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The features marked with a star (\*) are based entirely on material taken straight from standard research (and other Official and Therefore Always Correct) literature. Many of the other articles are genuine, too, but we don't know which ones.



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We have been encountering intolerable technical problems with the company that has until now been processing subscriptions the past ten years. We are in the process of moving the magazine subscription-handling to a different company, one that is staffed by human beings. We will keep you posted (by email) when the move is imminent. Thank you (we are sorry to have to say so many times, here in the vexed year 2025) for your patience!

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There's always new improbable — it's not what you expect! — stuff on the **Improbable Research blog** at [IMPROBABLE.COM](http://IMPROBABLE.COM)



### On the Front Cover

The Ig Nobel Biology Prize winners receive the prize from Nobel laureate Eric Maskin. Photo: Mike Benveniste.

### Some Coming Events

(See [IMPROBABLE.COM](http://IMPROBABLE.COM) for details of these and other events.)

#### November 6, 2025

— Falling Walls,  
Berlin, Germany

#### November 12, 2025

— Monell Center,  
Philadelphia, USA

#### November 28, 2025

— "Science Friday"  
Ig Nobel radio broadcast

#### December 9-10, 2025

— Paris, France

#### December 12, 2025

— Perugia, Italy

#### January 10, 2026

— Ig Nobel Face-to-Face,  
Miraikan, Tokyo, Japan

#### January 2026

— Arisia, Boston,  
Massachusetts, USA

#### February 13, 2026

— AAAS Annual Meeting,  
Phoenix, AZ, USA

#### March/April 2026

— Ig Nobel EuroTour

#### Northern Hemisphere Autumn:

— The 36th First Annual  
Ig Nobel Prize ceremony



# THE 35TH FIRST ANNUAL IG NOBEL PRIZE CEREMONY

by Alice Shirrell Kaswell, Improbable Research staff



*ABOVE: In addition to their constant throwing of paper airplanes [with a re-supply crew, led by Jim MacArthur, feeding them ready-to-be-recycled paper], the audience took full advantage of two Paper Plane Deluge periods, each thirty seconds in duration, to aim at a designated target (Eric Workman, seen here, clad in protective gear).*

On Thursday night, September 18, 2025, the new Ig Nobel Prize winners were announced — and showered with paper airplanes. They were honored for achievements that first make people LAUGH, and then make them THINK.

This was the 35th First Annual Ig Nobel Prize Ceremony. Organized by the *Annals of Improbable Research* (AIR), it celebrates the unusual, honors the imaginative, and spurs interest in science.

## The Winners

Ten (10) new Ig Nobel Prizes were awarded. The winners (some of them individuals, some teams) represent many countries. Details of who and what appear elsewhere in this issue of the magazine.

The prizes were personally handed to the new winners, together with a rousing handshake, by a bevy of genuine Nobel laureates: Esther Dufflo, Eric Maskin, Svante Pääbo, Mounqi Bawendi, William Kaelin, and Robert Merton.

In this year when long-distance travel became more complicated, several of the prize-winning teams did not come to the ceremony. Instead, each sent an acceptance speech that was read aloud on their behalf, during the ceremony, by Nobel laureates.

The ceremony happened at Boston University in Massachusetts.

This year's ceremony was produced in collaboration with the Boston University College of Communication.



*The audience spent the night throwing making and throwing paper airplanes, as per Ig Nobel tradition. (Sweepers worked to keep the stage from accumulating so many paper planes that walking would become hazardous.)*



# THE 35TH FIRST ANNUAL IG NOBEL PRIZE CEREMONY [CONT'D]

## The Added Difficulty of Producing the Ceremony in 2025

This year, this 2025, brought new difficulties in organizing the Ig Nobel Prize ceremony — difficulties for the ceremony organizers, and difficulties for the winners who contemplated traveling to the USA to take part in the ceremony. Hannah Richter reported about it in a September 19 article in *Science* magazine:

In a Viennese pub in 2013, a group of experimental psychologists jokingly agreed they were better at speaking foreign languages after a drink. They later decided to investigate their hunch—and to their surprise, the resulting study confirmed their tipsy inkling.

More than a decade after that fateful night out, the researchers have now received science's most whimsical and notorious honor: an Ig Nobel Prize. But the psychologists did not make it to the prize's 35th annual award ceremony in Boston—and neither did three of the other nine winning teams. In all, nearly half of this year's Ig Nobel recipients declined to attend. Wars, visa restrictions, and the research and border policies of U.S. President Donald Trump's administration have all dampened the fun.

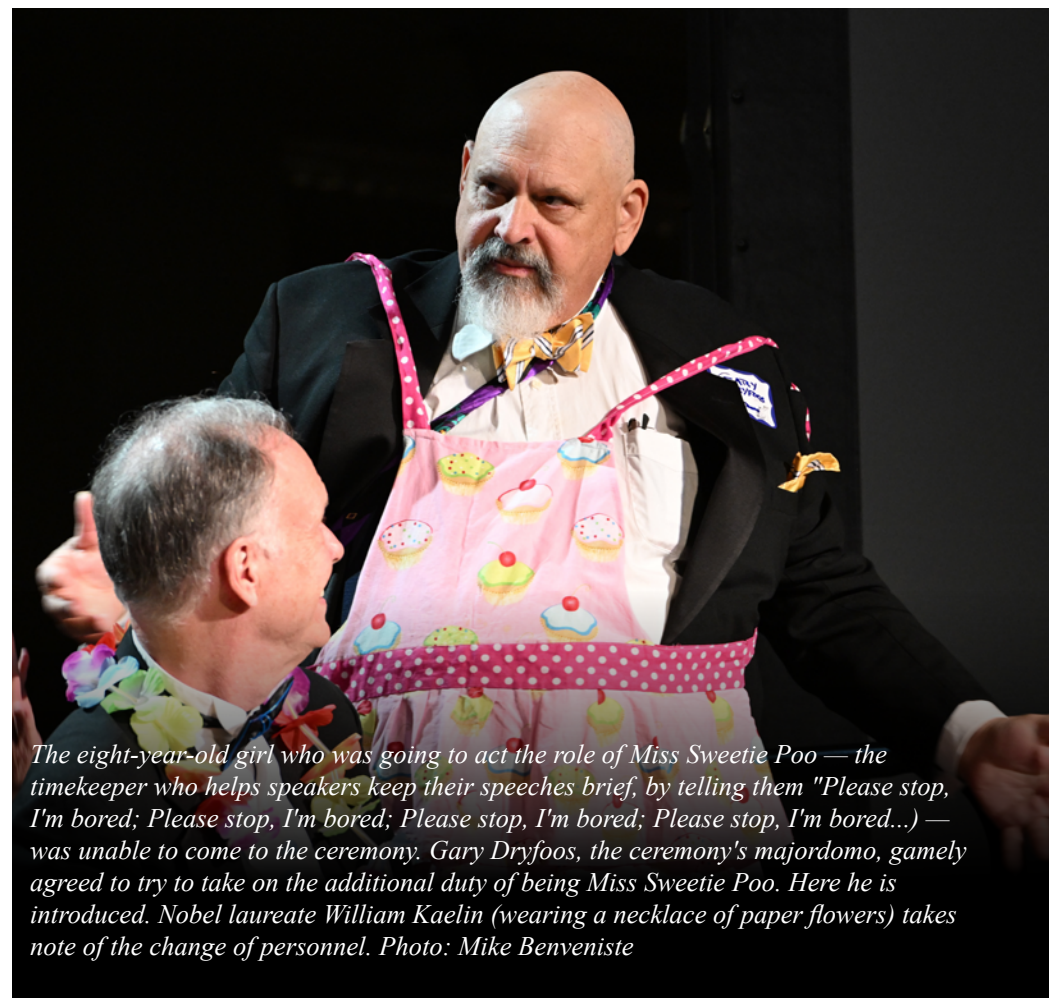
The situation has "been really agonizing for us," says Marc Abrahams, founder and master of ceremonies of the Ig Nobels and editor of the *Annals of Improbable Research*, a scientific humor magazine. "We've been trying, with the winners, to simultaneously make it clear that we're really eager to have [them] here ... but we want [them] to be safe and comfortable."

The four winning teams who did not travel to the ceremony instead each sent the text of their one-minute-long acceptance speech. During the ceremony, each speech was read aloud by a Nobel laureate.

All the winners were invited to take part in Ig Nobel Face-to-Face events that will happen later in the year in other countries (specifically in London, UK; Berlin, Germany; and Tokyo, Japan).



*Karen Hopkin, who narrated the opera and several other parts of the ceremony, displays the 2025 Ig Nobel Prize. The prizes, adapting a drawing by Seth Gliksmann into three-dimensional form, were hand-built by Eric Workman, Photo: Mike Benveniste.*



*The eight-year-old girl who was going to act the role of Miss Sweetie Poo — the timekeeper who helps speakers keep their speeches brief, by telling them "Please stop, I'm bored; Please stop, I'm bored; Please stop, I'm bored; Please stop, I'm bored..." — was unable to come to the ceremony. Gary Dryfoos, the ceremony's majordomo, gamely agreed to try to take on the additional duty of being Miss Sweetie Poo. Here he is introduced. Nobel laureate William Kaelin (wearing a necklace of paper flowers) takes note of the change of personnel. Photo: Mike Benveniste*



# THE 35TH FIRST ANNUAL IG NOBEL PRIZE CEREMONY [CONT'D]



## The Prize, the Year's Theme (DIGESTION), and the Opera

The theme of this year's ceremony (though not necessarily of any of the prize-winning achievements) was DIGESTION.

The Ig Nobel prize itself is hand-built, with a new design every year. This year's prize is a model of a human stomach. The two sides of the stomach each resemble a human face. One face is happy. The other face is grumpy.

Each winner also received a certificate saying they have won an Ig Nobel Prize. The certificate is signed by several Nobel laureates.

In previous years, each Ig Nobel Prize winning team was given, in addition to the prize, some cash—a ten-trillion-dollar bill from Zimbabwe. But not this year. The ceremony organizers explained that because of inflation, it is now too expensive to purchase ten-trillion-dollar bills. So instead, this year they gave each winner a moist towelette.

*ABOVE: In addition to an Ig Nobel Prize and a piece of paper saying that they were awarded an Ig Nobel Prize, the winners were also given a moist towelette. Each Nobel laureate, also, was given a moist towelette. Pictured in this photo: Eric Maskin, Esther Duflo, and Robert Merton using their moist towelettes. Photo: Mike Benveniste.*

*BELOW: Nobel laureates Mounji Bawendi and Eric Maskin use their moist towelette. All the used moist towelettes were collected and then given to audience members as keepsakes. Photo: Mike Benveniste.*





# THE 35TH FIRST ANNUAL IG NOBEL PRIZE CEREMONY [CONT'D]

## Chunks of This and of That

The ceremony included (in addition to the prize presentations):

- **THE 24/7 LECTURES**, in which several of the world's top thinkers each explained their subject twice — first in **TWENTY-FOUR (24) SECONDS**, and then, clearly, in **SEVEN (7) WORDS**. The 24/7 lecturers and their topics: Ben Smith (taste, smell, and digestion), Gus Rancatore (ice cream), Deborah Anderson (cola), Trisha Pasricha (smartphone use on the toilet and the risk of hemorrhoids)
- **A NEW MINI-OPERA** (called "The Plight of the Gastroenterologist") about gastroenterologists and their patients, and about digestion. And indigestion. The Nobel laureates played non-singing roles in the opera.
- **PAPER AIRPLANE THROWING**. By tradition, the audience makes and throws paper airplanes. This year's in-person audience fully honored that tradition.



*The minordomos help ensure during the ceremony that anyone and anything that moves moves at the right moment to the right location. They gathered backstage before the ceremony for this group photo. Standing, left to right: Model major minordomo Danny Ben-David, Kit de Vitry, Kiyoshi Furusawa, Aster Treitman, Edmund Golaski. Squatting: Natasha Rosenberg (who was the original Miss Sweetie Poo, a quarter-century ago) and Charlotte Minsky. [Absent from the photo: Eliza Margolin.] Photo: Geri Sullivan.*

## Better Luck Next Year?

The ceremony concluded with the traditional statement, "If you didn't win an Ig Nobel Prize tonight — and especially if you did — better luck next year."

**WEBCASTS:** The ceremony was webcast live for the 31st consecutive year. (The 1995 ceremony was one of the first events ever webcast.) There was a separate Japanese-language web stream.

**RADIO:** A specially edited recording of the ceremony will be broadcast in the USA on public radio's **Science Friday** program on the day after Thanksgiving.

## Two Days Later

Two days after the ceremony, most of the winners took part in an Ig Nobel Face-to-Face event at the MIT Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts. On stage, they asked each other questions about their work and answered questions from the audience.

*Two days after the ceremony, the new winners gathered at the MIT Museum for an Ig Nobel Face-to-Face event. In small discussion groups on stage, they asked each other questions about their work, and answered questions from the audience. Three people in banana costumes (Danny Ben-David, Kiyoshi Furusawa, and Raechel Hammer) acted as timekeepers. In this session: Ig Nobel Prize winners Gary Beauchamp, Tomoki Kojima, and Giacomo Bartolucci, with moderator Karen Hopkin Photo: Geri Sullivan.*



# THE 35TH FIRST ANNUAL IG NOBEL PRIZE CEREMONY [CONT'D]

## Coming Events

In February 2026, some of the winners will participate in the annual Improbable Research session at the annual meeting of AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science), which will be in Phoenix.

In spring 2026, some of the 2025 winners will join some past winners in a series of public events as part of the 2025 Ig Nobel EuroTour.

For details about all upcoming events, see the listing on our web site at [improbable.com/upcoming-events](https://improbable.com/upcoming-events).

*As the ceremony concluded, all the on-stage participants gathered for the traditional Pointless Photo Opportunity.*

