



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

- Finn:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Finn and with me is Rob. Hi Rob.
- Rob:** Hi Finn.
- Finn:** Rob, I have a question for you. Are you good at reading maps?
- Rob:** I have to say, I am, I really enjoy reading maps and I understand them well.
- Finn:** That's interesting. And today we're talking about new research into the differences between men's and women's brains, and looking at some vocabulary about brains and thinking. Now, this research says that men are better at some things, like reading maps.
- Rob:** Yes, well, I'm good at reading maps and even my wife would agree. She makes me do all the map reading in the car.
- Finn:** But women are better at other things – like remembering faces. That's according to this research. And before we look at it, I have a question about this incredible and mysterious thing – the human brain. Rob, you're a **brainy** – that is, an intelligent guy, but how much does the average human brain weigh? Is it:
- a) 1.4 kg
 - b) 2.2 kg
 - c) 3.6 kg
- Rob:** I'll have to use my brain for this. I'm really **racking my brains** - that means to think very hard. Right, well, I think: c) 3.6 kg.
- Finn:** OK we'll find out if you're right later on. Now this research was by a team from the University of Pennsylvania in the US. They looked at the brains of nearly 1,000 men and women and found they are 'wired differently'.
- Rob:** Yes – so they are connected in different ways.
- Finn:** Let's listen to Dr Ruben Gur talking about the connections in each **hemisphere** - each half or each side - of the brain. What's the difference between men and women?

Dr Ruben Gur, University of Pennsylvania:

What we found was that in males, the stronger connections run within each hemisphere, within each half of the brain. In women the stronger connections are between the two sides of the brain.

- Finn:** So: men have better links – that's stronger connections - inside each half of the brain. So the connections inside the right hemisphere are good, and the connections inside the left hemisphere are good too.
- Rob:** But women have stronger connections *between* each side – the links are better going from one side to the other, from left to right. But what does that mean?
- Finn:** Well, they say these differences might explain why men are better at learning and performing a *single* task, like cycling or **navigating** – that's reading maps and finding your way around.
- Rob:** And it explains why women are often better at **multi-tasking** – that's doing several things at once.
- Finn:** The research also showed women are better at remembering words, faces and information about other people, and they also had longer **attention spans** – that means they could concentrate on a task for longer without becoming distracted. Rob? Rob? Are you there?
- Rob:** Ah sorry. I was miles away. You might be right Finn! But not everyone agrees with this research.
- Finn:** No, Professor Heidi Johansen-Berg from the University of Oxford says the connections inside the brain are not '**hard-wired**': in other words, that means they are not permanently fixed and they keep changing.
- Rob:** She said the brain is very complex – so you can't make **generalisations** about it – generalisations are statements that are often true but based on a limited amount of information.
- Finn:** But overall I think it's an interesting idea. We asked our audience on social media what they thought about the study.
- Rob:** Cremildo from Mozambique said he's a man and agrees with the survey, and he admires his mother who is able to do a lot of things by herself.
- Finn:** Pen Pae from Thailand says it depends on the individual – she's good at reading maps *and* multi-tasking – but don't ask her about language or driving.
- Rob:** And Hana Potki from Iran agrees – she said it took her five times to pass her driving test!
- Finn:** Now Rob, earlier I asked you if you knew how heavy the human brain is, on average:
- Rob:** And I said c) a heavy 3.6 kg.
- Finn:** Very very heavy brain and a lot heavier than the average human brain. The answer was in fact a) 1.4 kg. This compares with the average of 7 kg for whales and 1.4 for dolphins. Albert Einstein's brain was only 1.2 kg; that's

lower than average, so size isn't everything. Now, Rob, before we go – would you remind us of today's brain-related words?

Rob: Of course. We had:

brainy
rack my brains
hemisphere
navigating
multi-tasking
attention spans
hard-wired
generalisations

Finn: Great. Thank you Rob. And thanks everyone for listening. Join us again for more 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.

Rob: Bye.

Finn: Goodbye.

Vocabulary and definitions

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| brainy | (informal) clever, intelligent |
| rack my brains | think very hard to answer a question or solve a problem |
| hemisphere | half (of something round in shape) |
| to navigate | to find your way around a new place, often using a map |
| multi-tasking | doing several things at the same time |
| attention span | the maximum amount of time that you can concentrate on one thing |
| hard-wired | designed to work in a particular way which cannot be changed |
| generalisation | a statement that is often true but based on limited information |

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http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2014/03/140320_6min_male_female_brain

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