



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR
2003 PROJECT SUMMARY**

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Project Title Seeing Is Believing... Or Is It?	
Abstract Objectives/Goals To determine whether eyewitness reports are reliable enough to be used as substantial evidence in criminal convictions, by examining whether gender, distance from subject, and delay in recollection time affect the accuracy of reporting. Methods/Materials A human subject was dressed in brightly-colored clothing and sent into a communications class to briefly interact with the lecturing professor, in full view of all students in the class. The students were then given sealed envelopes containing surveys regarding the appearance of the subject. Half the class were instructed to open and complete the survey the same day, and the other half were to complete it the next day and return it to the professor. The surveys were then analyzed and graded for accuracy. Results Overall, females were 11.1% more accurate than males. Students sitting in the front third of the lecture theater were 9.3% more accurate than students sitting in the back third. Students that completed the survey on the same day were 5.5% more accurate than those that completed the survey on the next day. Conclusions/Discussion Females are likely to be more accurate eyewitnesses than males. The closer an eyewitness is to an event, the more accurate the report is likely to be. The sooner an eyewitness recalls an event from their memory, the more accurate it is likely to be. On average, eyewitness reports are less than 50% accurate. My project has shown that eyewitness reports alone, are certainly not accurate enough to be used as substantial evidence in criminal convictions.	
Summary Statement This project examines the accuracy of eyewitness reporting by varying gender, distance from subject, and time of recollection.	
Help Received Mother was subject (wearing brightly-colored clothes); Father was professor of communications class.	