

# **Offloading memory: serial position effects**

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## **Abstract**

Despite the long history and pervasiveness of cognitive offloading as a memory strategy, the memorial fate of offloaded information is not well understood. Recent work has suggested that offloading information may engage similar mechanisms as instructions to forget (directed forgetting). Presently, we test this prediction by examining the serial position effect for offloaded information. Previous research has demonstrated that forget instructions can eliminate the primacy effect while leaving an intact recency effect. Across two experiments, participants completed multiple free recall trials using an external aid and then a final recall trial without the external aid. We compared a group that was expecting to use the aid for the final trial (offloading) with a group that was not (no offloading). We found a memory impairment for offloaded items that was characterized by a reduced primacy effect but intact recency effect, similar to what has been reported in research on directed forgetting.