

**MEMORY: PETERSON & PETERSON
DURATION OF STM**

Aim: To test how long STM lasts when rehearsal is prevented

Procedures:

- ❑ Participants were briefly shown a consonant trigram (i.e. three letters such as CPW or NGV)
- ❑ Participants were asked to count backwards in threes from a specified number to stop them thinking about the letters
- ❑ After intervals of 3, 6, 9, 12, 15 or 18 seconds, participants were asked to recall the original trigram
- ❑ The procedure was repeated several times using different trigrams

Findings:

- ❑ Participants were able to recall 80% of trigrams after a 3 second interval
- ❑ Progressively fewer trigrams were recalled as the time intervals lengthened
- ❑ After 18 seconds, fewer than 10% of the trigrams were recalled correctly

Conclusions:

- ❑ If rehearsal is prevented, information vanishes rapidly from STM
- ❑ Therefore decay is the mechanism for forgetting in short term memory

Criticisms:

- ❑ Trigrams are rather artificial things to remember and may not reflect everyday memory
- ❑ It is possible, however, that interference from the counting task (not merely decay) caused the poor recall.