

Three word recall

Clinical examination of memory functions often includes the administration of simple free recall tasks, such as the recall of several words following a few minutes. Little is known, however, about the normative parameters or psychometric properties of such procedures, and such techniques have rarely been compared with more comprehensive, well-standardized memory indices. To address these issues, two three-word recall tasks were administered to a large group of carefully selected healthy subjects over the age of 50 years. The Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) was obtained as an index of global cognitive status, and the California Verbal Learning Test (CVLT) was used to exclude subjects with abnormal memory abilities. Significant but modest relationships were found between two three-word recall tasks and CVLT results. Substantial variability was seen on three-word recall, with a significant proportion of normal subjects recalling zero or one word. Results suggest using caution in interpreting simple recall performance as an index of memory, as great variability in results is seen among healthy (particularly older) individuals ¹⁾.

¹⁾

Cullum CM, Thompson LL, Smernoff EN. Three-word recall as a measure of memory. J Clin Exp Neuropsychol. 1993 Mar;15(2):321-9. PubMed PMID: 8491854.

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