

# THE ONE ABOUT EXPERTS OVERCLAIMING

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## THE STUDY

Many people tend to overestimate their knowledge, skills and abilities. If we believe ourselves to be experts in one area, are we more likely to exaggerate what we actually know? Researchers from Cornell University and Tulane University ran a series of studies to find out.

To give an example of how they tested this, they asked people to rate how familiar they were with a list of key terms. Unbeknownst to those being studied, some of the terms were real and some were fake. For example, in the banking section real terms included “fixed-rate mortgage” and “home equity” and false ones “pre-rated stocks” and “annualized credit”.



## THE MAIN FINDINGS

- 1 Over **90%** of the participants claimed to have at least **some knowledge** of some of the made-up phrases.
- 2 Those **who had done well** in an easy quiz, and thus felt more like an expert about a topic were subsequently **more likely to overclaim** their knowledge.

- 3 The more that the participants viewed themselves as an **expert**, the more likely they were to **overclaim their knowledge**.



- 4 This effect of experts overclaiming was found to be **true in a range of studies** and topics, which included science, geography, banking and literature.

- 5 Even if participants **had been warned** that some of the information they were about to read **was false**, many of them still overclaimed their knowledge about these topics.



Ref: Atir et al, 2015, *Psychological Science*