

## Improving Observation Skills, Page 3

Video: Focus Expert: Brian Scholl

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVRDLVFb8OM>

Duration: 1 minute, 41 seconds

BRIAN SCHOLL: The core of attention and focus is two seemingly paradoxical relationships. On the one hand, there's not enough information coming in through the eyes to infer what's going on out there in the world. As a result the brain has to be like a detective. And on the basis of this sketchy evidence it gets from the eyes, it has to infer what's going on in the world. At the same time there's far too much information out there in the world to focus on at any given second, and so every moment we have to be extremely highly selective and focus on only a very small amount of what's in front of us.

When you're driving in your car, for example, driving in your car and talking on your cellphone, you might make a special effort to check your blind spot more. But here's something you'll never do. You'll never make a special effort to see what's right in front of you when your eyes are open. Why? Because you're under the grip of an assumption. A false assumption. You're assuming that whatever's right in front of your eyes, as long as your eyes are open, you'll see. But it's not true. In any visual image, there's just far too much information for our puny brains to process. Inattention blindness is this phenomenon where an unexpected object, no matter how salient it is, that's right in front of us, if we're not expecting it, if we're- if our attention is otherwise engaged, we will completely fail to consciously perceive it.

Seeing is certainly the single most common activity that anyone engages in all day long. And we completely take it for granted. We have completely mistaken assumptions about how perception works. And so learning a bit about some of these phenomena can really make a difference.