Sorry if this is a bit rude to ask, but if you grew up speaking while signing, were you initially/currently partially deaf? Or did you just figure out how to make the sounds?

← ... | ↑ · ↓

✓ ferrrretsultan · 1h

I'm hard of hearing but was deaf deaf until I was about 9 years old. I mostly think in images and motion. Sometimes I do think in simple phrases or weirdly think in screams. My husband says that I do small yells when something very slightly upsetting happens I can hear a bit but don't notice myself doing it.

← ... | ↑ 5 ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ mechanicalgrip · 1h

181 comments and I only spotted one genuine answer to the question. Shame really, I was genuinely interested in this.

← ... | ↑ 8 ↓

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

✓ Vitaboy99 · 1h

I've always wondered how people teach someone English, when they have no basis of the language, like, how do you tell a deaf person what "hello" is in sign language is if they can't hear you?

← ... | ↑ 4 ↓

✓ evldmon · 1h

the same way you teach a baby what a horse is

← ... | ↑ 7 ↓

✓ The_Gentleman_Jas · 22m

That is based on concepts.

You say hello enough times to someone when you first meet up with them, it becomes an understanding that it is a greeting, a "tradition" when you first meet up with someone. Same with Goodbye.

More Comments (1)

ChrisBenj · 1h

Slightly off topic. I was born deaf due to an infection so when i was younger i communicated in a basic sign language with my family. I started hearing around 6 and got speech therapy. Anyway back to the topic at hand, a lot of the time my inner monologue can be imagery/written words and I generally talk to myself when I need to when I need discuss having a sort of conversation with my inner monologue.

bag_of_grapes · 2h

If your answer starts with “not deaf, but” go fuck yourself

punchmytoast · 1h

Go fuck yourself then.

JustFuckUp · 1h

Spanish or Chinese

levraisassychat · 26m

This is so fascinating because, 1) I never even thought of this...and 2) now that I think about it...most of my internal monologue isn't in words/sounds but in images/situational factors, which when you factor in that I am fully blind probably makes no sense...
unless I'm giving myself a pep talk or something or trying to practice a speech in which case it's actually words/sounds... But for the most part it's just observational/reflection of my conception of the world, so I guess it would be the same for deaf people, which really isn't so very different to how all of us think considering that of course environment shapes our thought processes.

TheDethMan001 · 6m

Morgan Freeman.

Pugmaster9001 · 4h

It's probably just abstract thinking. Inner monologue isn't at all necessary.

samesies · 59m

Word. I think that a lot of people think that they have the internal-monologue thing, when in reality their brain works more in concepts and relations.

More Comments (1)

TheMeltingSnowman72 · 3h

TIL deaf people don't use Reddit.

flexylol · 2h

Words/language only express thoughts/feelings etc. that we already have, into a more abstract layer. The words/language are not the thoughts. I don't think that deaf people think so differently.

794613825 · 56m

I'm not deaf, but my inner monologue isn't in words, or even pictures. The only way I can describe it is that it's in general, abstract concepts.

OrbitBrazil · 55m

follow up question:

im not deaf, but does that mean i have to have an inner monologue? most of the time i feel like im just on autopilot, even when it comes to thinking, so to speak. like ideas formulate and i acknowledge them but i dont necessarily articulate them into language as an inner monologue.

sezrawr · 39m

I think in pictures like in silent movies.

loaguru1 · 17m

I enjoyed this question and the comments immensely

dat_kramer · 17m

youre inner monologue is more like pure ideas

EstoyBienYTU · 16m

Language is a construct, people (deaf or not) think/experience first independent of it

Idamron · 11m

I'm an interpreter and Deaf people have told me they think in sign language and images.

gor134 · 3h

I think this same thing about animals. When we are hungry, we think in English "I am hungry", but if a cat or dog is hungry what language does it think in, ya get what I mean?

elcocodrilotito · 2h

But in order to say you're hungry you must feel hunger. Animals just feel hunger I guess

➤ [More Comments \(1\)](#)

ozzagahwihung · 2h

I'm not deaf and my inner monologue has never been audible words. It's just thoughts. I don't know why people say they hear their inner monologue.

fletchindubai · 2h

So how do you have arguments with people in your head?

➤ More Comments (1)

➤ More Comments (59)