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Orientation

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Updated Definition

Orientation relates to the relative position of oneself and/or that of objects in the environment. The concept of orientation is a complex one, for it not only relates to personal navigation replete with social and psychological manifestations but also involves mental representations unique to brain anatomy and physiology, and the sophisticated human nervous system. To move effectively and produce models of the world, the motor-sensory system is engaged with the seven senses, especially the visual sense and the two “hidden” vestibular and kinesthetic/proprioceptive senses. Orientation therefore relates to embodied conceptual knowledge, its memory foundations, and organizing principles and processes. Thus, orientation is synonymous with concepts that range from navigational relations like direction, path, route, track, course, travel, wayfaring, bearing, and point of reference to the more tangible synonym of compass reading (Baird et al. 2006).

Processing of spatial, temporal, and social relations relies on mental cognitive maps, on which the behaving self is oriented relative to different places, events, and people. High-resolution functional MRI scanning reveal that mental orientation in space, time, and person produces a sequential posterior–anterior pattern of adjacent and partially overlapping activity with the brain’s default-mode network, a system involved in self-referential processing (Peera et al. (2015).

Cross-References

► [Orientation \(Left-Right\)](#)

References and Readings

- Baird, A., Dewar, B. K., Critchley, H., Dolan, R., Shallice, T., & Cipolotti, L. (2006). The role of the anterior cingulate cortex in social and emotional functions. *Cognitive Neuropsychiatry*, 11(4), 369–388.
- Peera, M., Salomons, R., Goldberg, I., Blanke, O., & Arzy, S. (2015). Brain system for mental orientation in space, time, and person. *Psychology and Cognitive Sciences*, 112(35), 11072–11077. doi:[10.1073/pnas.1504242112](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1504242112).