

## BRIEF SUMMARY

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**Jiang, Y. V., Koutstaal, W., & Twedell, E. L. (2016). Habitual attention in older and young adults. *Psychology and Aging, 31*, 970–980.**

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Age-related decline is pervasive in tasks that require explicit learning and memory, but such reduced function is not universally observed in tasks involving incidental learning. It is unknown if habitual attention, involving incidental probabilistic learning, is preserved in older adults. Previous research on habitual attention investigated contextual cuing in young and older adults, yet contextual cuing relies not only on spatial attention but also on context processing. Here we isolated habitual attention from context processing in young and older adults. Using a challenging visual search task in which the probability of finding targets was greater in 1 of 4 visual quadrants in all contexts, we examined the acquisition, persistence, and spatial-reference frame of habitual attention. Although older adults showed slower visual search times and steeper search slopes (more time per additional item in the search display), like young adults they rapidly acquired a strong, persistent search habit toward the high-probability quadrant. In addition, habitual attention was strongly viewer-centered in both young and older adults. The demonstration of preserved viewer-centered habitual attention in older adults suggests that it may be used to counter declines in controlled attention. This, in turn, suggests the importance, for older adults, of maintaining habit-related spatial arrangements.

**KEYWORDS:** habitual attention, visual search, spatial-reference frame