

GEMs for Enquiring Minds

August Issue
2026

Here's your August 2026 issue.
Feel free to [forward to a friend](#)

GEMs email: GEMS@u3aonline.org.au
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CONTENTS

1. Breaking News

- 2. Physical Health GEMs
- Emotional Health GEMs
- Social Health GEMs
- Intellectual Health GEMs
- Other Interesting GEMs
- Fun GEMs
- Technical GEMs
- Security GEMs
- Interesting GEMs

Days of the week –



12th August - International Geocaching Day

Breaking News

News from COTA Australia

COTA Australia has applauded the Federal Government's commitment to ensuring human oversight in the aged care assessment process. Many older people have been concerned that the new rules – known as the Single Assessment System – would be entirely applied through software. Now the government has included an escalation process to allow increased human oversight as part of determining the right level of support.

As noted in GEMs last month, these new rules are part of the government's efforts to reduce waiting times and to help people have the resources to continue to live at home or to find the right level of care in supported accommodation.

While specific details of the changes are still to be published, COTA says that the goal of reducing the wait-time for assessment and for outcomes after assessment can only make the system better.

U3A Online Group-Partner Memberships Now Open

U3A Online has introduced a new membership suite to encourage U3As and other organisations to promote online activity to their members. A U3A or other body which joins Online as a Group

member can provide for its members a much cheaper membership type Partner membership.

U3As which sign up as Group members can encourage their own members to become Partner members and to use Online classes and self-study courses alone or as part of group study. Click here [u3aonline.org.au/groups](https://www.u3aonline.org.au/groups) to learn more about Group and Partner memberships.

U3A Online offers 140+ self-study courses. Those not associated with a U3A or other group can still join U3A Online as individual members.

Have You Explored Symmetry Yet?

Have you ever wondered why snowflakes, wallpaper patterns, and crystals seem so pleasing? They seem to draw us in.

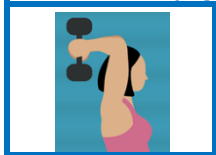
You don't need to be a mathematician to enjoy U3A Online's new Symmetries and Groups course. If you've ever admired the patterns in a flower, a quilt, a mosaic or a cathedral window, you've already experienced the beauty of symmetry. Discover how mathematicians use those familiar patterns to reveal one of the most elegant ideas in mathematics.

You may even find that mathematics is less about numbers than about recognising patterns in the world around us.

Visit <https://www.u3aonline.org.au/courses> and select *Mathematics* to explore *Symmetries and Groups*.

◀ A Closed Mind Gathers No Thought ▶

Below are links to brief, readable research summaries published in the last 30 days, which may help to improve your quality of life. (NB If you read only the first and last paragraphs of each research report you'll normally get the key take-away message).



Physical Health

- [You're not being lazy, you're being smart](#)
- [How long can you hold your breath?](#)
- [How the right human touch can transform your health](#)



Emotional Health

- [Why conversations leave us emotionally exhausted](#)
- [Exercise your mind](#)
- [Can AI help us like each other?](#)



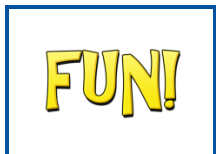
Social Health

- [Your dreams aren't random](#)
- [Going to museums, movies, and theatre may help your body stay younger](#)
- [Science discovers how the brain rewires itself to truly multitask](#)



Intellectual Health

- [World models are the future of AI but how do they work?](#)
- [Space photo of the week](#)
- [Three of the 12 galaxies in this cosmic string are missing a crucial component](#)



Fun

- [What is the roundest animal?](#)
- [Was Einstein wrong about anything?](#)
- [Mop man stealing the show at Commonwealth Games - video](#)



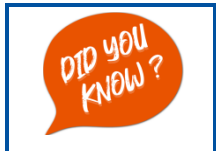
Technical (Thanks to Ask Leo and Bob Rankin)

- [Why is it so important to have different passwords on different accounts](#)
- [Don't trust your ears](#)
- [Do you need an email alias?](#)



Security (Thanks to Scambusters)

- [Did you sign out of your account?](#)
- [Friendly fraud – when the customer is the scammer](#)
- [Common scams linked to on-demand transportation services](#)



Interesting

- [The Neanderthal extinction mystery just got even stranger](#)
- [Experts unveil the country with the longest lifespan](#)
- [Can you wake up speaking a different language?](#)

GEMs is compiled for U3A Online by Carol Williams in Canberra, Australia. The Editor welcomes your feedback and suggestions for change. Please email possible snippets for inclusion to GEMS@u3aonline.org.au Earlier GEMs issues are freely available on our website www.u3aonline.org.au. Copyright © 2026 U3A Online. All rights reserved.