

After image

A flash of light can print a colored, lingering image in your eye.

Try this:

Be sure to read all the instructions before you start.

- Keep both eyes open, look into the viewer, and push the button. You'll see a sudden, brilliant flash of light.
- Quickly close your eyes and cover them with your hands. You'll see a bright, ghostly shape called an afterimage.
- Open your eyes and look around. You'll be able to see the afterimage change color, size, and position as it slowly fades away.

What's going on?

If you've ever been "blinded" by someone taking a picture of you with a flashbulb, the light you see afterward is an afterimage. In fact, every time you look at a bright object, such as a lamp

or computer screen, you see an afterimage. Your brain ignores most of them, but if you pay attention, you can see them practically everywhere you look.

Afterimages are created by the light-sensitive cells at the back of your eye. These cells send signals to your brain whenever they're stimulated by light. When you see a bright flash, the cells are stimulated so strongly that they send signals to your brain for several minutes, causing the afterimage.

Some of these cells, called cones, respond to the colors in the light. Some are sensitive to red light, some to green light, and some to blue light. The white flash stimulates all three types of cells. But after a while, some of the cones start to tire. When one type stops firing, the afterimage changes color.