

Witnesses' memories can be improved

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British researchers have developed a technique to make crime witnesses' memories more accurate and stronger.

Fiona Gabbert of Portay University in Dundee and Lorraine Hope of Portsmouth University headed the team that developed the self-administered interview, *The Scotsman* reported. They say witnesses who have gone through the interview are 42 percent more reliable than those who have not.

Gabbert said police often focus on a few key witnesses immediately after a crime has been reported. Others may not be interviewed for weeks, while their memories fade.

"Decades of research in cognitive psychology demonstrate that memory decay, or forgetting, occurs rapidly at first," she said. "In a witnessing situation, this forgetting will occur naturally and within hours of the incident."

The tool includes detailed questions about where witnesses were and what they were doing and thinking, as well as questions about perpetrators and other details. It allows witnesses to interview themselves while their memories are fresh.

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