

### PSYCHOLOGY

## Controlling prospective memory

Psych. Rev. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000113>



Credit: Lasse Kristensen / Alamy Stock Photo

Prospective memory—the ability to remember to execute a specific task at a given moment, such as stopping at the shops for milk on your drive home—is fundamental to navigating our daily lives. Despite a long history of interest in the topic, research hasn't yet settled on a formal account of how we achieve this planned remembering.

A new formal account has now been proposed by Luke Strickland and colleagues. Their model combines features from different accounts of decision-making and cognitive control to predict not only participants' behaviour at the moment when they do have to remember to execute an action, but also their behaviour while they execute unrelated tasks in between those moments. At the core of the model is the idea that memory-unrelated ongoing responses compete against the appropriate responses to the cue that should trigger the memorized action. The model also incorporates an influential account of how humans control their actions, by formalizing the role of proactive and reactive control mechanisms.

While the model accounted for behaviour of healthy young participants, one future test will be to see whether the model captures behaviour in individuals that suffer from a decline of prospective memory, e.g., as a result of dementia.

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Published online: 14 February 2019  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-019-0539-0>