



Interviewing Preschoolers

A Bibliography

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**Championing and Strengthening the
Global Response to Child Abuse**

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Scope

This bibliography provides publications that discuss a variety of topics related to the forensic interview of preschool age children.

Organization

Publications include articles, book chapters, reports, and research briefs and are arranged in date descending order. Links are provided to full text publications when possible. However, this collection may not be complete. More information can be obtained in the Child Abuse Library Online.

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A Bibliography

Henderson, H., Sullivan, C. E., Wylie, B. E., Stolzenberg, S. N., Evans, A. D., & Lyon, T. D. (2023). [Child witnesses productively respond to "How" questions about evaluations but struggle with other "How" questions](#). *Child Maltreatment*, 28(3), 417–426.
DOI:10.1177/10775595231175913

Child interviewers are often advised to avoid asking "How" questions, particularly with young children. However, children tend to answer "How" evaluative questions productively (e.g., "How did you feel?"). "How" evaluative questions are phrased as a "How" followed by an auxiliary verb (e.g., "did" or "was"), but so are "How" questions requesting information about method or manner (e.g., "How did he touch you?"), and "How" method/manner questions might be more difficult for children to answer. We examined 458 5- to 17-year-old children questioned about sexual abuse, identified 2485 "How" questions with an auxiliary verb, and classified them as "How" evaluative (n = 886) or "How" method/manner (n = 1599). Across age, children gave more productive answers to "How" evaluative questions than "How" method/manner questions. Although even young children responded appropriately to "How" method/manner questions over 80% of the time, specific types of "How" method/manner questions were particularly difficult, including questions regarding clothing, body positioning, and the nature of touch. Children's difficulties lie in specific combinations of "How" questions and topics, rather than "How" questions in general.

Chae, Y., Hartman, D. T., & Goodman, G. S. (2022). What children remember after talking with parents: Implications for children's memory and testimony. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 11(3), 328–333.
DOI:10.1037/mac0000067

Comments on the article by G. F. Principe and K. London. Research on parent–child discussion addresses a crucial topic, contributing both to theory and application, with

special relevance to child sexual abuse (CSA) cases. Children often first disclose CSA to a parent and thus how that conversation goes has pervasive implications. In this commentary, the authors attempt to deepen discussion of this topic. Specifically, we present findings to balance past research reviews and comment on the generalizability of studies to CSA cases. Overall, they seek an explicitly developmental approach, as children's memory and suggestibility are, on average, tied to their age, especially for preschoolers, although there are individual differences at each age as well. Many factors, such as attachment and culture, also play important roles. They congratulate Principe and London for their focus on a key issue within the study of memory development and children's testimony.

Principe, G. F., & London, K. (2022). How parents can shape what children remember: Implications for the testimony of young witnesses. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 11(3), 289–302. DOI:10.1037/mac0000059

Forensic investigations involving children carry heavy consequences and often present immense challenges. Most child maltreatment allegations first occur in an informal setting, where young witnesses discuss legally relevant information with parents before official interviews. After decades of developmental research on how various qualities of formal interviews can shape children's forensic reports, a growing body of work examining parent-child memory-sharing exchanges demonstrates that informal conversations with others outside of investigative interviews are a powerful source of mnemonic influence. Not only can suggestions offered by parents intrude into children's later independent accounts, they also can lead children to make novel and elaborate reports of nonoccurring events. Despite the potency of parental conversations on children's recollections, children typically fail to recognize parents as the source of memory errors. We offer suggestions for future research and legal practice.

Henderson, H. M., & Lyon, T. D. (2021). Children's signaling of incomprehension: The diagnosticity of practice questions during interview instructions. *Child Maltreatment*, 26(1), 95–104. DOI:10.1177/1077559520971350

Forensic interviewers are routinely advised to instruct children that they should indicate when they do not understand a question. This study examined whether administering the instruction with a practice question may help interviewers identify the means by which individual children signal incomprehension. We examined 446 interviews with children questioned about abuse, including 252 interviews in which interviewers administered the instruction with a practice question (4- to 13-year-old children; Mage = 7.7). Older children more often explicitly referred to incomprehension when answering the practice question and throughout the interviews, whereas younger children simply requested repetition or gave "don't know" responses, and individual children's responses to the practice questions predicted their responses later in the interviews. Similarly, older children were more likely to seek confirmation of their understanding of interviewers' questions and to request specification. The results highlight the need for interviewers to test and closely monitor younger children's responses for ambiguous signs of incomprehension.

Lawson, M., Jaeger, B., McManus, E., Speidel, R., & Valentino, K. (2021). Maternal reminiscing is associated with preschoolers' reports of maltreatment during forensic interviews. *Child Maltreatment*, 26(1), 105–114. DOI:10.1177/1077559520925180

Children's reports during forensic interviews regarding maltreatment allegations are often critical for legal processes and for guiding decisions regarding services for children and their families. Field research examining forensic interviews with children has identified a wide range in the amount of information children report to interviewers. Research examining associations between children's forensic reports and their broader ecological and developmental contexts related to autobiographical memory would critically contribute to our understanding of children's reports of trauma during forensic

investigations. Guided by the sociocultural theory of autobiographical memory development and a self-determination perspective of interviewing child witnesses, associations between the number of allegation-relevant details reported by 52 preschoolers ($M = 4.59$ years old, $SD = 1.06$) during forensic interviews concerning substantiated maltreatment allegations and later maternal elaborative and autonomy supportive reminiscing from observations of mother-child interactions during a laboratory assessment were examined. Consistent with previous research regarding children's autobiographical memory, a positive association between maternal elaborative reminiscing about everyday experiences with their children and the number of unique allegation-relevant details children reported during forensic interviews was observed, but only when mothers reminisced with their children in an autonomy supportive manner. Theoretical and practical implications for interviewing child witnesses are discussed.

Magnusson, M., Ernberg, E., Landström, S., Joleby, M., Akehurst, L., Korkman, J., & Ask, K. (2021). [The effects of drawing on preschoolers' statements about experienced and non-experienced events](#). *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 35(2), 497–507. DOI:10.1002/acp.3772

Although drawing is frequently used during investigative interviews, few studies have explored the effectiveness of draw-and-talk techniques with very young children. In this article, we examined the effects of drawing on preschoolers' (3–6 years old) reports of self-experienced and non-experienced events. In Study I, we interviewed 83 preschoolers about a staged event. We did not observe any significant statement differences between children asked to draw-and-talk compared to a verbal-only condition. In Study II, we interviewed 25 preschoolers about a nonexperienced event. Twenty-one children initially denied the event. When asked if they could help the interviewer draw a person from the event, 13 (61.9%) children complied with the request and eventually provided several false details. While drawing did not significantly increase the average number of details,

exploratory findings indicated that drawing may have helped a subset of children. However, drawing might impair children's accuracy when suggestively interviewed about nonexperienced events.

Magnusson, M., Joleby, M., Ernberg, E., Akehurst, L., Korkman, J., & Landström, S. (2021). Preschoolers' true and false reports: Comparing effects of the Sequential Interview and NICHD protocol. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 26*(1), 83–102. DOI:10.1111/lcrp.12185

The current study aimed to examine a Norwegian technique for conducting investigative interviews with preschoolers: the Sequential Interview (SI). The SI advocates for increased initial rapport building and includes a pre-determined break before the substantive phase. To explore the potential benefits and risks of the SI, the technique was compared with an adapted version of the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) protocol. A total of 129 preschoolers (3–6 years) were interviewed with either the SI or NICHD protocol about a self-experienced (Exp. I) or non-experienced (Exp. II) event. For Exp. I, no significant difference was observed across interview conditions in the number of reported details about a self-experienced event. Children interviewed with the SI exhibited a slightly lower accuracy rate compared to those interviewed with the NICHD protocol. For Exp. II, a total of 31.1% of the preschoolers initially assented to remembering a fictive (false) experience and 15.6% gave an account (>40 details) of the non-experienced event. We found no difference between interviewing conditions in assent rates or number of false accounts. The study provides valuable insights into the difficulties involved when interviewing young children. The results showed few differences between the novel SI model and the well-established NICHD protocol. While many preschoolers could provide accurate testimony, some embedded worrisome false details in their narratives. Furthermore, a minority of children gave false reports about non-experienced events when interviewed with the two techniques. Methodological limitations and suggestions for future research will be discussed.

McWilliams, K., Williams, S., Stolzenberg, S. N., Evans, A. D., & Lyon, T. D. (2021). [Don't know responding in young maltreated children: The effects of wh-questions type and enhanced interview instructions](#). *Law and Human Behavior*, 45(2), 124-137.
DOI:10.1037/lhb0000404

Objective: Two studies examined 4–7-year-old maltreated children’s “I don’t know” (IDK) responses to wh- questions after receiving various interview instructions. Hypotheses: We predicted (H1) children would be less inclined to give IDK responses and more inclined to guess to color/number questions compared to other wh- questions; (H2) IDK instructions would increase children’s IDK responding compared to no instructions, with an increase in accuracy; but (H3) instructions would be less effective in reducing guessing for color/number questions than other wh- questions. In Study 1, we predicted that (H4) verbalizing a commitment to answer IDK would be particularly effective. In Study 2, we predicted that (H5) IDK instructions would reduce children’s accurate corrective responses, but that (H6) the negative effect of IDK instructions on corrective responses would be alleviated by a “correct the interviewer” instruction. Method: Across 2 studies, 301 four- to seven-year-old ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.09$) maltreated children viewed videos and answered wh- questions about true and false details. Both studies included a within-subjects manipulation of wh- types (color/number & wh- detail) and a between-subjects manipulation of instructions (Study 1: IDK practice, IDK practice/verbalize, control; Study 2: IDK, correct me, IDK + correct me, control). Results: In both studies, (a) color/number questions elicited more guessing than wh- detail questions, (b) IDK instructions decreased inaccurate responses, but they also decreased accurate responses, including accurate corrective responses, and (c) IDK instructions had a larger effect on wh- detail questions, reducing accurate corrective responses. In Study 1, verbalization failed to enhance the effect of instructions. In Study 2, the negative effect of IDK instructions on accurate corrective responses was not alleviated by instructions to correct the interviewer. Conclusions: Among young maltreated children, color/number questions elicit higher rates of guessing than other wh- questions. IDK instructions reduced inaccurate responses, but also reduced accurate responses.

Wylie, B., Stolzenberg, S. N., McWilliams, K., Evans, A. D., & Lyon, T. D. (2021). Young children's ability to describe intermediate clothing placement. *Child Maltreatment*, 26(1), 87–94. DOI:10.1177/1077559520930825

Children's ability to adequately describe clothing placement is essential to evaluating their allegations of sexual abuse. Intermediate clothing placement (partially removed clothing) may be difficult for young children to describe, requiring more detailed explanations to indicate the location of clothing (e.g., the clothes were pulled down to the knees). The current study investigated 172 3- to 6-year-olds' descriptions of clothing placement when responding to commonly used questions (yes/no, forced-choice, open-choice, where), as well as children's on-off response tendencies when describing intermediate placement (i.e., labeling the clothing as fully on or off). Results revealed that where questions were superior in eliciting intermediate descriptions, even for the youngest children. Children sometimes exhibited tendencies to describe intermediate placements as "on" or "off," which varied by question-type and clothing placement. The implications of the findings for interviewing young children about sexual abuse are discussed.

Baugerud, G. A., Johnson, M. S., Hansen, H. B., Magnussen, S., & Lamb, M. E. (2020). [Forensic interviews with preschool children: An analysis of extended interviews in Norway \(2015–2017\)](#). *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 34(3), 654–663. DOI:10.1002/acp.3647

This study examined the quality of forensic interviews conducted by specially trained police officers in the Norwegian Barnahus between 2015 and 2017, using the sequential interview (SI) model, a Norwegian version of the extended interview model that has not previously been studied. Two hundred and seven interviews of alleged abused preschool children (3–7 years old) were selected from around the country. Developmental trends in interview dynamics and the pattern of disclosure were analyzed. Analyses showed that the interviews were long but involved few open-ended and many suggestive questions, especially in interviews with the youngest children who did not disclose. Because similar

findings were obtained in previous studies of Norwegian interviews not using this model, the findings suggest that the SI interview model does little to improve the formal quality of forensic interviews with very young children, and show the need to develop new forms of interviewer training which are more intensive than those currently employed.

Benedan, L., Zajac, R., McFarlane, F., & Powell, M. B. (2020). Attentional difficulty is a risk factor for interrogative suggestibility in preschoolers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 119, 105487. DOI:10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105487

Preschool children are particularly prone to suggestion. Here, we examined the extent to which temperament variables and internalising and externalising problems influenced preschoolers' suggestibility. Children aged between 3 and 5 years (N = 140) completed the Video Suggestibility Scale for Children (Scullin & Ceci, 2001), and their kindergarten teachers completed two questionnaires: the EAS Temperament Survey for Children, and the Child Behaviour Checklist. As expected, age and free recall performance were both negatively related to susceptibility to misleading questions. Attentional difficulty was the only individual difference variable that added predictive value to this model. None of our individual difference variables were related to the extent to which children changed their responses in the face of negative feedback. We propose that attentional difficulties might be a particularly strong correlate of suggestibility when children are very young, and we outline the implications of this finding for forensic interviewers who solicit preschoolers' accounts.

Cordisco Steele, L. (2020). [Interviewing preschool children](https://apsaclibrary.org/publications/2020%20Number%202/10567.pdf). *APSAC Advisor*, 32(2), 64-71. <https://apsaclibrary.org/publications/2020%20Number%202/10567.pdf>

Conducting forensic interviews of child witnesses is an important and complex task, no matter the age of the children, and is an essential component of investigations of alleged abuse. However, forensic interviewers are uniquely challenged when questioning

preschool children about possible experiences of maltreatment for a variety of cognitive and socioemotional reasons. It is well documented that preschool children can provide accurate information about remembered experiences when properly questioned by interviewers who do not exceed the children's developmental abilities. Preschool children, like older children, provide the most complete and accurate information when emphasis is placed on free-recall retrieval strategies. Recommendations for evidence-based practice in forensic interviewing must be adapted to meet the emotional and developmental needs and respect the limitations of very young children serving as witnesses.

Gagnon, K., & Cyr, M. (2017). Sexual abuse and preschoolers: Forensic details in regard of question types. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 67, 109–118. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.02.022

The present study looks into the association between the types of questions used by interviewers and the number of details obtained among preschoolers during an investigative interview. An innovative aspect of this study concerns the analysis of question subtypes (eg. open-ended directive and closed-ended). Analysis of variance were carried out on 55 NICHD interview protocols conducted among children aged three to five years old who disclosed an episode of sexual abuse. Findings reveal that interviewers' style is in accordance with best practices in conducting investigative interviews with children allegedly victims of sexual abuse. As expected, there are more details in answers: 1) provided by older children compared to younger counterparts; 2) following invitations compared to all other question types. However, the analysis of question subtypes has shown that answers given to an open-ended question using cues (cued invitations or directive open-ended) obtained more details concerning the incident compared to the absence of cues (general invitations). These findings support the fact that children as young as three years old are able to produce informative responses when questioned appropriately about the CSA incident and propose reconsidering the types of question that should mainly be used with them. Findings

suggest that the use of open-ended questions, using a cue previously mentioned in the testimony of the child, helps provide a detailed account during an investigative interview conducted among preschoolers allegedly victims of sexual abuse.

Magnusson, M., Ernberg, E., & Landstrom, S. (2017). Preschoolers' disclosures of child sexual abuse: Examining corroborated cases from Swedish courts. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 70, 199–209. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.05.018

Young victims of child sexual abuse can – for a range of developmental, motivational and contextual reasons – have difficulties disclosing their experiences. In the present study, corroborated court cases concerning 57 preschoolers' disclosures of sexual abuse were examined using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Together, the cases involved 53 girls and 4 boys between 2–6 years ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 1.2$) during the (first) incident of abuse. The children were between 3–7 years ($M = 5.3$, $SD = 1.2$) during their police interview. Analyses showed that many children could provide at least one central detail about the abuse to; i) informal disclosure recipients, and ii) during their police interview. However, the time up until their first disclosure was often delayed. A range of barriers for disclosing were observed in the court cases, and many young victims were assessed as reluctant during their police interview. Repeated sessions, direct questions, and other reassurances could at times facilitate the disclosure process. Other suggestions on actions and future research that may help young child abuse victims are discussed.

Middleton, J. (2017). Memory development and trauma in preschool children: Implications for forensic interviewing professionals – A review of the literature. *Forensic Research & Criminology International Journal*, 4(1), 00100. DOI:10.15406/frcij.2017.04.00100

Currently, very little research exists that connects what is known regarding autobiographical memory development with the field of child forensic interviewing. Knowledge regarding autobiographical memory development is especially important

when applying forensic interviewing techniques in interviews with young children aged 3–6. Due to a lack of knowledge by interviewing professionals regarding memory development, as well as pressure from law enforcement, judges, and juries, children are often pushed beyond their capabilities. In an effort to connect these two fields of expertise, this paper explores the research regarding autobiographical memory development in preschool children, specifically focusing on the impact of trauma on children's memories as well as developmental differences regarding memory retrieval in young children. Based on a critique of the current literature, implications for future research and practice regarding the trajectory of memory development as a predictor of a child's ability to describe a traumatic event are offered.

Stolzenberg, S. N., McWilliams, K., & Lyon, T. D. (2017). [Spatial language, question type, and young children's ability to describe clothing: Legal and developmental implications](#). *Law and Human Behavior*, 41(4), 398–409. DOI:10.1037/lhb0000237

Children's descriptions of clothing placement and touching with respect to clothing are central to assessing child sexual abuse allegations. This study examined children's ability to answer the types of questions attorneys and interviewers typically ask about clothing, using the most common spatial terms (on/off, outside/inside, over/under). Ninety-seven 3- to 6-year-olds were asked yes/no (e.g., "Is the shirt on?"), forced-choice (e.g., "Is the shirt on or off?"), open-choice (e.g., "Is the shirt on or off or something else?"), or where questions (e.g., "Where is the shirt?") about clothing using a human figurine, clothing, and stickers. Across question types, children generally did well with simple clothing or sticker placement (e.g., pants completely on), except for yes/no questions about "over," suggesting children had an underinclusive understanding of the word. When clothing or sticker placement was intermediate (e.g., pants around ankles, and therefore neither completely on nor off), children performed poorly except when asked where questions. A similar task using only stickers and boxes, analogous to forensic interviewers' assessments of children's understanding, was only weakly predictive of children's ability

to describe clothing. The results suggest that common methods of questioning young children about clothing may lead to substantial misinterpretation.

Malloy, L. C., Orbach, Y., Lamb, M. E., & Walker, A. G. (2016). "How" and "Why" prompts in forensic investigative interviews with preschool children. *Applied Developmental Science*, 21(1), 58–66. DOI:10.1080/10888691.2016.1158652

Although young children may frequently be asked "How" and "Why" questions, it is unclear whether they have the ability to respond well enough to justify the use of these words during investigative interviews. The range of possible uses and interpretations of the words "How" and "Why" makes it critical to examine their use when communicatively immature children are interviewed. In this study, police interviews of 3- to 5-year-old suspected victims of sexual abuse ($n = 49$) were examined. The use of How/Why prompts by interviewers and children's responses to interviewers' How/Why prompts were coded. How/Why prompts represented 22% of all interviewer prompts. Of all details provided by children, however, 8.5% were in response to How/Why prompts. In addition, children provided the information sought in response to only 20% of the interviewers' How/Why prompts, whereas uninformative responses were relatively common. Children responded to more How/Why prompts with the information sought by interviewers as they grew older. The findings suggest that How/Why prompts may not be particularly effective when interviewing preschool children.

Blything, L. P., Davies, R., & Cain, K. (2015). [Young children's comprehension of temporal relations in complex sentences: The influence of memory on performance](#). *Child Development*, 86(6), 1922–1934. DOI:10.1111/cdev.12412

The present study investigated 3- to 7-year-olds' ($N = 91$) comprehension of two-clause sentences containing the temporal connectives before or after. The youngest children used an order of mention strategy to interpret the relation between clauses: They were

more accurate when the presentation order matched the chronological order of events: “He ate his lunch, before he played in the garden” (chronological) versus “Before he played in the garden, he ate his lunch” (reverse). Between 4 and 6 years, performance was influenced by a combination of factors that influenced processing load: connective type and presentation order. An independent measure of working memory was predictive of performance. The study concludes that the memory demands of some sentence structures limits young children’s comprehension of sentences containing temporal connectives.

Cordisco Steele, L., & National Children’s Advocacy Center. (2015). *Do forensic interview protocols work for preschoolers?*. National Children’s Advocacy Center.

Mehrani, M. B., & Peterson, C. (2015). [Recency tendency: Responses to forced-choice questions](#). *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 29(3), 418–424. DOI:10.1002/acp.3119

The present study was conducted to investigate whether forced-choice questions would lead to any particular tendency in young children’s responses. Two experiments were conducted in which 3- to 5-year-olds children were shown a short animation and then were asked a set of two-option, forced-choice questions. Consistent findings were obtained: (i) Forced-choice questions influenced children’s responses; (ii) Children displayed a consistent ‘recency tendency.’ That is, they tended to choose the second option in forced-choice questions; (iii) This tendency grew weaker as children aged. The findings suggest that forced-choice questions carry some suggestibility load and can bias children’s responses.

Evans, A. D., Stolzenberg, S., Lee, K., & Lyon, T. D. (2014). [Young children's difficulty with indirect speech acts: Implications for questioning child witnesses](#). *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 32, 775–788. DOI:10.1002/bsl.2142

Prior research suggests that infelicitous choice of questions can significantly underestimate children's actual abilities, independently of suggestiveness. One possibly difficult question type is indirect speech acts such as "Do you know..." questions (DYK, e.g., "Do you know where it happened?"). These questions directly ask if respondents know, while indirectly asking what respondents know. If respondents answer "yes," but fail to elaborate, they are either ignoring or failing to recognize the indirect question (known as pragmatic failure). Two studies examined the effect of indirect speech acts on maltreated and non-maltreated 2- to 7-year-olds' post-event interview responses. Children were read a story and later interviewed using DYK and Wh- questions. Additionally, children completed a series of executive functioning tasks. Both studies revealed that using DYK questions increased the chances of pragmatic failure, particularly for younger children and those with lower inhibitory control skills.

Fivush, R., & Merrill, N. (2014). The personal past as historically, culturally and socially constructed. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 28(3), 301–303. DOI:10.1002/acp.3017

Korkman, J., Juusola, A., & Santtila, P. (2014). Who made the disclosure? Recorded discussions between children and caretakers suspecting child abuse. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 20(10), 994–1004. DOI:10.1080/1068316X.2014.902455

Within investigations of suspected child abuse, the child's account is often at the core of the judicial process. When analysing the child's account, it is therefore important to consider how parents may have discussed the suspected abuse prior to the official investigation. However, no studies up to the present time have investigated discussions in real cases where parents suspect that their children have been abused. We analysed a sample (N = 19) of recorded conversations between parents and their children,

delivered to the police as evidence for alleged physical or sexual abuse. Analyses of the questions used and the information provided in the discussions showed that the parent's strategies when questioning their children were extremely leading and that in the majority of the cases, all new information was provided by the parents. In spite of this, the parents deemed the recorded conversations as records of the children's accounts. While the sample was small and likely to be unrepresentative of child abuse suspicions in general, the findings have important practical implications. The results indicate that when planning an interview in a case where the alleged abuse relies on what a child allegedly has told a parent, particular caution should be taken when referring to these conversations.

Lyon, T. D., & Evans, A. D. (2014). [Young children's understanding that promising guarantees performance: The effects of age and maltreatment](#). *Law and Human Behavior*, 38(2), 162-170. DOI:10.1037/lhb0000061

Two studies, with 102 nonmaltreated 3- to 6-year-old children and 96 maltreated 4- to 7-year-old children, examined children's understanding of the relative strengths of "I promise," "I will," "I might," and "I won't," to determine the most age-appropriate means of eliciting a promise to tell the truth from child witnesses. Children played a game in which they chose which of 2 boxes would contain a toy after hearing story characters make conflicting statements about their intent to place a toy in each box (e.g., one character said "I will put a toy in my box" and the other character said "I might put a toy in my box"). Children understood "will" at a younger age than "promise." Nonmaltreated children understood that "will" is stronger than "might" by 3 years of age and that "promise" is stronger than "might" by 4 years of age. The youngest nonmaltreated children preferred "will" to "promise," whereas the oldest nonmaltreated children preferred "promise" to "will." Maltreated children exhibited a similar pattern of performance, but with delayed understanding that could be attributed to delays in

vocabulary. The results support a modified oath for children: “Do you promise that you will tell the truth?”

Evans, A. D., & Lee, K. (2013). [Emergence of lying in very young children](#). *Developmental Psychology*, 49(10), 1958–1963. DOI:10.1037/a0031409

Lying is a pervasive human behavior. Evidence to date suggests that from the age of 42 months onward, children become increasingly capable of telling lies in various social situations. However, there is limited experimental evidence regarding whether very young children will tell lies spontaneously. The present study investigated the emergence of lying in very young children. Sixty-five 2- to 3-year-olds were asked not to peek at a toy when the experimenter was not looking. The majority of children (80%) transgressed and peeked at the toy. When asked whether they had peeked at the toy, most 2-year-old peekers were honest and confessed to their peeking, but with increased age, more peekers denied peeking and thus lied. However, when asked follow-up questions that assessed their ability to maintain their initial lies, most children failed to conceal their lie by pretending to be ignorant of the toy’s identity. Additionally, after controlling for age, children’s executive functioning skills significantly predicted young children’s tendency to lie. These findings suggest that children begin to tell lies at a very young age.

Heather Fritzley, V., Lindsay, R. C., & Lee, K. (2013). [Young children's response tendencies toward yes–no questions concerning actions](#). *Child Development*, 84(2), 711–725. DOI:10.1111/cdev.12006

Two experiments investigated response tendencies of preschoolers toward yes–no questions about actions. Two hundred 2- to 5-year-old children were asked questions concerning actions commonly associated with particular objects (e.g., drinking from a cup) and actions not commonly associated with particular objects (e.g., kicking a toothbrush). The impact of delay and comprehension of questions were also

investigated. Results revealed a consistent developmental transition: Younger children tended to display a yes bias whereas older children did not display a bias unless they faced incomprehensible questions, in which case they displayed a nay-saying bias. Delay shifted children's responses in such a way that "no" answers were given more often. These findings hold important implications regarding the use of yes-no questions with children.

Okanda, M., Kanda, T., Ishiguro, H., & Itakura, S. (2013). Three- and 4-year-old children's response tendencies to various interviewers. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 116(1), 68–77. DOI:10.1016/j.jecp.2013.03.012

Unlike young preschoolers, older preschoolers may exhibit a response bias under social pressure from authoritative interviewers. To examine this, 3- and 4-year-old preschoolers were asked yes-no questions about familiar and unfamiliar objects in three conditions. In one condition an adult asked them questions in a live interaction, in a second condition an adult asked questions via video, and in a third condition a robot asked questions via video. The 3-year-olds exhibited a yes bias—a tendency to say "yes"—in nearly all conditions. The only exception was when they were asked questions about unfamiliar objects by the human interviewer via video, where they did not respond in a biased manner. The 4-year-olds exhibited a yes bias in only one condition—when they were questioned by a live human interviewer about both objects. They also exhibited a nay-saying bias when asked questions about unfamiliar objects in both video conditions, and they did not show any response bias in other conditions. The results suggest that the social pressure from an authoritative adult in a live interaction is problematic.

Walker, A. G. (2013). *Handbook on questioning children: A linguistic perspective* (3rd edition). ABA Center on Children and the Law.

A forensic linguist who does extensive training on questioning child victim/witnesses covers children's understanding of adult questions, problems to look out for in interviewing children, and language-related reasons for inconsistencies in children's testimony. Has references, checklist and suggestions for interviewing/questioning of children, sentence-building principles for talking to children, a prototype child competency voir dire, and an extensive author and subject index. New edition revises and updates 1994 materials, expands upon first edition's list of principles for questioning children, and adds a chapter on cross cultural issues affecting questioning of children.

Waterman, A., & Blades, M. (2013). The effect of delay and individual differences on children's tendency to guess. *Developmental Psychology*, 49(2), 215-226.
DOI:10.1037/a0028354

Few researchers have investigated the factors that influence children's tendency to indicate correctly when they do not know the answer to a question. In this study, 5- to 8-year-olds witnessed a staged event in their classroom and were subsequently interviewed about that event either the following day or after 5 months. Some of the questions were answerable based on the information in the event, and some were unanswerable such that children would have had to guess to provide an answer. Individual-difference measures were taken of children's verbal ability and self-perceptions. Delay, verbal ability, and children's self-perceptions all affected whether children correctly indicated when they did not know the answer to a question.

Battin, D. B., Ceci, S. J., & Lust, B. C. (2012). Do children really mean what they say? The forensic implications of preschoolers' linguistic referencing. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 33(4), 167–174. DOI:10.1016/j.appdev.2012.04.001

This study compared younger ($M=53$ months) and older ($M=90$ months) children's use of linguistic referential devices to make a positive identification. Children were shown a 4-minute video that concluded with a wrongful act. They were interviewed 24 hours later and asked to identify the perpetrator of the wrongful act with open-ended and directive questions. Younger children were significantly more likely to fail to provide any pertinent information ($p<.001$) or employ a restrictive modifier to accomplish singular definite reference to a specific perpetrator ($p<.001$). When children made an initial ambiguous reference, but failed to respond to directive questions by appropriately restricting their reference, a false suggestion was presented by the interviewer to resolve the ambiguity. Ultimately, 42% of the younger and 91% of the older children made an identification, with 13% and 62% correct, respectively. The implications of these findings for forensic interviewers are discussed.

Carrick, N., & Ramirez, M. (2012). Preschoolers' fantasy–reality distinctions of emotional events. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 112(4), 467–483. DOI:10.1016/j.jecp.2012.04.010

Research suggests that emotions influence children's ability to discern fantasy from reality; however, reasons for this association remain unknown. The current research sought to better understand the mechanisms underlying children's distinctions by examining the roles discrete emotions and context have in 3- to 5-year-olds' evaluations of fantasy and reality. In Study 1, children's fantasy– reality distinctions of images depicting happy, frightening, or sad events were obtained under two conditions: Children responded freely or were motivated to respond accurately. When responding freely, older children reported that happy and sad fantastic and real events could occur but frightening events could not. When motivated to respond accurately, children's accuracy

improved for fantasy but not for reality. Study 2 examined real events exclusively and found that children may lack the knowledge that frightening, but not happy or sad, real events can occur. The findings provide new insight into how emotions affect children's fantasy–reality distinctions.

Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M. E., Orbach, Y., Katz, C., & Horowitz, D. (2012). The development of communicative and narrative skills among preschoolers: Lessons from forensic interviews about child abuse. *Child Development, 83*(2), 611–622. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01704.x

This study examined age differences in 299 preschoolers' responses to investigative interviewers' questions exploring the suspected occurrence of child abuse. Analyses focused on the children's tendencies to respond (a) at all, (b) appropriately to the issue raised by the investigator, and (c) informatively, providing previously undisclosed information. Linear developmental trends characterized all types of responding. When the types of prompts were considered, 3- to 4-year-olds responded slightly more informatively to specific (directive) recall prompts than to open-ended prompts whereas children aged 5 and older were more responsive to open-ended recall prompts. The findings suggest that even 3-year-olds can provide information about experienced events when recall processes are activated, although the ability to provide narrative responses to open ended recall prompts only becomes reliable later in development.

Ahern, E. C., Lyon, T. D., & Quas, J. A. (2011). [Young children's emerging ability to make false statements](#). *Developmental Psychology, 47*(1), 61–66. DOI:10.1037/a0021272

This study examined the origins of children's ability to make consciously false statements, a necessary component of lying. Children 2 to 5 years of age were rewarded for claiming that they saw a picture of a bird when viewing pictures of fish. They were asked outcome questions ("Do you win/lose?"), recognition questions ("Do you have a bird/fish?"), and

recall questions (“What do you have?”), which were hypothesized to vary in difficulty depending on the need for consciousness of falsity (less for outcome questions) and self-generation of an appropriate response (more for recall questions). The youngest children (21/2 to 31/2 years old) were above chance on outcome questions, but it was not until age 31/2 that children performed above chance on recognition questions or were capable of maintaining false claims across question types. Findings have implications for understanding the emergence of deception in young children.

Carrick, N., Quas, J. A., & Lyon, T. (2010). [Maltreated and nonmaltreated children's evaluations of emotional fantasy](#). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34(2), 129-134. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2009.02.009

Thierry, K. L., Lamb, M. E., Pipe, M. E., & Spence, M. J. (2010). The flexibility of source-monitoring training: Reducing young children's source confusions. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 24(5), 626-644. DOI:10.1002/acp.1574

The effect of source-monitoring training on the ability of 3- to 4-year-old children to discriminate between events seen live and those described in a story was examined. All children saw a live presentation of a target event and heard about a similar target event from a storybook. Three to 4 days later, the children received either source-monitoring or control training involving a different set of events. Within each training condition, the children were taught to discriminate events (source training) or identify features of events (control training) acquired from sources that were either analogous (live-story events) or partially analogous (live-video events) to the target-event sources. Immediately after training, all children were asked to monitor the source of the target events seen a few days earlier. The children in both the analogous and partially analogous source-monitoring training groups more accurately distinguished between the target live and story events than did children in the control training groups. Copyright © 2009 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Kulkofsky, S., Wang, Q., & Ceci, S. J. (2008). Do better stories make better memories? Narrative quality and memory accuracy in preschool children. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 22(1), 21-38. DOI:10.1002/acp.1326

The present study examines how the quality of children's narratives relates to the accuracy of those narratives. Sixty-one 3- to 5-year-olds played a novel game with a researcher in their schools. Children were questioned in an interview that included an open-ended free recall prompt followed by a series of directed questions. Children's narratives were coded for volume, complexity and cohesion as well as for accuracy. Correlational results showed that overall, narrative skills enable the reporting of more information, while decreasing the proportion of information that was accurate. These results appeared to be driven by a quantity-accuracy trade-off; in an ensuing regression analysis with all narrative variables entered into the model, volume was associated with decreases in accuracy while narrative cohesion was associated with increases in accuracy. We discuss the results in terms of their relationship to the development of autobiographical memory as well as implications for forensic contexts.

Fivush, R., Haden, C. A., & Reese, E. (2006). Elaborating on elaborations: Role of maternal reminiscing style in cognitive and socioemotional development. *Child Development*, 77(6), 1568-1588. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00960.x

Initial research on maternal reminiscing style established clear and consistent individual differences that vary along a dimension of maternal elaboration and that are related to children's developing autobiographical skills. More recent research has linked maternal elaborative reminiscing to strategic memory development, language and literacy skills, developing attachment relationships, and understanding of self, other, and mind. In this review, this research is placed in theoretical context by arguing for the critical role of reminiscing in developmental process and outcome.

Tang, C. M. (2006). [Developmentally sensitive interviewing of preschool children: Some guidelines drawn from basic psychological research](#). *Criminal Justice Review*, 31(2), 132–145. DOI:10.1177/0734016806291191

Interviewing preschool children who are victims or witnesses of crime to ensure accuracy and completeness of their recall is no easy task. Rising up to the challenge, a large number of empirical psychological studies related to interviewing young children have been conducted in the past decades. Most of these studies were applied research, simulating circumstances of real forensic interviews. It is believed, however, that more basic research could also be informative. The present article thus selectively reviews more basic psychological research in the areas of memory development, language development, and conceptual development as they relate to the forensic interviewing of preschool children. Based on characteristics of preschool children's development in these areas, some useful guidelines are generated for forensic interviewers. Recommendations for future research are also made.

Cordón, I. M., Saetermoe, C. L., & Goodman, G. S. (2005). Facilitating children's accurate responses: Conversational rules and interview style. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 19(3), 249–266. DOI:10.1002/acp.1090

This study examined the effectiveness of teaching young children a set of social conversational rules as a method of reducing errors in children's memory reports. Forty children (aged 3 to 6 years) interacted with a confederate 'teaching assistant.' Three conversational rules were examined as possible means of decreasing inaccuracies. For comparison purposes, three placebo rules were also developed. To test the limitations of teaching young children a set of conversational rules, three interview styles (neutral, repetitive, accusatory) were used. Results indicated that children who received all three target rules provided a smaller proportion of incorrect responses than did children who received fewer target rules or than children in a placebo control group, regardless of interview style. Theoretical and applied issues are discussed.

Ryder, N., & Leinonen, E. (2003). [Use of context in question answering by 3-, 4- and 5 year-old children](#). *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 32(4), 397–415.
DOI:10.1023/A:1024847529077

This study investigates, within the theory of relevance of Sperber & Wilson (1995), how 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children ($n = 45$) use context when answering questions. The children were required to answer questions that placed differing contextual and processing demands on them, as predicted by the theory. The results indicate that an increasing ability to use complex contextual information was related to age and was reflected in the children's ability to answer questions appropriately. A developmental pattern became evident in terms of how the children assigned referents, enriched semantic underdetermination, and recovered implicatures. It also became evident that even at the age of 5 years 6 months the children were in the process of becoming more skilled at integrating contextually complex inferences. It was further shown how children's selection of the appropriate context, given the focus of the question, depended on how relevance was achieved in that context.

Talwar, V., & Lee, K. (2002). Development of lying to conceal a transgression: Children's control of expressive behavior during verbal deception. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 26(5), 436–444. DOI:10.1080/01650250143000373

The present study examined lying behaviour in children between 3 and 7 years of age with two experiments. A temptation resistance paradigm was used in which children were left alone in a room with a music-playing toy placed behind their back. The children were told not to peek at the toy. Most children could not resist the temptation and peeked at the toy. When the experimenter asked them whether they had peeked, about half of the 3-year-olds confessed to their transgression, whereas most older children lied. Naïve adult evaluators (undergraduate students and parents) who watched video clips of the children's responses could not discriminate lie-tellers from nonliars on the basis of their nonverbal expressive behaviours. However, the children were poor at semantic leakage

control and adults could correctly identify most of the lie-tellers based on their verbal statements made in the same context as the lie. The combined results regarding children's verbal and nonverbal leakage control suggest that children under 8 years of age are not fully skilled lie-tellers.

Waterman, A., Blades, M., & Spencer, C. (2002). How and why do children respond to nonsensical questions? In H. L. Westcott, G. M. Davies, & R. H. C. Bull (Eds.), *Children's testimony: A handbook of psychological research and forensic practice* (pp.147-160). Wiley. DOI:10.1002/9780470713679.ch10

Bauer, P. J., & Mandler, J. M. (2001). Remembering what happened next: Very young children's recall of event sequences. In R. Fivush & J. A. Hudson (Eds.), *Knowing and remembering in young children* (pp. 9-29). Cambridge University Press.

Focuses on three issues, all dealing directly with the question of whether or not the event representations of very young children [aged 16 to 23 months] share characteristics with those of older preschoolers. The questions are these: first, do very young children include temporal order information in their representations of events / second, do they use order information to organize their recall of newly experienced events / third, do they organize their recall around causal relations?

Dorado, J. S., & Saywitz, K. J. (2001). Interviewing preschoolers from low-and middle SES communities: A test of the Narrative Elaboration recall improvement technique. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 30(4), 568-580.
DOI:10.1207/S15374424JCCP3004_12

Tested the effectiveness of Narrative Elaboration (NE), a memory enhancement and interview preparation technique, with 99 preschool children from middle- and low-socioeconomic status (SES) communities. Half were trained with the NE intervention to utilize generic visual cue cards to provide forensically relevant details within four

information categories: participants, settings, actions, conversation. One day after the NE training, interviewers asked participants to recount an event staged 1 week earlier. Analyses revealed that NE-trained children from both SES levels recalled significantly more about the event than control children, without producing more errors, particularly when given an opportunity to elaborate on initial free recall using the visual cue cards. No such difference in free recall alone was found. Additionally, preschoolers from low-SES communities generated more errors than their middle-SES counterparts, regardless of treatment condition.

Farrar, M. J., & Goodman, G. S. (2001). Developmental differences in the relation between scripts and episodic memory: Do they exist? In R. Fivush & J. A. Hudson (Eds.), *Knowing and remembering in young children* (pp.30-64). Cambridge University Press.

Children display evidence of many similarities to adults in the nature and use of general event representations and autobiographical memory. Similarities such as these have prompted the proposal that across the preschool and adult years, developmental differences do not exist in the relation between general and autobiographical memory. Given the extent of change in cognitive skills, knowledge, and experience that occurs across this age range, can this proposal be true? The intent of this chapter is to answer this question and begins by briefly reviewing the basic assumptions of schema-memory models, with particular attention to the relation between general knowledge and episodic memory. This review is followed by an outline of our theoretical perspective on how schemas and scripts function in the encoding and retention of event information and present the results of our research on the relation between children's script and autobiographical memory development.

Brady, M. S., Poole, D. A., Warren, A. R., & Jones, H. R. (1999). Young children's responses to yes-no questions: Patterns and problems. *Applied Developmental Science, 3*(1), 47-57. DOI:10.1207/s1532480xads0301_6

Concern about the accuracy of children's responses to "yes-no" questions has created controversy regarding the appropriateness of these questions for forensic interviews. To evaluate response patterns, 56 children (3-7 years old) were twice asked a set of yes-no questions, either in standard or in a modified, forced-choice format, about a videotaped event. Younger children were less accurate and consistent than were older children. Unlike the older children, the younger children were less accurate on questions that adults rated as probing central information compared to those involving more peripheral details. Question format did not alter children's accuracy, their tendency to answer "I don't know," or their consistency across repeated questions. No clear response biases were observed for the majority of children regardless of question format, and accuracy was equivalent on "yes-correct" and "no-correct" questions. Consistency and answers to suggestibility check questions were not predictive of performance. Because multiple mechanisms underlie errors on yes-no questions, the goal of postdicting the accuracy of children's responses remains elusive.

Hewitt, S. K. (1999). *Assessing allegations of sexual abuse in preschool children: Understanding small voices*. Sage. DOI:10.4135/9781452220505

Peterson, C., Dowden, C., & Tobin, J. (1999). Interviewing preschoolers: Comparisons of yes/no and wh-questions. *Law and Human Behavior, 23*(5), 539-555. DOI:10.1023/A:1022396112719

This study investigated the influence of question format on preschool-aged children's errors, their response accuracy, and their tendency to say "I don't know" when given non-misleading questions in a neutral, unbiased context. Children (3 to 5 years old) participated in a craft-making session that included a staged "accident" with two

experimenters differing in gender and appearance, the environment also had several distinctive features. One week later children were interviewed about actions, participants, and environment; questions were yes/no format with the veridical response "yes" ("yes" questions), yes/no format with the veridical response "no" ("no" questions), and specific wh- format questions. Question format substantially influenced children's responses: they were most likely to make errors if asked "no" questions, and were unlikely to answer either yes/no question with "I don't know." In contrast, children spontaneously and frequently said "I don't know" to wh- questions about content they did not recall (environment), but not about content that was well recalled (actions). Implications of question format for reliability of eyewitness testimony by preschoolers are discussed.

Roberts, K. P., Lamb, M. E., & Sternberg, K. J. (1999). Effects of the timing of postevent information on preschoolers' memories of an event. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 13(6), 541-559. DOI:10.1002/(SICI)1099-0720(199912)13:6<541::AID-ACP618>3.0.CO;2-5

Few researchers have investigated whether the timing of postevent information affects the accuracy of children's reports of events they have experienced. In this study, four-year-olds dressed up in costumes and had their photographs taken. An unfamiliar adult spoke to the children about the event either a day (immediate condition) or a month (delayed condition) later, providing both accurate and misleading information about the staged event. When questioned five weeks after the event, children in a control group who had not received the review were more inaccurate answering focused questions than children who had been reminded of the event. A review a while after the event but shortly before the interview increased the amount of details recalled and this was not at the expense of accuracy. Misinformation was seldom reported spontaneously, although children in all groups acquiesced to leading questions in line with the misleading suggestions.

Poole, D. A., & Lindsay, D. S. (1995). Interviewing preschoolers: Effects of nonsuggestive techniques, parental coaching, and leading questions on reports of nonexperienced events. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 60(1), 129–154. DOI:10.1006/jecp.1995.1035

This study explored preschoolers' eyewitness testimony under conditions designed to maximize (session 1) or degrade (session 2) the quality of their event reports. In session 1, thirty-nine 3- to 4-year-olds and twenty-nine 5- to 7-year-olds interacted with Mr. Science and were immediately interviewed using nonsuggestive techniques. The children did well in this immediate interview, and nonsuggestive prompts elicited substantial amounts of new accurate information. Three months later 21 of the children heard their parents read a story about Mr. Science that described experienced and nonexperienced events preparatory to an interview in which children were asked nonleading, leading, and source monitoring questions about their experiences with Mr. Science. The children made many erroneous reports in this second interview (e.g., 41% of the 3- to 4-year-olds spontaneously reported that Mr. Science had done things that were mentioned only in the story). Patterns of errors in response to free recall, leading, and source monitoring questions are described.

Reese, E., & Fivush, R. (1993). Parental styles of talk about the past. *Developmental Psychology*, 29(3), 596–606. DOI:10.1037/0012-1649.29.3.596

Past research indicates that mothers have different styles of reminiscing with their children (e.g., R. Fivush and F. A. Fromhoff, 1988). This study examined fathers' styles of talking about the past as well. Mothers and fathers from 24 2-parent families talked separately with their 3-yr-olds about shared 1-time events. Consistent with previous research on mothers, parents displayed 2 distinct narrative styles. The styles were not associated with gender of parent. However, parents of daughters were generally more elaborative (i.e., they provided more narrative structure and talked longer) than parents of sons. In turn, daughters participated in the conversations to a greater extent than sons,

but sons and daughters had similar linguistic skills. Parents do not appear to be basing their narrative styles on the memory or language capabilities of their children. Instead, the practice of reminiscing may be a sex-typed activity.

Peterson, C. (1990). [The who, when, and where of early narratives](#). *Journal of Child Language*, 17(2), 433–455. DOI:10.1017/s0305000900013854

To be well understood, narratives need to be embedded within appropriate contextual information. The early development of key orientation (participants, location and time) was traced with an 18-month longitudinal study of real-experience narratives produced by 10 children aged approximately 2–3; 6. Listener knowledge or inference was required to decode most named participants and many were not specified at all. There was no developmental improvement. Orientation to when was rare at first and involved formula words indiscriminately applied. There was steady developmental improvement in frequency as well as differentiation of time references. where information was more common at all ages, particularly when the narrated events occurred away from home. It also showed developmental improvement, but only for away-from-home locations. Overall, very young children can produce narratives in an unscaffolded context to adults unfamiliar with their experiences. The potential role of parental scaffolding in teaching orientation skills is discussed.