

# Breaking News English.com

**Scientists find that rats love driving – 2nd December 2024**

## Level 4

The term "rat race" may soon mean real rats racing in cars. Scientists have taught rats to drive tiny cars in a laboratory. A neuroscientist has worked with rats since 2019. She told a news agency that the creatures learned to rev the engines of their small vehicles and seemed to "get a kick out of it". She said the rats had an "intense motivation" for driving. She added they often jumped into the car, revved the engine, and then "hit the road".

The research explored the relationship between rats and their environment. It looked at how the rats' thought developed, and how they processed new skills. In the tests, one group of lab rats got toys and companions. The other test rodents got no toys and fewer friends. The rats got rewards for good driving. The rats with the toys learned to drive better. The research supported the idea that complex environments enhanced learning in the rats.

## Level 5

The term "rat race" may soon mean actual rats racing in cars. This is because scientists have taught rats to drive tiny cars around a laboratory. Neuroscientist Dr Kelly Lambert has worked with the rodents since 2019. She told the news agency "The Conversation" that the creatures learned to rev the engines of their miniature vehicles, and they seemed to "get a kick out of it". She said: "We found that the rats had an intense motivation for their driving training, often jumping into the car and revving the...engine before their vehicles hit the road."

Lambert's study explored the relationship between rats and their environment. She wanted to find out how their thinking developed, and how they processed new skills. In her tests, she gave one group of lab rats many toys and companions. The other test rodents got no toys and fewer friends. Lambert trained the rats to associate driving with a sweet reward. The rats with the toys learned to drive better. She concluded that her research supported the idea that complex environments enhanced neuroplasticity. This is the brain's ability to reorganize connections during learning.

## Level 6

The metaphor "rat race" may soon have a more literal meaning. This is because scientists have been teaching rats to drive a tiny, purpose-built car around a laboratory. Neuroscientist Dr Kelly Lambert from the University of Richmond in the USA has been working with the car-driving rodents since 2019. Speaking to the online news agency "The Conversation," she explained that the creatures not only learned to rev the engines of their miniature vehicles, they seemed to "get a kick out of it". She said: "Unexpectedly, we found that the rats had an intense motivation for their driving training, often jumping into the car and revving the 'lever engine' before their vehicles hit the road."

Lambert's study was to explore the relationship between rats and their environments. She wanted to find out how their cognition developed, and how they processed new skills. In her tests, she placed one group of lab rats in a space that contained many toys and companions. The other test rodents were put in an area with no toys and fewer friends. Dr Lambert trained the rats to correlate driving with a sweet cereal reward. Those in the more enriched environment learned to drive faster. Dr Lambert concluded her research findings supported the idea that complex environments enhanced neuroplasticity. This is the brain's ability to form and reorganize connections in response to learning.