

Backward Recall and the Word Length Effect.

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Summary: The word length effect, the finding that words that have fewer syllables are recalled better than otherwise comparable words that have more syllables, is one of the benchmark effects that must be accounted for in any model of serial recall, and simulation models of immediate memory rely heavily on the finding. However, previous research has shown that the effect disappears when participants are asked to recall the items in strict backward order. The present 2 experiments replicate and extend that finding by manipulating the participant's foreknowledge of recall direction (Experiment 1) and by giving the participant repeated practice with one direction by blocking recall direction (Experiment 2). In both experiments, a word length effect obtained with forward but not backward recall. The results are problematic for all models that currently have an a priori explanation for word length effects. The finding can be accounted for but is not predicted by Scale-Independent Memory, Perception, and Learning (SIMPLE), a model in which item and order information are differentially attended to in the 2 recall directions. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR] Copyright of American Journal of Psychology is the property of University of Illinois Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use. This abstract may be abridged. No warranty is given about the accuracy of the copy. Users should refer to the original published version of the material for the full

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