

Quirks of Memory — A Categorized Index

The papers in the memory series are arranged below by natural category, following the life cycle of a memory: what a witness perceives and encodes, how recall itself changes a memory, the ways memory is later distorted, the biases that color it, how it is distributed and dated across a life, how it is quantified, and how it operates for intentions and for particular witnesses. Some papers bear on more than one category and are placed under their closest fit. Each title links to the paper.

Attention and Encoding

What a witness actually perceives and registers at the time of the event.

[Memory for Violence and Weapon Focus](#)

How a weapon and the stress of violence narrow attention and shape what is encoded.

[Change Blindness and Inattentional Blindness](#)

Why witnesses fail to notice plainly visible people, objects, and changes.

[The Serial Position Effect](#)

Why the beginning and end of an event are remembered better than the middle.

[The Isolation Effect](#)

Why a distinctive item in a scene stands out and is remembered better.

[The Self-Reference Effect](#)

Why information that involves the witness personally is encoded more deeply.

Retrieval as a Modifier

Recall is not a neutral readout; retrieving a memory can strengthen, narrow, or alter it.

[Remembering Changes Memory](#)

How each act of recall can strengthen, narrow, or reshape a memory.

[The Testing Effect](#)

Why retrieving a memory, as in an early interview, strengthens and preserves it.

[The Generation Effect](#)

Why self-produced details are remembered well but with weak memory for their source.

[Memory Inhibition](#)

How retrieving some details can suppress access to related, unretrieved ones.

Distortion, Contamination, and Source Error

How accurate content becomes attached to the wrong source or is reshaped by outside information.

[Source Monitoring](#)

How we judge where a memory came from, and why that judgment can fail.

[Unconscious Transference](#)

How a familiar but innocent face is misidentified as the offender.

Verbal Overshadowing

How describing a face in words can impair later recognition of it.

External Sources of Memory Distortion

How post-event information and suggestion alter memory.

Imagination Inflation

How imagining an event can make it feel like a genuine memory.

False Memory

How detailed, confident memories of events that never happened arise.

Cryptomnesia

How a remembered idea is mistaken for an original one.

Schema and Script Memory

How expectations fill gaps and reshape what is recalled.

The Illusion-of-Truth Effect

Why repeated statements come to feel true regardless of accuracy.

Motivated and Emotional Coloring

How emotion, self-image, and present beliefs tilt memory, usually without awareness.

Rosy Retrospection

Why the past is remembered more positively than it was experienced.

Fading Affect Bias

Why negative feelings fade from memory faster than positive ones.

The Self-Serving Bias

Why people credit themselves for success and blame circumstances for failure.

Egocentric Bias

Why people overstate their own role and centrality in remembered events.

Consistency Bias

Why people misremember past views and feelings as matching their present ones.

Hindsight Bias

Why an outcome, once known, seems to have been predictable all along.

Confirmation Bias

How expectations steer what is noticed, sought, and remembered.

The Peak-End Rule and Duration Neglect

Why an ordeal is judged by its worst and final moments, not its length.

Mood-Congruent and State-Dependent Memory

How mood and physical state at encoding and recall shape memory.

Memory in Time

How memories are distributed across the lifespan and how witnesses place events in time.

The Reminiscence Bump

Why adults recall a disproportionate share of events from youth and early adulthood.

Memory Across Puberty and the Reminiscence Bump

How a developmental boundary shapes the lifespan distribution of memory.

Childhood Amnesia

Why the earliest years of life leave almost no accessible memory.

The Telescoping Effect

Why witnesses systematically misdate events and over-report their frequency.

Autobiographical Memory

How the memory of one's own life is organized and reconstructed.

Flashbulb Memories

Why vivid memories of shocking events feel certain yet can be mistaken.

Judgment and Estimation

How witnesses quantify their experience and how much weight their confidence deserves.

Anchoring in Witness Estimation

Why estimates of speed, distance, and time are imprecise and easily swayed.

The Subadditivity Effect

How breaking a possibility into parts makes it seem more probable.

Confidence and Accuracy

What a witness's confidence does and does not reveal about accuracy.

Eyewitness Confidence

How confidence is formed, inflated, and properly weighed.

Remembering to Act

Memory for what one means to do, as distinct from memory for what has happened.

Prospective Memory

Remembering to perform an intended act, and why intentions are forgotten.

The Zeigarnik Effect

The contested claim that interrupted tasks are remembered better than completed ones.

Who Is Remembering: Special Populations

How particular conditions and characteristics affect the reliability of a witness's memory.

Intellectual Disability and Memory

Accuracy, completeness, and suggestibility in witnesses with intellectual disability.

Autism and Memory

The memory profile of autistic witnesses and how best to interview them.

Schizophrenia and Memory

Source-monitoring difficulty and confident errors in schizophrenia.

Alzheimer's Disease and Memory

How dementia impairs accurate memory and shapes false recognition.

Dissociation and Memory

How dissociative tendencies relate to suggestibility and memory error.

False Memory in Trauma and PTSD

Whether trauma-exposed witnesses are more prone to laboratory memory errors.

Aging and Memory

What declines and what is preserved in the memory of older witnesses.

Interaction of ADHD and Memory

How attention differences in ADHD bear on encoding and recall.

Alcohol and Memory

How alcohol impairs the encoding of witnessed events.

Intoxication and Memory

How intoxicating substances affect memory for events.