

New Research on Aging From Psychological Science

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Read about the latest research on cognitive and perceptual processes in aging published in *Psychological Science*.

[Distraction Can Reduce Age-Related Forgetting](#)

Renée K. Biss, K. W. Joan Ngo, Lynn Hasher, Karen L. Campbell, and Gillian Rowe

Can distraction improve memory in older adults? Older and younger adults studied a list of words and then performed a working memory task in which half of the original words appeared as distractors. Participants were then asked to recall as many words as they could from the original word list. Older adults had better memory for words from the list that had been repeated in the working memory task. Younger individuals had similar memory for words from the list regardless of whether they had appeared in the working memory task or not. The researchers suggest that exposure to distraction may serve as a rehearsal episode for older adults and thus help boost their memory.

[Age-Related Changes in Attentional Reference Frames for Peripersonal Space](#)

Emily K. Bloesch, Christopher C. Davoli, and Richard A. Abrams

Do older adults represent mental peripheral space differently than do younger adults? The researchers recorded hand movements of older and younger adults as they viewed the outline of nine boxes and touched the one that turned green as quickly as possible. Analysis of each participant's response times and hand movements indicated that younger individuals used their hand as a frame of reference for their movements, whereas older adults used their body. This suggests that changes seen in adults' frame of reference could be due to age-related reductions in representations of hand-centered personal space.

[Learning to See, but Not Discriminate, Visual Forms Is Impaired in Aging](#)

Shu-Guang Kuai and Zoe Kourtzi

Is visual form learning maintained in older adults? Younger and older adults were shown dots placed in a radial, concentric, or intermediate pattern. Participants were asked to determine if the pattern they saw was concentric or radial. Each individual completed a pretraining session, 4-5 training sessions, and a posttraining session. The researchers found that training improved both local integration and global form discrimination in young adults. In comparison, training increased only global discrimination in older adults. This suggests that visual form learning in older adults is limited by the performance of processes related to extracting and integrating local elements.