

## Attention limits and non-associative learning

Supported GRE teaching and original transfer practice

## Identify the evidence

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Explain divided-attention costs with capacity and multimode accounts

Use the overview measurement lesson VI for research inference.

# Concepts 1

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Attention is limited capacity. Early-selection accounts filter by physical features, late-selection accounts filter after meaning, and multimode theory (Johnston and Heinz) lets the selection point flex with task demands. Divided attention fails when combined demands exceed capacity: a hands-free call still slows driving because the bottleneck is central, not manual.

Load theory separates perceptual load from working-memory load: high perceptual load in the main task shuts out distractors, while high working-memory load invites them. Predictions follow the load, not the slogan that multitasking is always impossible.

## Concepts 2

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Habituation is non-associative learning: repeated presentation of a stimulus weakens the response, and a changed stimulus restores it (dishabituation). No pairing with another stimulus is involved, which separates it from classical conditioning. A commuter who stops hearing a scheduled train has habituated; the response returns if the train schedule changes.

Habituation is exploited as a measure: infants look longer at novel stimuli, so looking-time recovery after habituation indexes discrimination. Extinction in conditioning is different: there a learned association is withdrawn, not a repeated stimulus.

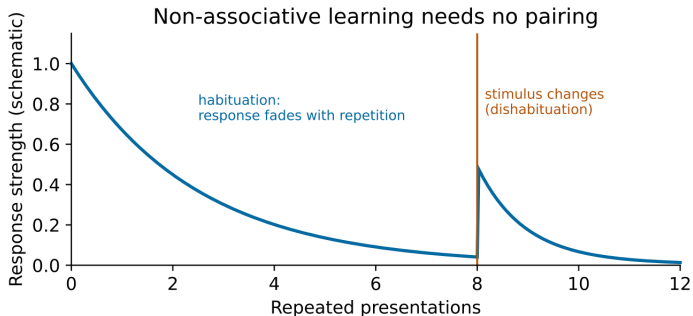
## Reason through the worked case

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Looking time falls across repeated displays and rises after the colour changes. What is supported, and what is not established?

The recovery is consistent with discrimination of the change after habituation. It does not show adult-like colour concepts or prove exactly how the display is represented. Control simple salience differences and compare suitable novel and familiar displays.

## Read the reviewed representation



Original schematic for Attention limits and non-associative learning. Illustrative relationships and numbers are not research results.

## Attempt an unfamiliar case

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A response falls with repeated sound presentations. Propose a check against fatigue and explain why extinction is not established.

Pause and write the explanation before continuing.

## Check the transfer argument

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Test an appropriate changed stimulus and recovery after a rest, with suitable controls. Recovery can make general response fatigue less plausible, although it does not alone settle every mechanism. Extinction requires a previously learned cue/consequence relation that is no longer maintained; repetition alone supplies no such history.

Accept a different explanation when its evidence and limits are justified.

## Limit the conclusion

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Calling habituation a form of conditioning, or claiming attention always fails under any dual task; the cost depends on load and the selection point.

Original classroom cases are not official questions or personal clinical advice.

## Check yourself

### Independent retrieval

A response returns after a novel stimulus interrupts repetition. What does dishabituation help rule out?

Write your reasoning before comparing it with the methods and limits taught in this lesson.