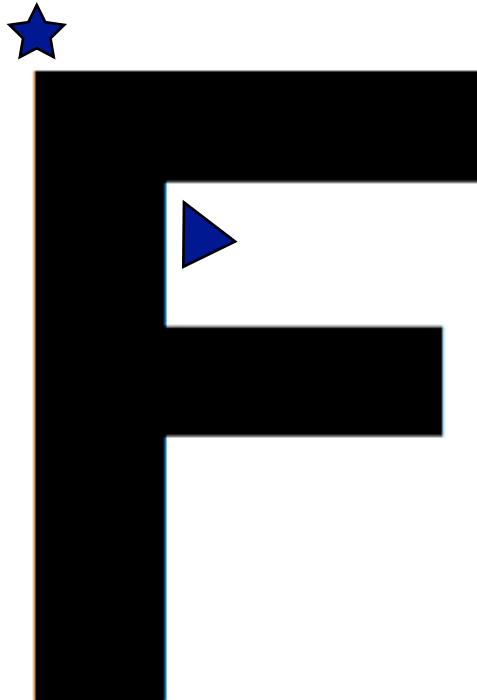


Brooks Multi-Tasking (1968) Experiment

Take a sheet of paper and write the words YES and NO on it. Get a stop-watch like timer (e.g., from the clock app on your smartphone or laptop). You are going to measure your speed doing four different trials.

First Trial: Look at the block letter below. In just a moment, close this file, so that you are only visualizing the block letter in your mind. While you are visualizing the letter, mentally go around the outside of the letter, starting at the upper left-hand corner, which is marked with an asterisk. Mentally move around the letter going clockwise. Each time you come to an OUTSIDE corner, such as the first corner, point to the word YES on your sheet of paper. Each time you come to an INSIDE corner, such as the corner marked with the triangle, point to the word NO on your sheet of paper. Be sure to close the file before you begin and time yourself going all the way around the letter, clockwise, one time.



Second Trial: Repeat the first trial, but this time, as you mentally move around the letter, each time you come to an OUTSIDE corner, say the word YES aloud. Each time you come to an INSIDE corner, say the word NO aloud. Be sure to close the file before you begin and time yourself going all the way around the letter one time.

Third Trial: Memorize the sentence, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." In just a moment, close this file, and say the sentence silently in your mind. While you're saying the sentence silently, work through the sentence, deciding whether each word is a noun or not (hint: bird, hand and bush are nouns). Each time you come to a word that IS A NOUN, point to the word YES on your sheet of paper. Each time you come to a word that's NOT A NOUN, point to the word NO on your sheet of paper. Be sure to close the file before you begin and time yourself going through the sentence mentally one time.

Fourth Trial: Repeat the third trial, but this time, as you work your way through the sentence in your mind, each time you come to a word that IS A NOUN, say the word YES aloud. Each time you come to word that's NOT A NOUN, say the word NO aloud. Be sure to close the file before you begin and time yourself.

From the four time measurements you recorded, which combinations took you less time (because they were easier) and which combinations took you more time (because they were harder)? When you were visualizing the block letter and indicating inside versus outside corners, was it easier to indicate your answers by saying the words YES and NO aloud or by pointing to the words YES and NO on your paper? In contract, when you were saying the sentence in your mind, was it easier to indicate your answer by pointing to the words YES and NO or by saying the words YES and NO aloud?