A

Attentional Blink

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Definition

Attentional blink (AB) is a phenomenon primarily reported in the visual domain (Horváth and Burgyán 2011), in which attention to a primary target results in a reduced likelihood of identifying a secondary target presented a short duration after. The effect is most pronounced in a 200–600 ms window after the initial target is presented (Nieuwenstein et al. 2009). The classic paradigm involves the rapid serial visual presentation (RSVP) of letters, with a primary target letter and secondary target letter embedded within the RSVP. When the secondary target in the RSVP appears during the AB window, the likelihood of successful identification is dramatically reduced. If the secondary target is presented outside the 200–600 ms window, a deficit in identification does not occur. The initial reports of the AB reported that the effect depended on the inclusion of distractor letters in the RSVP (Raymond et al.

1992), though more recent reports have suggested that this may not be the case (Visser 2007). Mechanistically, the AB is thought to reflect a constraint in the ability of the nervous system to deploy selective attention (Dux and Marois 2009) and not to be constrained by sensory limitations.

References and Readings

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