

Overview of Human Memory Models

Early models of memory

Some of the first noted research on human memory was conducted in 1890 by [William James](#). Based on his works, James assumed memory consists out of two systems:

- primary memory, which lasts for a few seconds and holds in our consciousness the perception of events in our environment, and
- second memory, which has unlimited duration and can be brought to consciousness if wanted.

A measure for the capacity of short-term (primary) memory was first introduced even a bit earlier, in 1887, by Joseph Jacobs, who tested the span of digits his students were able to remember. Under the criterion that at least 50% of the digits need to be remembered correctly, subjects he tested mostly remembered about 7 digits. What he also noticed is that this result can be improved by grouping the digits (for example in groups of three), or reading aloud.

Bibliography

[Famous People and Their Contributions to the Study of Memory](#) Retrieved March 16, 2011.

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