

# [Memory language alone. post-event information can alter a](https://assignbuster.com/memory-language-alone-post-event-information-can-alter-a/)

Memory is a malleable store of information that has been demonstratedto be unreliable and easily manipulated (Loftus & Palmer, 1974) by languagealone. Post-event information can alter a witness’s memory of details of thecrime and the offender (Loftus & Greene, 1980).

Consequently, interview andquestioning techniques have been proposed to reduce the unconscious manipulationof the eyewitness’s memory by police. The Cognitive Interview technique (Geiselman& Fisher, 1984) is used to enhance a witness’s information retrieval duringpolice questioning. Cognitive Interview (CI), in actuality, consists of fourmemory retrieval prompt techniques.

Witnesses are encouraged to report everydetail, no matter how trivial they may perceive such information to be, so asto try trigger retrieval of key details (Smith, 1983). The interviewer mentallyrecreates the personal (e. g. emotions, senses) and environmental context of thecrime (Bower, Gilligan, & Monteiro, 1981; Smith 1979). The interviewer asks the witnesses to report the crime froman array of different perspectives, and to describe what they think others mayhave seen (e.

g. other witnesses or the perpetrator themselves). These twotechniques stem from the encoding specificity principle (Tulving & Thomas, 1983) that suggests information recall is increased when the conditions of theevent and retrieval are similar. The recency effect is an aspect of the serial positioneffect (Ebbinghaus) refers to the findings that an item’s position in a list affectsrecall accuracy. The recency effect refers to the higher probability of recall ofthe most recently stored information. Consequently, witnesses should recountthe incident backwards.

The changes in perspective and order of events serve toreduce the involvement of schemas, expectations, and pre-existing knowledge inthe witness’s memory retrieval (Geiselman et al, 1984). Geiselman et alconducted an experiment in 1984 in order to evaluate the CI procedure, in whichstudents were interviewed immediately following a class disruption by actorsthrough a questionnaire. Those whose questionnaires featured the four cueswithin the CI technique were able to recall more information correctly than thosewho were instructed to continue trying to remember as much information aspossible. Numerous lab and field studies have shown also CI technique increasesthe number of correct and accurate details, and only a minor rise in incorrectinformation. After reviewing 27 studies, Bekerian and Dennett (1993) found thatin all cases using CI, more accurate information was obtained than the otherinterview techniques.

However, Cognitive Interview has its limitations. The fourcomponents of the overall techniques result in a long process that requiresintensive attention and questioning in response to the witness’s answers, andis overall a demanding task for the interviewer. Context recreation introducesthe risk of involving imagination (particularly with children) and rendering thetechnique counterproductive as once a memory is altered, it is difficult toreverse this effect.