Parallax Puzzle

Scientists can calculate, or figure out mathematically, the distances of different stars from earth. As we look at the stars, we understand from what we have learned that the stars stay in an exact position and are very far away. But what our eyes and our brains tell us may not totally correct. If we walk past a house, the house does not move but the position of it does because the angle we view it from after passing it is different. This is parallax, and this simple experiment will show you how parallax works.

**What to do:** Hold your thumb vertically, or straight up and down, right before your eyes. Now, close your left eye, quickly open it and close your right eye. Do it again. Continue to rapidly close first one and then the other and observe what happens to the thumb before you.

**What happens:** The thumb jumps, moving from side to side. Where is it really? How can you know?