

BRIEF SUMMARY

Koutstaal, W. (2003). Older adults encode—but do not always use—perceptual details: Intentional versus unintentional effects of detail on memory judgments. *Psychological Science, 14*, 189–193.

Investigations of memory deficits in older individuals have concentrated on their increased likelihood of forgetting events or details of events that were actually encountered (*errors of omission*). However, mounting evidence demonstrates that normal cognitive aging also is associated with an increased propensity to *errors of commission*—shown in false alarms or false recognition. The present study examined the origins of this age difference. Older and younger adults each performed three types of memory task in which details of encountered items might influence performance. Although older adults showed greater false recognition of related lures on a standard ("identical") old/new episodic recognition task, older and younger adults showed *parallel effects* of detail on repetition priming and meaning-based episodic recognition (decreased priming and decreased meaning-based recognition for different relative to same exemplars). The results suggest that the older adults encoded details but used them less effectively than the younger adults in the recognition context requiring their deliberate, controlled use.
