### Eyewitness Identification Check List

Which of these factors are present in your case?

- Cross-racial identification
- Alcohol intoxication of witness
- Weapon focus
- Long or short exposure time
- Stressful event
- Violent event
- Senior/Child witness
- Night viewing
- Police as witnesses
- Distinctive clothing
- Mug Shots
- Composites
- Lineups & Showups
- Highly confident witnesses
- Repeated viewing of suspect
- In-court identification

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**Contact:** Kim MacLin, PhD  
**Phone:** 319-273-2302  
**FAX:** 319-273-6188  
**Email:** kim.maclin@uni.edu  
**Website:** [http://eyewitness-identification.com](http://eyewitness-identification.com)
Estimator variables are factors inherent to the witnessed event whose impact on eyewitness identification can only be estimated after the fact. System variables are factors affecting eyewitness identification that are under the control of the criminal justice system. Both can impact your case.

## Psychological Factors in Eyewitness Identification

### Memory processes
Memory processes are scientifically well-established and knowledge of them often can shed light on factors relevant to eyewitness memory and identification.

### Attitudes/Expectations
An eyewitness’s interpretation and memory of an event are affected by expectations.

### Cross-race identification
Eyewitnesses are less accurate when identifying members of other races than members of their own race.

### Alcohol intoxication
Alcohol reduces an eyewitness’s ability to later recall persons and events.

### Weapon focus
The presence of a weapon held by the perpetrator makes it more difficult for an eyewitness to make a correct ID.

### Exposure time
The more time an eyewitness has to observe an event or person the more he/she will remember.

### Stress
High levels of stress reduce the accuracy of an eyewitness’s memory for an event.

### Event violence
The victim’s memory for the attacker is generally less accurate as the degree of violence increases.

### Child accuracy & suggestibility
Young children are less accurate than adults when recalling memories of past events, and are more influenced by interviewer suggestions that may not be true.

### Elderly witness
Compared to younger adults, elderly eyewitnesses are less accurate in their recollection of events.

### Opportunity to view
Viewing angle, distance, and amount of time can impact the quality of the eyewitness’s memory.

### Perceptual issues
- Lighting (amount, type and quality) and visual or auditory impairment all impact eyewitness memory.

### Unconscious transference
- When eyewitnesses are asked to identify the person they saw commit a crime, they sometimes mistakenly identify someone they have seen somewhere else.

### Trained observers (Police as witnesses)
- Police officers are about as accurate as eyewitnesses as the average person.

### Source monitoring
- Difficulty remembering the source of the information, and/or confusing the source of the information.

### Clothing bias
- Identifying clothing, instead of identifying the face.

### Interviewing witnesses
- The wording of questions can influence an eyewitness’ answers in major ways.

### Hypnotic suggestibility & accuracy
- Hypnosis generally increases the likelihood that an eyewitness will accept leading/suggestive questions asked by the interviewer.

### Post-event information
- When eyewitnesses are asked to report about an event they saw, their report generally includes not only what they actually saw, but also relevant information learned after the event.

### Mug shot-induced bias
- If a witness does not identify a suspect from mug shots, but later sees one of the mug shots in a lineup, they are more likely to pick the mug shot he/she has seen before.

### Composite bias
- Viewing composites can distort witness memory.

### Lineup construction
- There are lineup construction techniques that can unduly bias eyewitness memory.

### Description-matched
- If a witness provides a verbal description of a suspect, members of the lineup should match general and specific features of that description.

### Lineup fairness
- Lineups can be constructed to be an accurate test of memory.

### Lineup evaluation
- Lineups can be scientifically evaluated to determine if they were constructed correctly and are fair.

### Lineup Presentation
- How a lineup (live or photo) is presented impacts the quality of the identification.

### Lineup instructions
- The police instructions can influence the choice made by the eyewitness.

### Administrator bias
- The officer administrating the lineup should not know who the suspect is.

### Identification speed
- The longer it takes an eyewitness to identify someone in a lineup, the less accurate that identification is likely to be.

### Accuracy-confidence
- An eyewitness’s confidence does not tell us anything about the accuracy of the identification.

### Confidence malleability
- When a person ruminates over the details of an event, his/her confidence in the memory of that event is likely to increase over time.

### Repeated viewing
- When witnesses have multiple opportunities to see the suspect or a photo of the suspect, their memory is impacted.

### In-court identification
- Having witnesses identify the suspect in court is unduly suggestive and is not recommended.

The Institute for Psychological Science provides consultation, research, testimony, and training for attorneys and law enforcement regarding issues related to eyewitness memory and identification in order to promote the most effective use of psychological research in practice and in the courtroom.