

Ask the Witness Only Once

November 03, 2021



When an eyewitness stands up in court and identifies the person they say committed a crime, the impact can be powerful and effective. This dramatic testimony can be sincere and honest. It can also be wrong and tragically lead to wrongful convictions, lifelong incarcerations, and even the death penalty. But how can this happen? The witness is telling the court what they truly believe and remember. And therein lies the problem: memory, the often fuzzy and malleable recollections of events in the past.

In the latest edition of [*Psychological Science in the Public Interest*](#), researchers look at the problems with eyewitness misidentifications in the courtroom and explain why prosecutors and law enforcement should test a witness's memory of a suspect only once. Joining us is John Wixted, a researcher at the University of California at San Diego and first author on this article.