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[IAN CONGER, Ouija Board Applicant](#)

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16th August 2005, 10:56 AM

#1

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
 Location: South Florida
 Posts: 1,443

IAN CONGER, Ouija Board Applicant

This claim arrived on August 10, 2005...the first in many weeks.

What I am proposing to demonstrate is neither a "power" nor an "ability", but it is instead a phenomenon. I say this because this process is seemingly independent of any person or persons. I have my own beliefs as to the mechanics of the phenomenon, but as you state in rule #2...

We have no interest in theories or explanations...

Therefore, I will forgo any explanations of the mechanics of this phenomenon.

The phenomenon I am speaking of is, strictly speaking, a transfer of information from one place to another via no normal mode of communication transfer.

PROPOSED EXPERIMENTAL PROTOCOL

The proposed protocol is to have 4 people sitting in a room around a table with a Ouija Board. There should be at least one video camera set up nearby with a timestamp in the recording, trained on the participants around the table, and the Ouija Board on the table. These 4 people are to wait at the table with two fingers from each hand on the "planchette" of the Ouija Board.

While they wait, a 5th person in the experiment leaves the room, followed by a person with another video camera, also with a timestamp in the recording synchronized with the camera in the room. Those two people will go to either another room or another building. Once they reach their destination there will be a sealed box. Inside there will be a dictionary that has been cut up into individual words (app. 250,000). The 5th person in the remote location from the 4 persons with hands on the Ouija Board will then break the seal on the box of words, and then draw out 3 words at random, without looking in the direction of the box, or with eyes covered, or both. The 5th person will then look at the 3 words, just reading them to himself, not aloud, and then set the 3 words down face up in front of the box. All this is to be filmed by the person with the video camera. Once this is accomplished, the 5th person is done. He is to sit in that room and wait for someone from the other room to come and get him after the experiment is over. He will then return to the other room with the 3 words to compare to the words obtained there.

Meanwhile, back in the room with the 4 experimenters and the Ouija Board, the 3 words should be spelled out on the Ouija Board. The odds are approximately 250,000 to 1 for one word, 62,500,000,000 to 1 for two words in a row, and 15,625,000,000,000,000 to 1 for three in a row. I think this

may be considered self-evident results.

For the sake of following the rules, a positive result will be obtained if the Ouija Board can spell out two of the three words drawn out of the box by the 5th experimenter.

A result will be deemed negative if the Ouija Board can only spell out one word, or none of the words at all within a 5 minute timeframe from the moment the 5th experimenter leaves the room with the other experimenters in it.

Please feel free to add any and all safeguards against fraud and trickery you see fit.

IAN CONGER

(Edited to correct name.)

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



16th August 2005, 11:11 AM

#2

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Hi again Kramer,

Just dropping a line to see if my app has arrived yet. BTW, since last week, I've been reading through the "applicant threads" on the JREF website. I had no idea!!! This thing really draws em out of the woodwork! In another year or 2 there should be enough material there for an amusing little book.

Hope all is well,

Ian

=====

Hello Ian,

YES, your application arrived and it has been accepted. Regarding your protocol, however, it seems not only too complicated, but it also seems to be stacked rather astronomically in the favor of the JREF. Shall we say 100 words instead of the entire dictionary? Shall we say 100 five-letter words, thusly further reducing the possibilities? And shall we say that these 100 words shall be printed on individual cards, rather than cut out of a dictionary? This would not only simplify matters, but it would also make the odds a bit more fair.

-Kramer, JREF

=====

Sounds good. I wasn't really relishing the idea of having to cut up an entire dictionary. I have some Avery Clean Edge business card stock that should suffice. Now that the protocol has been settled on, I'll have to get the equipment & volunteers together. Give me a few weeks & I'll be ready to do this.

Thanx for the good news,

Ian

=====

I told Ian to contact OREGONIANS FOR RATIONALITY to arrange for a test, and he did so quickly...

Hi Kramer,

Just dropping a note to let you know I'll be fwding the correspondences between myself and Ted Clay. He is the representative of "Oregonians for Rationality", that lives in Ashland, OR.

Ian

=====

Some correspondence between Ted Clay (in italics) and the applicant...

Topic #1: Would you consider a method where the words are on a printed list with sequential numbers, and you use a random number to select from the list? When the word is picked, it is then written on a card. Then the list can be as long as you like with no additional cost or labor. Random numbers can be easily obtained in ways that everyone would agree are cheat-proof.

Hi Ted,

If you're willing to generate & print out the words. I have no concern about what method you use to pick the words to include, or exclude. All I ask is that no one from my group have any knowledge of what the words are, and that you completely SEAL the box that you put them in.

Topic #2. Do you think some words are too unemotional, such as "which" ? Do you think the list should be restricted to nouns and verbs? The list I have access to tells what category the word is in, so this would not be difficult.

I have no concern as to the emotionality of the words, nor do I care if they are nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, personal pronouns in the past perfect tense, or otherwise. Personally if I were in your shoes, I think I'd just draw from a list randomly & use that. That way there are no predictable groupings possible.

Topic #3. In your protocol you need to define whether spelling errors get "partial credit" . I think not, since you then open a whole can of worms about letter frequency, and anyone with knowledge in that area could create a score that would appear to be better than chance.

In some instances, I'd say yes, & in some I'd say no. I'm going to defer this one to Kramer & let him call this shot. Let's just keep in mind that this is just the preliminary experiment. If I pass this phase of the experiment it means nothing, except that I get to take another experiment... in which JREF will, I'm sure, break out the 4" thick lead-plated room to do the experiment in, use "Big Blue" to randomly select a word list from every word in every language ever spoken by mankind, and have 10,000 cameras mounted that can capture infra-red, ultra-violet, coronal mass ejections, and even visible light. I really think that if you use your own discretion & generate whatever word list you see fit, that should be good enough for this preliminary experiment.

Thanx again for your help,

Ian

=====

Given the "can of worms" regarding misspelled words, I recommend that you go for an experimental design in which this is not an issue. Consider this: You do away with words entirely, and just use single letters as the targets. You have a series of 1-letter trails. Each trial has a 1-in-26 chance of success. Decide ahead of time how many trials you want to do. Here are the advantages: 1. No word list hence no issues of secrecy, locked boxes, etc. 2. Easy to construct a clearly random way of selecting one of 26 letters. Your thoughts?

No. I don't like it personally. The fact of the matter is that I and the James

Randi Educational Foundation have reached an agreed upon protocol. You were just contacted to be their "independent observer" of the experiment which they and I have already agreed upon, not as a co-designer of the experiment. That experimental protocol to which we have agreed on is the 100 words in a sealed box.

I mean no disrespect Ted, but there appear to be some crossed wires here as to your role in this project. Please contact Kramer at the JREF to clarify any questions you may have.
kramer@randi.org

For the third time now, I will ask if you will consider printing the cards out as I suggested. You have not even commented on this suggestion as of yet. If you are not interested in this avenue of assuring I do not try to fool you, please address this issue. I personally believe this is the best course to take.

Thanx again,

Ian

=====

Ian, you are mistaken in your assumption regarding the final/formal test. We do not change the parameters of the agreed-upon protocol, except that your level of success must be higher. There will be no lead-lined rooms or other sundries added to the actual test protocol. This is why we take such extraordinary care when negotiating the protocol. We cannot alter it following the preliminary test. If we miss something and you manage to trick us and pass the test as a result, well, you still pass. We don't play those kinds of tricks on applicants. The only thing that changes at the final test (and by the way, there has never BEEN a final/formal test) is the rate of success you will be required to demonstrate.

-Kramer

=====

I understood that this was the case. I was just trying to make a point to Ted.

-Ian

=====

Hello Fellas,

Although Ian is correct that we have indeed agreed upon a basic protocol for the test which is very close to his initial proposal included with the application, the JREF does consider the expertise of the JREF associate as regards the test procedure. That said, however, Randi would like to stick with the words, as opposed to single letters. The applicant should be allowed to demonstrate his claim in the manner most comfortable to him, SO LONG AS THAT PROTOCOL IS ACCEPTABLE. I must say that Ted does suggest a protocol that greatly increases Ian's chance of success, but the Ouija Board supporters do insist that the device spells out words, so let's please proceed as per Ian's proposal, along with the necessary tweaks regarding which words are to be included in the list, etc.

Additionally, as we previously stated, the agreed-upon words are to be printed out individually on seperate pieces of paper by the JREF associate, not to be seen or handled in any way by the applicant prior to testing. I hope this settles any discrepancies that may have arisen, and that the test date and location will soon be determined.

-Kramer, JREF

=====

Now lets hold up on the date. I still need to get 2 more volunteers to participate. It shouldn't take more than 2 to 3 weeks.

Ian

=====

OK. I've cc'd TED so he's aware of this. It doesn't present a problem for us.

Ted, let me know you're with us on this, and that all is well.

-Kramer, JREF

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



16th August 2005, 12:53 PM

#3

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

A Letter from Ted Clay

Ian and Kramer,

First question: I need to see the experimental protocol as currently written, and would like to review it and possibly suggest changes. Those changes would be of a procedural nature, and I hear both of you with regard to the core task, which is spelling whole 5-letter words exactly correctly.

Second question: The easiest way for me to prepare 100 cards with words on them is to print them on thick paper stock and cut them apart with a paper-cutter. I have done this. The size of each card comes out as 1/2 inch high by 1 inch long with 18-point bold font for the writing. Get out your ruler and draw this. I assume this size is adequate for reaching into a container and selecting a card, but please let me know if it is not.

Third question: the protocol should explicitly state what types of words should not be allowed on the list. Let's be clear on these issues so that the trial does not contain any words that could be interpreted as putting the Ouija Board effort at a disadvantage. Please both of you address this question.

Here is a summary of the rules I propose. Think about each of these points and add any you wish to add.

The words should be "common" American English words that any person would know.

No words that have a different American vs British spelling.

Nouns, verbs and adjectives only.

No words which have multiple spellings for the same sound.

Pluralized 4-letter nouns and 4-letter verbs with "s" are allowed.

Best regards, Ted Clay

=====

Hello Ted,

If you check this thread...

<http://forums.randi.org/showthread.php?s=&threadid=61127>

...you will see the initial claim as Ian originally presented it.

I have also just asked Ian to write up a revised protocol that reflects the recent changes, as per your request.

Regarding your second question and your suggestion as to how to prepare the word-cards, we're fine with that.

Regarding your third question and subsequent "summary of rules", excellent. Your suggestions are acceptable.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



17th August 2005, 07:23 AM

#4

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Hi Ted,

I'm glad you got ahold of Kramer. He seems to be a very level-headed guy.

First point.

I'll rewrite the agreed upon protocol as it stands tonight. If I miss anything that we've covered, please let me know.

Second point.

I just gave it a test run, and it seemed a little small to me. How about we go with a Times New Roman font, all caps, bold, 36 point, in 1" x 2" slips of paper. It really looked better in my opinion. Let me know how much paper I owe you.

Third point.

Sounds good to me. The homonyms were the sticking point I had with spelling. You have covered that point well. Thanx.

I still need to get 2 more volunteers for the experiment. So take your time finding a locale. I'd guesstimate it'll take me 2-3 weeks to get 2 more and get prepared, including coordinating schedules & the like.

Talk to you soon,

Ian

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



17th August 2005, 07:59 AM

#5

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

From Ted Clay, Investigator

Ian and Kramer,

Protocol issue: Are the 3 words drawn from the box considered to be ordered? In other words, is there a first, second and third word, which correspond to the first, second and third Ouija Board words? If the first Ouija Board word agrees with the second or third word drawn from the box, is that considered a success? I think that is an issue for Kramer to address. Personally, I think it should be considered a success, because getting 2 out of 3 such successes by chance is still highly improbable, and most people who believe in the validity of the Ouija phenomenon would consider it a success. Another problem would be that if words must be guessed* in the correct order, the protocol becomes more complicated, with specific time intervals for guessing* the first, second and third words.

Cards: 1x2 inches fits in 8.5x11 as 4 by 11 or 44 words per page. So 3 pages would do it. Not a problem.

Timing issues: I plan to be out of town during the 2nd half of September. This would have to happen before or after that.

- Ted

* (Using the word "guess" to refer to the Ouija Board words reveals my bias. Any suggestion for a neutral word is welcome).

=====

Hello Ian and Ted,

No, it must be a direct hit. If the first word is "car", and Ian gets "car" as the 3rd word, that is NOT a correct answer. Sorry.

Randi rejects the idea of using a "pool" of targets. The person who randomly pulls the words from the box must pick one of the words, and then, the people at the Ouija Board must "receive" THAT WORD correctly. Then, the 2nd word, then the 3rd word. It must be done seperately, and each guess can have 5 or even 10 minutes, as needed. The applicant can actually have all the time he wants, really.

I trust that the two of you can work out the details to mutual satisfaction.

-Kramer, JREF

p.s. I would suggest that we replace the word "guess" with the word "attempt".

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



23rd August 2005, 11:49 AM

#6

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

From Ted, to Ian

Ian,

In the light of this clarification, I suggest that the protocol be modified as follows:

Two watches will be synchronized, and one will remain at the "Ouija Board location", and the other will go with the "sender" to the "Word Box location". Three "trial times" will be agreed upon and two identical copies written down, one for each location. Each trial will consist of the following sequence: 1) at ____ seconds before the trial time, the sender will pick a single word card from the Word Box and place it in front of him/her for easy viewing, 2) at the trial time, the Ouija Board team will begin spelling out a word, 3) the "sender" will look at the printed word card continuously for ____ minutes, which should be time enough for the Ouija Board team to complete a word, 4) at the end of that period, the selected word card will be scotch-taped on a record-sheet next to the number "1", "2", or "3" denoting the trial sequence.

Question: How will the Ouija Board team record the word they generate? The protocol must state that the team writes down the "attempt" clearly in capital letters. They could do this one letter at a time, or at the end, when the full word had been generated. After the full word is recorded, all Ouija Board team members will look at it and approve its correctness.

I know that the whole sequence will be video-taped, but this serves as a backup reference. -- Ted

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



23rd August 2005, 11:50 AM

#7

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

from Kramer to Ian & Ted

Hello Ian,

Sorry for the delay in my response but I was in Roatan all week, until today, sadly.

Your suggestions seem fine to me (and I hope that Ian will agree to them, but I would add one more note to the protocol that I believe has been neglected:

The "sender" must be an independent 3rd party, assigned by the investigator or chosen randomly. The persons at the Ouija Board can be assigned by Ian, but the

person who pulls the words from the sealed box must have no interest, bias, or knowledge of the details of the test.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



23rd August 2005, 11:54 AM

#8

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

From Ian, to Ted

Ted, first of all, your use of the word "guess" not only reveals your bias, but it is overtly disrespectful. I'll stop right there with it, and I'll strongly suggest that we agree to act in a manner of mutual respect for the remainder of this experiment.

1. As for the order of the words, I agree with you Ted.
2. Thanx for the 3 pages, I owe you a cup of coffee at the coffee house of your choice.
3. Let's shoot for sometime in October for this.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



23rd August 2005, 11:55 AM

#9

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

From Ian, in reply to revisions...

Hi guys,

Okay, put in that manner, I agree. It would reduce the odds to 32.3 - 1 for 1, 1566 - 1 for 2, and 152,000 - 1 for 3.

If I may go off on a tangent for a second.... those would be the odds IF the words were ALL KNOWN to me. Since none of the words will be known to me, and the only constraints are those we've already discussed, like 5 letter words, no homonyms, and the like, what are the actual odds? Since guessing isn't part of the experiment, they aren't important except that we rule out chance. But, the fact that the words are unknown does make the odds astronomical, and I'm just curious as to what they actually are. If you have a spare moment & feel like crunching em out Ted it'd be interesting. If not, no matter.

PS, Kramer.... Please tell Randi that I've been a big fan of his since I saw Alice Cooper's "From the Inside" tour in 1979. It was the best show I've ever seen. In case you didn't know Randi had a big part in designing that stage show.

-Ian

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



23rd August 2005, 12:04 PM

#10

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

From Ted, to Ian

Ian,

What counts here is that the protocol should clearly state what the criteria is for winning the prize, which is correctly generating 2 out of 3 5-letter words. As long as you and JREF agree on the protocol, you don't have to agree on the probability of success.

That said, the probability of that success is very complex, and as you say depends on how large you believe the "universe" is, of words which could be in the box.

Knowing what words are in the box shrinks that universe to size 100. Not knowing what words are in the box expands that universe to however large you believe the list of words is which MIGHT be in the box. It depends entirely on what you think that number is. Your guess is as good as mine. Whatever number you pick, call it N, the probability of getting 1 out of 3 correct is approximately 3/N.

However, if you can do what you agree to do, which is get 2 out of 3 words, your bragging rights will be in the form of a \$1,000,000 check.

If you can't do that, but instead find that you can consistently get 1 out of 3 words right, rather than stop there, you might have the basis of a JREF challenge, but under a different protocol. If you wish to explore your team's ability to get 1 out of 3 words correct, I would be willing stick around to assist with further trials after the "official" set of 3 trials.

-Ted

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



24th August 2005, 01:06 PM

#11

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

From Ian

Hi Ted and Kramer,

I hope you both had a nice weekend. I had about the nicest, but most unrelaxing weekend I've had in years. I'm just about caught up now & will send the updated protocol in a few minutes.

PS. In the forum, some guys pointed out the possibility of "palming" words. I'd like to suggest that the "picker" A. wear short sleeves, and B. use a 1/4" diameter wooden dowel with a length of 3 ft with some double-sided scotch tape on one end to poke down in the box of words & pull the words out with, so no hands ever enter the box.

What do you 2 think? If you think it's needed, I'll put it in.

Ian

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



25th August 2005, 09:36 AM

#12

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Ian's REVISED Protocol

What I am proposing to demonstrate is neither a "power" nor an "ability", but it is instead a phenomenon. I say this because this process is seemingly independent of any person or persons. I have my own beliefs as to the mechanics of the phenomenon, but as you state in rule 2.

"We have no interest in theories or explanations of how the claimed powers might work; if you provide us with such material, it will be ignored and discarded."

Therefore, I will forego any explanations of the mechanics of this phenomenon.

The phenomenon I am speaking of is, strictly speaking, a transfer of information from one place to another via no normal mode of information transfer.

Proposed Experimental Protocol

The proposed protocol is to have 4 people in a room sitting around a table with a Ouija board. There should be atleast one video camera setup nearby with a timestamp in the recording, trained on the participants around the

table, and the Ouija board on the table. These 4 people are to wait at the table with 2 fingers from each hand on the "planchette" of the Ouija board. The Independent observer will start two stop watches simultaneously. He will set one down with the group staying in this room, and will take the other stopwatch with him.

While they wait, a 5th person in the experiment leaves the room, followed by an independent observer with another video camera; also with a timestamp in the recording synchronized with the camera in the room. Those 2 people will go to either another room, or another building. Once they reach their destination there will be a sealed box prepared by the independent observer. Inside there will be 100 five-letter words, each printed on a card one inch high and two inches wide. These words will be chosen from a pool of all five-letter words that fit the following criteria:

The words should be "common" American English words that any person would know.

No words that have a different American vs British spelling.

Nouns, verbs and adjectives only.

No words which have multiple spellings for the same sound, (homonyms).

Pluralized 4-letter nouns and 4-letter verbs with "es" are allowed.

The 100 words are to be chosen from the available word-group-pool by whatever method the independent observer and the JREF agree to. No one from the Ouija team is to have any knowledge of what method was used to choose the words.

At a time interval agreed upon before the experiment, (enough time for the 5th person and the observer to get to the remote location), the 5th person in the remote location from the 4 people with hands on the Ouija board will then break the seal on the box of words and follow the format stated below for all three trials.

Each trial will consist of the following sequence: 1) at 30 seconds before the trial time, the 5th person will draw out one word at random, with out looking in the direction of the box, a single word card from the Word Box and place it in front of him/her for easy viewing, 2) at the trial time, the Ouija Board team will begin spelling out a word, 3) the 5th person will look at the printed word card continuously for 30 seconds, reading the word to him/herself, not aloud, which should be time enough for the Ouija Board team to complete a word, 4) at the end of that period, the selected word card will be scotch-taped on a record-sheet next to the number "1", "2" or "3" denoting the trial sequence. All this is to be filmed by the person with the video camera. Once this has been accomplished the experiment is over. (S)he will then return to the other room with the 3 words to compare to the words obtained there.

Meanwhile, back in the room with the 4 experimenters and the Ouija board, the 3 words should be spelled out on the Ouija board. As the words are spelled out, one of the 4 experimenters will write out the words on a piece of paper to compare with the 3 drawn from the box. The odds are approx 99 to 1 for 1 word, 9700 to 1 for 2 words in a row, and 941,000 to 1 for 3 in a row.... if all 100 words were known to us, since they are not, nor is the pool size, the odds are unknown. I think this may be considered self-evident results.

For the sake of following the rules, a positive result will be obtained if the Ouija board can spell out 2 of the 3 words drawn out of the box by the 5th experimenter.

A result will be deemed negative if the Ouija board can only spell out one word, or none of the words at all within the agreed upon timeframe from the moment the 5th experimenter leaves the room with the other experimenters in it.

Please feel free to add ANY & ALL safeguards against fraud & trickery you see fit.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



25th August 2005, 09:40 AM

#13

KRAMER
challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

From Ian To Kramer

Hi Kramer,

As for your suggestion of the "5th person" (they are NOT a "sender") being appointed by the independent observer. Given the design of the protocol as it stands, I'm not sure I follow the rationale in regards to the need for this.

-Ian

=====

Hello Ian,

Our rationale is that this provision would further insure against any possibility of cheating. Please understand that we are NOT accusing you of cheating. We are simply putting all safeguards in place, and I do believe that your most recent protocol revision ends with the words, "Please feel free to add ANY & ALL safeguards against fraud & trickery you see fit."

Does it not?

Edited by tim: Post edited to add "against" between "insure" and "any" in the first sentence.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



29th August 2005, 08:12 AM

#14

KRAMER
challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

From Ted, to IAN & Kramer

Ian and Kramer,

I suggest that you incorporate a change in the protocol to simplify the process of selecting the words. We would use 100 cards with words printed on them, as before, but use a different method of selecting them. The procedure I recommend is as follows:

The 100 word cards would be arranged face down in slots in a 10-by-10 grid. The 10 rows of the grid would be associated with the numbers 0 through 9, as would the 10 columns. The random selection of a single card would be done by rolling two 10-sided dice. Two 10-sided dice would be sealed in two separate clear-plastic containers, one marked "row", the other marked "column". The random selection would be done by shaking the containers with the dice, and letting the dice come to rest. The top numbers would determine the row and column of the word-card to be selected. The 100-card grid would remain sealed in the possession of the independent observer until the time of the experiment. The person who pulls the card from the grid would be an independent observer, not the Sender. After a card is selected from the grid, it would not be replaced. If the dice select an empty space in the grid, they would be rolled again.

The advantage of this method is that it is completely transparent that the selection was done in a "hands-off" manner, with no possible cheating. There is no need for a stick with scotch tape on the end, reaching into the box, etc. --- Ted

=====

I have no problem with this modification of the protocol.

-Kramer, JREF

=====
Sounds fair to me Ted.

-I an

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



30th August 2005, 09:15 AM

#15

KRAMER
challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

From Ian

Hi Kramer,

Just had a slight setback. One of the volunteers backed out. She said that she had a frightening experience with one once & doesn't want to repeat it in spite of wanting to help me on this project. Fear not, I'll get another volunteer soon.

-I an

=====

Hello Ian,

No problem. We'll move forward when you're ready.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



12th September 2005, 10:23 AM

#16

KRAMER
challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

A test forthcoming?

After a handful of emails in which Ian and Ted negotiated an affordable test location, we may be approaching a test date.

Ian,

Can we target October 5 for the Ouija board exam?

Ted

=====

Hi Ted,

I hope so. Our group is getting together for its first meeting this week. Given we can get a willing 6th volunteer at this meeting I see no reason why we can't. However, let's wait & see. I'll keep you posted.

Ian

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



12th September 2005, 10:34 AM

#17

KRAMER
challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004

The Test Protocol, Yet to be Approved by Randi

Ouija Board Exam Protocol

Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Introduction:

The James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF) offers a \$1 million prize to anyone who can demonstrate a paranormal phenomenon in a scientifically valid controlled experiment. To win the prize, the experiment must be conducted at the JREF location in Florida. This document explains the protocol of an experiment to be conducted in Grants Pass, Oregon, to test the efficacy of the Ouija Board, as a screening trial agreed to by JREF and by the Applicant, Ian Congers.

Summary

A team with an Ouija Board will try to spell out 5-letter words that are selected randomly at a remote location. The exam will be declared a success if the team spells out two out of three of the target words with no spelling errors.

People and Roles

- The Referee will supervise the exam and the random selection of words. Ted Clay will be the referee.
- The Ouija Board Team will consist of 4 to 6 people.
- The Applicant, Ian Congers, will be a member of the Ouija Board Team.
- The Sender will look at and think about the randomly selected words. The Sender will be chosen by the Referee, and must be a person not known to the Applicant or any member of the Ouija Board Team. The Sender may not be a skeptic, and must believe in the possibility that the Ouija Board Team can receive information by no known physical means.
- Two Video Recorders with video cameras.
- Other witnesses.

Locations:

The Ouija Board Team and the Sender must be in separate locations when the attempt to spell the words is taking place. There must be no method of sound transmission between the two locations. For the Grants Pass exam, the two locations will be two rooms in the same motel, paid for by the Applicant. The Referee will select the rooms. The two rooms will be referred to as "the Ouija Board room" and "the Sender room." The Referee will examine the rooms prior to the trial to insure that normal sound does not transmit from one room to the other.

Materials:

- Ouija Board and planchette, (Applicant)
- Ouija Board Record Sheet (Referee)
- Sender Record Sheet (Referee)
- Scotch tape (Referee)
- Two 10-sided dice in clear plastic boxes, one labeled "Row" , one labeled "Column" (Referee)
- Two digital video cameras and unused tapes (Referee)
- Two stop-watches with displays that can be easily read or recorded by the video cameras. (Applicant)
- A sealed container with target words on cards. (Referee)

Sequence of Events:

1. Prior to start of the trial the Referee will prepare a list of words, according to the following rules:
 - Each word will consist of five letters.
 - The words should be "common" American English words that any person would know.
 - No words that have a different American versus British spelling.
 - Nouns, verbs and adjectives only.
 - No words which have multiple spellings for the same sound, (homonyms).
 - Pluralized 4-letter nouns and 4-letter verbs with "es" are allowed.

The Referee will randomly select 100 of these words, and print them on cards. These cards will then be arranged face down in a grid with 10 rows and 10 columns. The cards grid will be kept secure by the Referee prior to and throughout the examination.

2. Preparation of watches and video cameras. The Applicant will prepare two synchronized watches with the correct time. The two video cameras will be set to record the time of day. The internal clocks in the video cameras will be synchronized with the correct time. The two Video Recorders will have digital video cameras loaded with blank tapes capable of recording 60 minutes.

3. Initial Gathering. The Ouija Board Team, the Sender, the Referee, and the two Video Recorders will gather at the Ouija Board room. The Referee will tell the Applicant how long it takes to walk from the Ouija Board room to the Sender room. The Applicant will decide when the three trials will take place, and will write those "start times" on each of the two Record Sheets. The two Video Recorders will start recording, and not stop or pause the recording until the exam is completed. The two Video Recorders will both record the times shown on both stop watches.

4. The Sender, the Referee and one of the two Video Recorders will walk from the Ouija Board room to the Sender room and get comfortable sitting at a table.

For each of the trial times written on the Record Sheet, the steps 5 through 9 should take place:

5. At 1 minute before the "start time", the Sender will shake the "Row" 10-sided die box and write down the result in the "Row" box on the Record Sheet, then do the same with the "Column" die box. The Referee will then open up the grid containing the word cards, and pull out the word-card located at the specified row and column. The Sender will watch this action to verify that the correct card was pulled. The card will be placed face up on the table.

6. At the "trial time", the Sender will focus his/her eyes and thoughts on the selected word. The Video Recorder should keep the card in view. No one present will read the word aloud.

7. At 4 minutes after the "trial time", the Sender may stop looking at the target word. Four minutes is a time agreed by the Applicant to be sufficient for the Ouija Board team to spell out a five-letter word. [Ian, OK?]

8. The Sender will scotch-tape the target word-card face up on the Record Sheet next to the written trial time. The Sender will be the sole person in possession of the Sender Record Sheet until Step 10 below.

9. Meanwhile in the Ouija Board room, at the "trial time" the Ouija Board Team will move the planchette to spell out five letters. After each letter, or at the end of each word, someone from the Ouija Board team will write the five letters in the spaces on the Ouija Board Record Sheet. After the letters are written down, all members of the Ouija Board team will look at the Record Sheet to confirm that it is correct. All letters must be clearly written in capitals in ink.

After repeating the above steps...

9. The Referee, followed by the Sender carrying the Sender Record Sheet, followed by the Video Recorder, will walk back into the Ouija Board room.

10. In the Ouija Board Room, the Ouija Board Team will immediately hand the Referee the Ouija Board Record Sheet. Next, the Sender will hand the Sender Record Sheet to the Referee. The Referee will place the two sheets next to each other on a table, and both video cameras will record the results.

Conclusion:

The applicant will be considered to have successfully demonstrated a paranormal phenomenon if for two out of three words, the letters recorded on the Ouija Board Record Sheet exactly match those on the preprinted cards taped to the Sender Record Sheet in the corresponding locations.

Miscellaneous Details:

The Video Recorders must be hand-held, not on tripods.

KRAMER,

JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



12th September 2005, 10:50 AM

#18

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Comments from the JREF

Hello Gentlemen,

It seems that this protocol is filled with unnecessary details, but we will agree to all except the ones that stand out most conspicuously, as follows.

First of all, we must reject the applicant's demand that the "sender" must believe in the possibility that Ouija Boards work. We cannot control or stipulate the attitudes or beliefs of anyone involved in the test. Also, this stipulation creates the perfect "escape portal" for the applicant, who will surely state (upon failing to demonstrate the claim) that the sender "did not believe". The phenomenon claimed, if authentic, should be verifiable regardless of the "belief" of the participants. We cannot allow any such flaw in the test design, and hence, this demand is rejected.

Also, in the "introduction", the applicant seems to think that he can dictate the location of the final test. This is not the case, and we will not be dictated to in this regard. Please remove this from the protocol document, which should contain ONLY the details of the actual JREF Challenge Preliminary Test, without reference to the final test.

We are unaware of anything called a "screening trial", so please replace that term with the words "preliminary test".

Not mentioned in this protocol is the fact that the entire target word pool must be known to both parties before the words are actually chosen.

In conclusion, please explain the need for the video cameras to be "hand-held, not on tripods". Not that we would argue about this, as it seems to make no valid difference in the test, but we sure are curious about why this should be required.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



14th September 2005, 11:13 AM

#19

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

from Ian

Hi Guys,

First of all..... Kramer. I became aware of these emails when I pulled up the JREF site and looked at this thread. There is no reference as to the origination of Ted's email to you. So when it is read, and then the following post is read, which is your reply to Ted, it appears that you are arguing with yourself. I had to check my other email acct that I'm only using for this event before I was able to sort out who was saying what..... and I still haven't figured out the why of it.

Anyway, I have a horse trailer to work on now. I'll go over it and send both of you a reply either this evening or tomorrow morning.

-- Ian

=====

Sorry for the confusion, Ted. Let me know if you need clarification on anything.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



 [NOMINATE](#)  [LINK](#)  [QUOTE](#) 

14th September 2005, 11:48 AM

#20

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Final Protocol Details from TED

Ian and Kramer,

In talking with Ian, and getting email from Kramer, Iâ€™ve identified some issues which the two of you need to agree upon. Here they are:

1. Who picks the Sender? Does the Applicant pick the Sender, or does the Referee pick the Sender? Ian believes that the Sender is an integral part of the Ouija Board team. Kramer may believe that the Sender is selected by the Referee, perhaps because that is what I (Ted) believed when writing the protocol document.
2. Ian does not want to know the list of words from which the 100 words are randomly selected and written on cards. Can Kramer permit this list to be kept private?
3. Ian prefers that the Referee be the only person to handle the Sender Record Sheet, and that a skeptical observer remain in the Ouija Board room. I (Ted) have no problem with these items.

Good luck, Ted

=====

Hello Ted - Hello Ian -

OK. Ian can chose the sender, but rest assured that Randi will confer with Ted prior to the test in order to be sure that Ted knows how best to be certain that no form of deception is taking place.

*If Ian doesn't want to know the list of words, that's fine. However, we must all agree that the word must be **PRECISE**, which means that there can be no argument if the chosen work is **BIKE** and the word spelled out on the Ouija Board is **HIKE**.*

The "hit" must be identical to the word randomly chosen from the box.

We have no problem with the "Referee" being the only person handling the Sender Record Sheet, or with the "observer" remaining in the Ouija Board room.

I also understand from Ted that if the video camera is on a tripod, the footage can be easily edited to misrepresent the test results, while covertly editing hand-held footage is much more difficult.

So we'll go with the hand-held camera.

Have we agreed upon the test date yet? It seems we're good to go.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



 [NOMINATE](#)  [LINK](#)  [QUOTE](#) 

14th September 2005, 12:17 PM

#21

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

From Ian

Hi Kramer,

I'm glad I waited to talk to Ted before I sent the email I had prepared. After reading the email from him, and then your reply to him I was livid!

You see, I had no knowledge of the changes Ted had proposed on his "protocol document" whatsoever, let alone having authored them, as you seem to think I did. Nor at any time did I think, or suggest that a final test, if my team even passes the preliminary test, would be held anywhere but in Florida.

Most important, is the fact that I in no way, shape or form, had any concept of this "sender must believe" business. However, upon talking to Ted, I did come to understand where his concept arose from. You see, Ted hasn't been following along with this thread and didn't understand that the "sender" is one of the members of the team, not somebody he chooses and brings into the equation.

So, I think he was trying to do his job the best he could given the misunderstanding he had.

When I talked to him on the phone though, a couple of good points did come up that should be detailed in the protocol.

Namely:

1. The target word pool... You state, that it must be known to both parties before hand... If you mean that Ted and you must know the pool of words, I agree fully. But if you mean that Ted, and my group should know the pool of words, I must object as there is no reason whatsoever why anyone on my team should need to know any of the words.

2. The Record Sheet... In the room with the sender and the skeptic, it will be the skeptic who will shake the dice and choose the word from the 10x10 grid of words, and then immediately scotch tape it to the record sheet, and place the record sheet in front of the sender. So, the sender will never even touch the record sheet.

Lastly, in the conversation Ted and I had, he told me that what he had done is to create a "protocol document" because he sees part of his role is to make sure that you and I are on the same page Kramer. While he was creating this document though, he had some ideas and included them in it without explaining that these were changes he was proposing, and that I had no knowledge of them!

After Ted and I got off the phone, I re-re-read the emails, and the applicant thread; and it seems to me that You and I were pretty much on the same page already Kramer, and that it was Ted that was off track a little bit. So although his intentions of creating and controlling the "protocol document" are good, I must stand firm in the assertion I made to him that I control the protocol document to avoid further confusion.

In closing, if there are any changes that Ted suggested in his document you think we ought to include, let me know, and I'll put them in to a 3rd draft of the protocol and send it back to you tomorrow.

Talk to you soon, Ian

=====

OK, Ian. I have no problem with any of this. But, it's not a question of who is "in control". It's a question of mutual agreement, and although we got a bit confused, I think we're all on the same page now. I'm quite certain that Ted was not trying to "control" anything. He was simply trying to DOCUMENT matters.

Let's be clear that neither party "controls" the protocol document. This is precisely why the Challenge rules clearly state that the protocol must be designed and agreed to mutually by the applicant and the JREF (in this case, our designated associate, Ted Clay). MUTUAL: 50/50.

So...Let's set a test date.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
 Location: South Florida
 Posts: 1,443

From Ian

Hi guys,

Point 1. I would expect nothing less from Randi.**Point 2. Absolutely agreed. If the target word were "LUCK", then *UCK would not cut it. The spelling must be correct for a hit.****Point 3. We seem to have some slight bit of confusion here. You are mentioning a "Referee", and an "Observer". At this point Ted is the only person coming up that I'm aware of. However, when we talked on the phone Monday night, I did ask him if there was any possibility he could bring another skeptic with him. This way, there would be an "observer" in each location. He said he'd try to arrange this.****This would also answer the question as to who's going to hold the video camera in the Ouija board room since we're not going to use tripods.****Point 4. Not quite yet... The group was supposed to meet this week for the first time and enlist the aid of a "6th volunteer", but 2 of our team, (a married couple) had to go out of town on business. So we're shooting for next week as our 1st meeting. Given no trouble getting a 6th team member, then early October should be a go. Ted suggested the 5th, & that's good for me, but everybody else's schedules have to fit also.****-Ian Conger**

 KRAMER,
 JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk


4th October 2005, 09:21 AM

#23

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
 Location: South Florida
 Posts: 1,443

From Ian...

Hi Ted,

Hope you had a nice vacation. I was just down your way today & was wondering when you were going to get back.

I've had a pretty big setback. Two of the members of the team, that had gone on a business trip about the time you were leaving, came back to town and the husband announced that he had just accepted a job 300 miles away and will be unable to continue with the project as he has to wrap up his business here, sell one house here, buy another there, and all those other not-so-fun aspects of relocating. So as of yet we haven't even been able to conduct an initial trial.

I've been trying to find some people to participate in the experiment. But it hasn't been my top priority for these two weeks. I'm on the board of a local non-profit & we've been having some structural upheavals that have been taking too much of my time & energy. This next week should end that distraction and I will resume rebuilding the team.

My apologies for the delay.

Ian

 KRAMER,
 JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk


14th October 2005, 10:30 AM

#24

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Hello?

Hello Ian,

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Long time no speak. The last I heard, we had determined a test location, and we were on the verge of determining an actual test date, making you only the 3rd claim to be tested during all of 2005. Or would it be the 4th? The facts escape me.

Regardless, our hope is that the delay is only temporary. Please let me know ASAP as to the status of the forthcoming test.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



17th October 2005, 08:49 AM

#25

KRAMER
challenge facilitator

Hi Kramer,

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Yes, it's been a while. As you know, we lost two of our team the week before we were going to have our initial meeting, (to try & recruit a 6th volunteer), due to a job offer our friend and his wife couldn't refuse. Since that happened, I've been distracted by several other of life's loose-ends that have been pretty well wrapped up. I've got a list of people I plan to ask if they'd like to get involved with this project, but I haven't asked any of them as of yet.

I hope to have good news for you soon. Then we can at least get back to the task of getting a 6th volunteer..... and then we can run the actual preliminary test with Ted.

-Ian

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



1st November 2005, 12:36 PM

#26

KRAMER
challenge facilitator

Hi Ted & Kramer,

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Just wanted to let you know I've gained 2 more participants, another married couple, but lost one more due to current engagements in the limelight. Still, we'll get there soon.

=====
=====

OK, Ian. Keep us informed. We're ready to go on this end.

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk



2nd December 2005, 08:13 AM

#27

KRAMER
challenge facilitator

Hi Kramer, Ted, and company,

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

We finally were able to get around a table yesterday and put our heads together, or at least our hands.

This initial contact was extremely slow moving and a very poor speller.

However, we'll be back at it next week & will update you as to our progress, or lack thereof as the case may be.

Ian

=====
=====

OK, Ian. Let us know when the spirits start cooperating.

-Kramer, JREF

Last edited by KRAMER : 2nd December 2005 at 12:09 PM.



[NOMINATE](#) [LINK](#) [QUOTE](#)

9th January 2006, 11:05 AM

#28

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

????????????????????

Hi Kramer & Ted,

Just an FYI.

We had our 2nd meeting yesterday. The movement was quite a bit more pronounced, but the spelling was still pretty bad.

Ian

=====
=====

Ian,

I think maybe we should close this file and you can re-apply when you actually have something to show us.

We have spent a great deal of time on your application, as has the investigator assigned to your file many months ago, and it seems clear to us that your "phenomenon" is sketchy, at best, and quite likely to be the result of something that is NOT paranormal at all.

Please feel free to re-apply at a future date, if you have something we can actually investigate.

-Kramer, JREF

KRAMER,
JREF Paranormal Challenge Desk

Last edited by KRAMER : 9th January 2006 at 11:08 AM.



[NOMINATE](#) [LINK](#) [QUOTE](#)

9th January 2006, 12:43 PM

#29

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Time...

Hi Kramer,

Let's give this a little time. I've just FINALLY gotten a team together after several false-starts, and we've only met twice to try to get this ball rolling so far. We've scheduled weekly meetings to see if we can get this thing from point A to point B, so let's not abandon the project quite yet okay?

I'll tell you what..... Let's compromise. My application was received by you on or about August 16, 2005, and if I'm not mistaken that application remains open for one year unless some major procedural or behavioral breach is committed by an applicant. To the best of my knowledge I have not indulged in either of these activities. At this point, there are eight months and seven days left before that year is up. What do you say we split the difference? That would take us to April 12th, 2006. If we can't produce some results by that date we'll call it a day.

Sound fair to you?

- Ian

=====

OK, Ian. I shall now patiently await your next email.

-Kramer, JREF



16th January 2006, 11:04 AM

#30

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Hi Kramer,

If you don't want to post the updates that I send you, that's fine with me. I'm just sending them to you because it's what you requested.

Anyway, we had our weekly meeting last night and some progress was finally made. Almost at the end of our session, the movement changed from painfully slow, with spelling being so poor as to be akin to random letters; to a movement that was VERY FAST, with seemingly flawless spelling that said its name was Nancy.

Hopefully this progress will continue next time!!!

Have a good weekend,

Ian

=====

Ian, these little emails detailing the nuances of your meetings are not what I was hoping to receive when I asked you to keep us informed.

All we really want at this point is to someday receive an email stating that you are ready to follow through with a demonstration of your claim.

The incremental "progress" you are celebrating is not a matter you need to share with us. Just let us know when you're good to go.

Thanks for your continued interest.

KRAMER, JREF Paranormal Claims Dept.



17th January 2006, 09:58 AM

#31

KRAMER

challenge facilitator

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: South Florida
Posts: 1,443

Now you tell me....(kidding). Sounds like a plan. Thank you for the clarification.

By the way, we never did get the final detail or 2 agreed upon for the test protocol.

I'll revise the doc that I have to include the last suggestions that I received from you & Ted, and get that off to you in a few hours.

Ian

=====

Hello Ian,

Isn't that a bit premature? Or have the spirits suddenly improved their spelling...

We'll pick up the test protocol negotiations when you can conclusively state that you are ready to be tested.

Really, Ian, your file is almost an inch thick now. I feel that both the JREF and Ted Clay have put more than enough effort into this, and I can't in good conscience contribute any more until you have a claim that is ready to be tested. So let us know.

-Kramer, JREF

Last edited by KRAMER : 18th January 2006 at 09:02 AM.



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Challenge Applications

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-- JREF

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