

Blind Spot

Can you save the mouse from the cat?



Hold the sheet with the cat with outstretched arms, so that the black dot is on the right hand side.

Close your right eye and fix your left eye on this dot.

Now slowly bring the sheet closer, while still keeping your eye fixed on the dot.

Did you notice anything?

Your retina consists of several million light-sensitive cells which send signals to the brain. The nerves from these cells and the necessary blood vessels do not lie behind the retina but, surprisingly, in front of it! In order to get to the brain, they bundle together at a spot in the retina from where they leave as the “optic nerve”. At this spot there are no light-sensitive cells, so we have a blind spot there. Normally we are unaware of this: the brain just fills in the picture, so to speak, at this spot. It does this properly, depending on the general pattern of things that we happen to be observing. If there should be something particular at the blind spot, however, we don’t see it.

Turn the sheet round so that the dot is on the left and repeat the experiment with your right eye. Try out the other sheets.