

# New technique boosts eyewitness recall

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New research from a memory expert at James Cook University in Australia shows there may be a simple way to help eyewitnesses of crimes remember more about what they have seen.

JCU psychology lecturer Dr Craig Thorley showed 200 volunteers a video of a woman being mugged and then tested them on what they remembered, using two different interview techniques.

He said the results using the new Category Cluster Recall (CCR) [technique](#) stood out.

"Using this system, we prompt eyewitnesses to first remember what the [people](#) involved in the crime looked like, then the what those people did, then the environment the crime took place in."

Dr Thorley said this differed from the standard police tactic of 'free recall', where people recall the details of a crime in whichever order they wished.

"It's the first study to compare CCR to free recall. We interviewed people using both methods and found using CCR produced superior results, with the people using it remembering more correct information about the [crime](#). It also increased the amount of different details they remembered."

Dr Thorley said scientists had yet to figure out exactly how the technique worked.

"I think it's likely that asking people to focus on one category of information at a time, such as what the people involved looked like, focuses their memory on that [category](#) and they offer more details related to it than they otherwise would."

Dr Thorley said the results were very promising, but more research had to be done before a change in police procedure was warranted.

**More information:** Craig Thorley, Enhancing individual and collaborative eyewitness memory with category clustering recall, *Memory* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/09658211.2018.1432058](https://doi.org/10.1080/09658211.2018.1432058)

Provided by James Cook University

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