
Hi! I'm Ben Bergen, a Professor of Cognitive Science at UC San Diego. I study language, and my most recent book What the F is about the science of swearing. Profanity is special—it's processed differently in the brain and it triggers different psychological reactions from neutral language. So there's a lot that it can uniquely reveal. But for the most part, there's been very little research on it because of persistent taboos. Even tenured professors can lose their jobs for using the wrong words in lecture. So for the duration of its history, the science of language has mostly been the science of anodyne words. It's like studying biology but ignoring reproduction because it makes you uncomfortable.

I invite you to join me in taking some corrective measures. I'll be online today at 1pm EDT to answer your questions. Feel free to ask me about the neuroscience, psychology, linguistics, sociology, or history of taboo words and gestures. Consider yourself trigger-warned.
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