

BBC Learning English
Words in the News
*Environment shapes ants'
'personality'*
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Ant colonies have their own personalities, which are shaped by the environment, a US study suggests. Colonies of several hundred ants show differences in the way they behave, just like individual people do. The study is published in the journal 'Proceedings of the Royal Society B'. The BBC's Jonathan Webb reports.

According to **ecologists**, having a personality means showing a **consistent** pattern of behaviour over time. Researchers from the University of Arizona studied colonies of rock ants across the western US, both by following them **in the wild** and by taking whole colonies back to the lab.

They found that certain risky behaviours, like **foraging** widely for food and responding aggressively to a threat, went together, and colonies further north **tended** to take more of these risks. The study suggests those more **adventurous** personalities could be an adaptation to the limited window of activity left by the long, snowy northern winter.

Vocabulary and definitions

ecologists	scientists who study organisms and their relationship with where they live
consistent	always the same
in the wild	in the place in nature where they live
foraging	looking for food
tended	were inclined to
adventurous	inclined to be bold and take risks

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