LAION-fMRI stimulus Terms of Use

Version 2026-05-12

1. The stimuli

The LAION-fMRI stimuli are the exact visual stimulus images used in the LAION-fMRI experiment. They are drawn from the publicly released ReLAION-2B-en-research-safe corpus (Schuhmann et al., 2022; LAION e.V., 2024 re-release after the removal of unsafe content identified by the Stanford Internet Observatory) and further filtered using the LAION-Natural naturalness classifier (Roth & Hebart, CCN 2025; huggingface.co/datasets/andropar/relaion2b-natural) to retain natural photographs only.

On top of that source filtering, every image included in the released LAION-fMRI stimulus set was manually screened by the Hebart Lab for explicit, illegal, or otherwise unsafe content; none such were retained. If a new external report (e.g. rights-holder, ethics body, or Stanford-style content audit) identifies any item we should remove, we commit to removing it from future releases — see the Takedown document.

The underlying image copyrights remain with the original rights-holders. The stimuli are made available to academic researchers under the custom research-use terms in this document. Inclusion of third-party copyrighted images in this research archive is supported by the scientific-research exception for text-and-data mining in German and EU copyright law (§ 60d UrhG; Art. 3 of Directive (EU) 2019/790).

2. Who is "you"

"You" means the natural person submitting the access form, plus — for the purposes of viewing the stimuli during research work — immediate members of the same research group at the same institution (e.g. supervised students, lab RAs). For cross-institutional collaborators, each person who needs the stimuli should submit their own access form so the acceptance is recorded on their record. Do not pass the request id or the downloaded files to anyone outside your research group.

3. Permitted use

You may use the stimuli only for **non-commercial academic research** necessary to reproduce, replicate, or analyse the LAION-fMRI experiment and related scientific work. For the purpose of these terms, "academic research"

means research carried out at a non-profit research institution, or by an independent researcher with documented institutional ethics oversight. All other uses are prohibited.

4. Prohibited use

You may not:

1. Share, redistribute, mirror, publish, or otherwise make the stimuli or the HDF5 / metadata files available to third parties outside the scope of "you" in §2.
2. Use the stimuli for any commercial purpose.
3. Use the stimuli to train, fine-tune, or evaluate general-purpose or commercial AI / ML models or services.
4. Create derivative works from the stimuli for any purpose other than non-commercial academic research.
5. **Apply facial-recognition, face-clustering, biometric identification, or any other biometric-template extraction** to people depicted in the stimuli.
6. **Attempt to re-identify** any individual depicted in a stimulus — whether by reverse image search, cross-referencing with external databases, or any other technique — or to publish, post, or otherwise disclose the identity of any depicted individual ("doxxing").
7. Extract, isolate, or republish individual depicted faces or persons as separate images, including in publication figures.

5. Publishing stimulus examples

Showing a small number of representative stimuli in a scientific publication is permitted under the usual quotation / fair-dealing norms in academic writing. As a concrete safe-harbour, the following is always considered within scope:

- up to **16 thumbnails per publication**, each at no more than 256 px on the long edge;
- identified by stimulus id from the metadata (not by source URL);
- shown only where scientifically necessary (e.g. illustrating the experimental design or category structure).

Larger image grids, full-resolution single-image reproductions, or cover art use sits outside the safe-harbour and must rely on your own assessment of the underlying rights or a licence from the rights-holders.

6. No ownership claim

The dataset provider claims no ownership of any third-party image copyrights. Rights-holders may request removal of specific images at any time — see the Takedown document.

7. Deletion on revocation, item-level takedown, or project end

If your access is revoked, or when the research project for which you obtained the stimuli ends, you must **delete all local copies** of the stimulus files (HDF5, metadata CSV, and any derivative copies of individual images) and **confirm deletion in writing** to the controller within **30 days**. A short signed statement by email to the controller's address (see the foot of this document) is sufficient.

When a new dataset-version manifest is published following a rights-holder takedown or a data-subject removal request, you must delete the superseded items from your local copies within **30 days** of being notified that a new manifest is available, and confirm the item-level deletion on request.

8. Ethics and content responsibility

The stimuli are natural-world photographs drawn from a research-safe public corpus and additionally screened by the project team (§1). They may nevertheless depict scenes, objects, or settings that some research participants find unfamiliar or uncomfortable. It is your responsibility to obtain any required institutional ethics approval (IRB / ethics committee) before using the stimuli with human research participants and to apply appropriate stimulus selection for your population.

9. Citation

When publishing work derived from the LAION-fMRI dataset, cite the dataset paper and any relevant source datasets indicated in the metadata.

10. Logging and governance

The access service records each submission (name, email, institution, research purpose, accepted version of these terms) and each download issuance for controlled-access governance — see the Privacy notice document for full details, including lawful basis, retention periods, and your data-subject rights.

11. Your responsibility

You are responsible for ensuring your use complies with applicable law and your institution's policies, including data-protection rules where the stimuli are viewed in the presence of human research participants.

12. Governing law

These terms are governed by the laws of the Federal Republic of Germany. Exclusive venue for disputes arising out of or in connection with these terms is the court with subject-matter jurisdiction in Gießen, Germany, to the extent permitted by applicable consumer-protection rules.

Controller: Prof. Dr. Martin Hebart. Contact: martin.hebart@uni-giessen.de. Imprint / Impressum: hebartlab.com/impress.