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
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[Why Fingernails on Blackboards Sound So Horrible](#)

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Previous research on the subject suggested that the sound is acoustically similar to the warning call of a primate, but that theory was debunked after monkeys responded to amplitude-matched white noise and other high-pitched sounds, whereas humans did not. Another study, in 1986, manipulated a recording of blackboard scraping and found that the medium-pitched frequencies are the source of the adverse reaction, rather than the the higher pitches (as previously thought). The work won author Randolph Blake an Ig Nobel Prize in 2006.

The latest study, conducted by musicologists Michael Oehler of the Macromedia University for Media and Communication in Cologne, Germany, and Christoph Reuter of the University of Vienna, looked at other sounds that generate a similar reaction — including chalk on slate, styrofoam squeaks, a plate being scraped by a fork, and the ol' fingernails on blackboard.



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