

1. Have you ever come across such memes? In your opinion, what do they imply?

2. Look at the following cartoons to collect more information regarding "British scientists" memes.

a. Write your own definition or description of the phenomenon. In modern Russian culture "British scientists" is a running joke used as an ironic reference to absurd news reports about scientific discoveries. It is described as referring to "researchers working on completely insane, idiotic, pseudo-scientific projects that have absolutely no practical value" – a form of mad science.

b. What could be the positive or negative consequences of the memes spreading widely online?

One could say there is no such thing as bad publicity and that drawing attention to science is always positive. It could be argued British scientists are not afraid to do and publish various kinds of eccentric research that sometimes gives "a chance to do something really wonderful" (Marc Abrahams, founder of Ig Nobel Prize).

On the other hand, the trend has been identified as a media virus which not only thrives in reality but also slightly modifies it: popular media are twisting the reports about scientific discoveries to make them clickbait. In the long run, it may discredit science, turn young people away from it and affect research funding. It could also be a form of strategic, political misinformation to discredit science in another country.



3. Some satirical sites list such achievements by British scientists.

Fill in the following statements, imagining the nature of the study or experiment.

- a. British scientists discovered that swearing **can help reduce pain.** (*Richard Stephens, of Keele University*)
- b. British scientists discovered that bumblebees could be taught to **play football.** (*Olli Loukola, of Queen Mary University*)
- c. British scientists discovered cheese **doesn't actually work better in mousetraps than any other food.**
- d. British scientists discovered that nine out of ten ladybirds **carry venereal disease fungus.**
- e. British scientists discovered that binge drinkers **tend to fall over more.**
- f. British scientists discovered that different colour football shirts **can affect performance.**
- g. British scientists discovered that ducks **have regional accents.**

4. Among the following findings, guess which are genuine discoveries by British scientists.

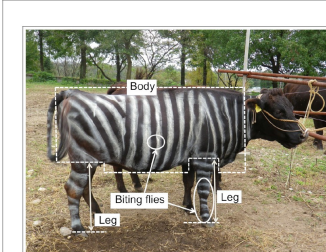
- a. The height of Cinderella's heels.
- b. Monkeys can work cassette-recorders better than Generation Z humans.
- c. Tea stops working if you microwave it.
- d. Tea tastes better when someone else makes it. (*Based on studies about perceived effort and taste bias*)
- e. Biscuits taste better when stolen from someone else's plate.
- f. Saying "sorry" lowers national blood pressure.
- g. People walk faster in cities than in small towns.
- h. Trains are delayed even when they arrive on time.
- i. Talking to yourself is linked to higher cognitive function.
- j. Weather complaints are a valid form of social bonding.
- k. Umbrellas only work when it's not raining.

5. Do you think about examples of the same kind you would like British scientists to investigate?

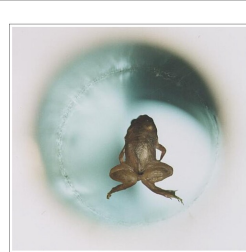
6. Besides "British scientists," do you know examples of science being similarly satirized?

- **The Golden Fleece Award** (1975-1988) was a tongue-in-cheek award given to public officials in The US for squandering public money. Its name is sardonically taken from the actual Order of the Golden Fleece, a prestigious chivalric award created in the late 15th century. It is a play on the transitive verb fleece, or charging excessively for goods or services. US Senator William Proxmire began to issue the Golden Fleece Award in 1975 in monthly press releases. In 1988 The Washington Post referred to the award as "the most successful public relations device in politics today." Pixar President Ed Catmull wrote of the "chilling effect on research" the Award exerted. He argued that when thousands of research projects are funded, some have measurable, positive impacts and others don't. It is not possible to predict what the results of the projects will be or whether they will have value. Failure in research is essential and fear of failure would distort the way researchers choose projects, which would ultimately impede progress.
- On the contrary, **the Ig Nobel Prize** is a satirical prize awarded annually since 1991 to promote public engagement with scientific research. Its aim is to "honor achievements that first make people laugh, and then make them think." The name is a pun on the Nobel Prize and the word "ignoble".

7. What could be the findings and assets of the following experiments?



The 2025 Ig Nobel Prize in biology was awarded to Tomoki Kojima and other researchers for demonstrating that painting cows with black and white stripes can prevent flies biting them without using more pesticide.



The 2000 Ig Nobel Prize in physics was awarded to Andre Geim and Michael Berry for the magnetic levitation of a live frog. The floating amphibians may lead the way to a cheap alternative to space-based science experiments. Geim was awarded an actual Nobel Prize in Physics in 2010.