The effect of instructional set and intertrial activity on retention in a short-term memory task.

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AB Investigated the effects of ITI activity and instructional set on recall of consonant trigram stimuli in a short-term memory task. 48 undergraduates either: (a) sat silently during the ITI, (b) overtly rehearsed the prior item during the ITI, (c) overtly rehearsed the prior item under a set that they were to recall all items, (d) were given the set and engaged in a neutral counting activity during the ITI, (e) counted during the ITI with no set. Overt rehearsal and set, singly and together, depressed recall over a 3- and 18-sec retention interval and largely eliminated differences in recall between the two intervals. Counting during the ITI depressed recall of the initial and middle items. It is suggested that Ss in a short-term memory experiment engage in task-related activity during the ITI.