The Role of Temporal Overlap of Visual and Auditory Material in Forming Dual Media Associations

Patricia Baggett
Department of Psychology
University of Colorado

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Institute of Cognitive Science
University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado 80309

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The Role of Temporal Overlap of Visual and Auditory Material in Dual Media Comprehension

Baggett, Patricia

Institute of Cognitive Science
University of Colorado-Campus Box 345
Boulder, CO 80309

Personnel & Training Research Programs
Office of Naval Research, Code 458
Arlington, VA 22217

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-14, -7, 0 (synchrony), 7, 14, or 21 sec. They were tested immediately or after a week for recall of the names, given the pieces. Scores were highest at zero- and 7-day delay for two groups: synchrony, and visuals 7 sec before narration. At 0-delay, each of the other five groups scored about 80% of the highest groups. At 7-day delay, the other five groups scored differently: the 3 narration first groups were about 30% less than the two visuals first groups. The temporal order in which visual and auditory elements are presented differentially influences the formation of dual media associations. When auditory precedes visuals, much of the auditory component is lost. Two possible theoretical interpretations are given, and practical applications are discussed.
The Role of Temporal Overlap of Visual and Auditory Material in Forming Dual Media Associations

Abstract

This paper contains some results about forming associations between the visual and spoken material in a dual media presentation such as film or television. In particular, it reports the role played by the overlap in time of visual and auditory linguistic material. Fourteen groups of college students were shown a 30 min film which introduces an assembly kit, its pieces, their names, and some of their uses. The film's visuals and narration could be presented in synchrony, or one could be shifted relative to the other up to 21 sec. Subjects saw the film in one of seven versions: visuals moved relative to narration by -21, -14, -7, 0 (synchrony), 7, 14, or 21 sec. They were tested immediately or after a week for recall of the names, given the pieces. Scores were highest at zero- and 7-day delay for two groups: synchrony, and visuals 7 sec before narration. At 0-delay, each of the other five groups scored about 80% of the highest groups. At 7-day delay, the other five groups scored differently: the 3 narration first groups were about 30% less than the two visuals first groups. The temporal order in which visual and auditory elements are presented differentially influences the formation of dual media associations. When auditory precedes visuals, much of the auditory component is lost. Two possible theoretical interpretations are given, and practical applications are discussed.
The Role of Temporal Overlap of Visual and Auditory Material
in Forming Dual Media Associations

In many dual media presentations such as film and television, human speech is
used in the sound track to label or describe or explain or comment in some way on
the visual images. When the speaker is not seen in the visual images, such
narration is called voice over (Jacobs, 1970; Monaco, 1977). Educational and
instructional films, documentaries, and television commercials frequently have sound
tracks whose speech consists, partly or entirely, of voice over narration. It is
simpler to prepare than lip-sync narration (synchronization between the movement of
the mouth of a person in the visual image and the words on the sound track), and it
can be created after the visual images are filmed, allowing for flexibility in verbal content.

This paper reports results concerning the role of the overlap in time of the
visual and voice over narration material in forming dual media associations.
(Henceforth, the term narration will be used to mean voice over narration, and the
term visuals will be used to mean the visual images of a film or videotape.) In this
study, the narration and the visuals to which the narration corresponds are shifted
in time. For some presentations, the visuals come early; for others, the visuals
and corresponding narration come simultaneously; and for others, the narration
comes early.

We are testing one aspect of comprehension, the creation of associations
between visuals and narration, and in particular, the association of an object with
its name. We assess whether associations have been formed by testing in one
direction only. The cue is visual (an object), and recall of the verbal part (the
object's name) is measured.
The experiment presented here does not show how people in the various groups with visuals and narration shifted in time would perform on some other tasks. For example, it does not test how well they would answer questions based on the film or give summaries of it, or perform tasks shown in the film. Our focus is to establish the role of temporal overlap in forming dual media associations.

Depending on the experimental outcome, any of several different hypotheses about dual media processing may be supported or rejected. We will briefly discuss four different hypotheses and the predictions they make.

A. First is the dual code hypothesis, whose most well known proponent is Paivio (1971). It assumes that visual material and verbal material are stored in two separate memories. Internal associations between the two are formed by some internal processing which does not have to occur at the time of encoding. This hypothesis is attractive. It says that people can be presented visual and verbal material at different times and still make very good associations. The prediction from the dual code hypothesis is that a relatively small shift of visual and verbal materials should not have any influence on the ability to form associations. This prediction is graphed in Figure 1a.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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B. The second hypothesis is similar to A, in that it assumes that there are two memories in which information is stored, one for visual and the other for verbal. It differs from A in that it assumes that associations between the two are formed at the time of encoding, when the information is stored, that is, within some relatively small period of time.

Hypothesis B has two versions. Hypothesis B1 assumes that visual and verbal items are put into memory at the time that they are physically presented. It therefore predicts that the best associations are formed with a synchronous
presentation, and that there is a uniform drop in both directions, when visual
precedes verbal and vice versa.

Hypothesis B2 assumes that synchrony in putting visual and verbal items in
memory is not necessarily equivalent to the physical presentation of the stimulus.
In particular, it assumes that the text consists of linguistic units, processed in
cycles (as in the theory of Kintsch and vanDijk, 1978). Each linguistic unit has to
be divided into propositions, which are linked together into a coherence graph.
Only then can the conceptual unit be stored. The verbal information cannot be ready
for storage, for example, until a phrase is finished, and the text base has been
formed. Associations from verbal and visual are best, then, when the actual text
precedes the visuals. This causes the text base to be synchronized with the
visuals.

Thus, there are two predictions from hypothesis B: either (1) the best
associations are made with visuals and narration in synchrony; or (2) there will be
some advantage when the narration precedes the visuals. These predictions are shown
in Figure 1b.

C. The third hypothesis assumes a single conceptual memory that operates as a
semantic network. (Many researchers including Anderson (1976), Collins and Quillian
(1969), Kintsch & vanDijk (1978), and Norman & Rumelhart (1975) make this
assumption.) Nodes in the network correspond to concepts. It is important to note
that the formulation here differs from those of the authors cited above, in that
concepts do not correspond to linguistic units. Concepts can consist of elements
arising from different media, for example, linguistic and pictorial. When an
instance of the concept is created, it will be connected to the already existing
semantic network. (Connections and associations have the same meaning here.)

An individual concept has some number of associations. For example, if the
word "red" is spoken, it can connect to, or associate with, the visual concept of an
object that is red.
Examples of the connections (associations) made can be seen when subjects are naming some object. In a previous study (Baggett and Ehrenfeucht, in press) we asked people to name pieces in an assembly kit. The kit is the same one used in this experiment. Figure 2 shows a piece from the kit and Table 1 shows the words generated, separated into modifiers and nouns. These words are associated to the object shown in Figure 2.

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Insert Figure 2 and Table 1 about here
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The main assumption of this hypothesis is that visual concepts are able to form more associations than verbal concepts, which are far more limited. We refer to this difference as "bushy" and "skimpy" concepts (Baggett, note 1). For example, it is possible that a concept formed from a physical object can be associated with the verbal expressions "red block", "orange brick", etc., as well as to other concepts formed from physical objects. On the other hand, we assume that a concept formed from the verbal expression "red block" has fewer associative possibilities. It is important to remember that concepts are not necessarily linguistic.

Consider the situation when one wants a direct association between two concepts. One concept is more bushy (can form more associations) than the other. The proper order in which to present the two concepts is to give the more bushy one first, and the less bushy one later. The mathematical formulation will not be given here, but the idea can be illustrated with a simple example (see Figure 3). Assume the already

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Insert Figure 3 about here
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existing network E will permit four connections to be made, of types 1, 2, 3, and 4. Two concepts are coming in as input to E. Concept X is able to form connections of types 1, 2, 4, and 5. Concept Y is able to form only those of types 3 and 5.
Concept X is thus more bushy than concept Y. We assume that X and Y will connect to E. We want them to connect to each other as well. X and Y can be connected only by joining 5 with 5. What is the chance of this connection, depending on which (X or Y) comes first?

We assume that if connections are possible, they are done with the same probability, and only one connection is needed. Suppose X (more bushy) comes first. This situation is shown in Figure 3(I). By assumption, it connects with the existing network, by any one of 1, 2, and 4. Next comes Y (less bushy). By assumption, it must also connect to the existing network, which now includes X. It will connect by either 3 or 5, each with a 50% probability. It can connect to X only by 5, and to E excluding X only by 3. Therefore, the probability that Y will connect to X is 50%. This is the outcome when the more bushy concept is presented first. It is illustrated on the upper right of Figure 3.

Now suppose Y, the less bushy concept, comes to the existing network first. This situation is shown in Figure 3 (II). Y connects by 3. Next comes X, with four possibilities (1, 2, 4, and 5) of connecting with E. Only one of these (5) is a connection with Y. Therefore, X's chance to connect to Y is 25%. This is shown on the lower right of Figure 3.

This example illustrates that the chances of creating a compound concept whose parts are presented in two modalities depends strongly on the order in which the parts are presented. Hypothesis C1 predicts that verbal material (skimpy concepts) following visual (bushy concepts) is best. Hypothesis C2 makes a slightly different prediction: Possibly, processing linguistic material is slightly delayed relative to visual (as in the argument in B2 above), so that either delaying verbal material slightly, or presenting it in synchrony with visual, leads to the best connections. These two predictions are graphed in Figure 1(c).

D. The fourth and final hypothetical framework gives the same predictions as the previous one, but is based on a different model. Paivio (1971) can be given
credit for this one, as well as Kosslyn (1980). Linguistic material, according to this framework, automatically creates visual images. The visual images created are based on previous visual inputs. When verbal material follows visual, the verbal material becomes associated with the just previously presented visual image. When verbal material precedes visual, the visual images that it associates with (call them V) are not necessarily related to the coming visual image (call it V1). The visual images automatically associated (V) make the correct association to V1 difficult. This framework predicts, as did C, that visuals and narration in synchrony, or narration following visuals, will cause the best associations to be formed.

Four different hypotheses, and the predictions they make about dual media processing, have been discussed. Summarizing, they are:

A. Dual code memory, with associations made at any time. Prediction: performance will not vary with the temporal shift.

B. Dual code memory, with associations made at the time of processing. Prediction: performance will be best when visuals and narration are in synchrony, or when narration precedes visuals.

C. Bushy and skimpy concepts. Prediction: performance will be best when visuals and narration are in synchrony, or when visuals precede narration.

D. Mental imagery. Prediction: same as (C).

Method

Subjects. Three hundred thirty-six students in Introductory Psychology at the University of Colorado participated as part of a course requirement. They were randomly assigned, in groups of one to five, to one of 14 experimental conditions, with 24 subjects per condition. Half of the conditions consisted of film presentations at one of seven temporal overlaps, with subjects tested immediately afterwards. The other half consisted of the same temporal overlaps, with subjects tested one week later.
Design. The experiment was a 7 x 2 between subjects design. There were seven types of temporal overlap (visuals 21, 14, and 7 sec before narration; visuals and narration in synchrony; visuals 7, 14, and 21 sec after narration), and two delays (0- and 7-day).

Stimulus Materials. The film, a 30 min color presentation, was shot, edited, and narrated by a professional film maker, James Otis, using silent super 8 film. It featured an assembly kit, Fischer Technik 50, which is similar to Lego. The kit, manufactured in Germany, has 120 total and 48 different plastic, metal, and rubber pieces. The smallest piece is 5mm² (.2 in²) and the largest, shown in Figure 2, is 90 x 45 mm (3.54 in x 1.77 in). The manufacturers recommend its use by children as young as six through adults.

Names to be used in the narration for the 48 different pieces were selected using a method described in Baggett and Ehrenfeucht (in press). The names are simple, short, easily matched with their physical referents, and fairly well recalled. They also form categories. In general, a name for a piece consisted of a noun (the category name) and an adjective modifier, to differentiate the piece from other members of the category.

The film presents the 48 pieces in six different scenes, corresponding to six categories of pieces. These are: 4 blocks, 9 joints and rails, 6 platforms and plates, 8 rods, 10 wheels, gears, and other round pieces, and 11 special pieces. The names are given in Appendix 1. The film has 1626 words of narration. The narration describes the pieces, gives their names and names of their features, and describes some of their uses. The first words of narration are given in Appendix 2.

Using a specially constructed electronic arrangement, simply by setting a timer, we could shift the narration and visuals with respect to one another. We selected seven such shifts: visuals 21, 14, and 7 sec before narration; visuals and narration in synchrony; and visuals 7, 14, and 21 sec after narration.
The narration and visuals were the same for all 14 conditions. All that varied was the overlap in time of corresponding elements. Expressions such as "This is..." or "What you see here..." were avoided in the narration.

In the extreme conditions (visuals 21 sec before or after the appropriate narration) the viewer could occasionally be hearing about piece X while seeing piece Y.

Procedure. Subjects were run in small groups. The instructions were: "Today you are going to see a film which introduces you to an assembly kit of pieces, their names, and some of their uses. The kit is similar to Lego. After the film, which lasts about 1/2 hour, you will be given a task to do, based on what you have seen and heard. So just pay attention to the film." (The people in the 7-day delay groups were told to come back one week later to do the task.) Subjects were not told the exact nature of the task.

After the film, and at the appropriate delay, each subject was given a collection of the 48 actual pieces from the kit, a sheet with 48 numbered blanks, and a folder with 48 colored photos of the pieces. The photos were numbered 1 to 48, to correspond to the blanks. The subject was instructed to write in blank one, the name of the piece shown in photo one, etc. If the subject had any doubt as to which of the 48 pieces was pictured in a photo, he or she was instructed to ask the experimenter, who would show him or her the actual piece. The subject was further instructed to write the names exactly as they had been given in the film.

Subjects were told there was no penalty for guessing. They finished the task in 15 to 30 min. Before leaving, they filled out a questionnaire indicating whether they had played with the kit before.

Results and Discussion

The data are from 336 subjects. None of them was familiar with the Fischer Technik assembly kit, according to answers on their questionnaires. The dependent
measure was percentage correct on recall of the names, using the pieces as cues. A strict scoring criterion was used: Any deviation from exactly correct was scored as wrong.

Table 2 presents percentages correct and standard errors (in parentheses) for each of 14 groups. Figure 4 shows the results graphically. Results of statistical tests are given in Table 3.

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Insert Tables 2 and 3 and Figure 4 about here

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Two groups scored equally high at zero delay: in synchrony (S) and visuals 7 sec before narration (V+7). Their means are 45.57 and 44.09% respectively. Also, two groups scored equally high after a 7 day delay: In synchrony (S) and visuals 7 sec before narration. Their means are 30.12 and 29.94%. (See test 4 in Table 3.)

At zero delay, the five other groups scored significantly lower than S and V+7. (Test 5 in Table 3.) But scores in the five groups were not statistically different from one another. (Tests 2 and 6 in Table 3.) Thus, at zero delay, subjects recall the pieces' names best in S and V+7. In all other groups they are able to recall some names, about 80% as well (35.94/44.85) as in S and V+7.

The story is different after a week. As at zero delay, in synchrony (S) and visuals 7 sec before narration are best. The other five groups are significantly lower. However, the five groups are not identical, as they were at zero delay. The three narration first groups (narration 21, 14, and 7 sec before visuals) average only 19.8% correct. The two visuals first groups (visuals 21 and 14 sec before narration) average 25.4%, over 28% higher. The three narration first groups score significantly lower than two visuals first groups. (Test 3 in Table 3.)

We operationally define a measure of retention to be the ratio of the percentage correct after a week to the percentage correct at zero delay. The average retention for the three narration first conditions is 55.4%. For visuals 21
and 14 sec before narration, retention is 70.9%. For the conditions, in synchrony and visuals 7 sec before narration, retention is 66.9%. For good retention, it is better to err in the direction of early visuals than of early narration.

The main finding is an asymmetry in the temporal shift, as shown in Figure 4. When visuals precede narration by up to 7 sec, recall is as good as when visuals and narration are in synchrony. When narration precedes visuals by 7 sec or more, much of the narration is lost, especially after a delay.

The experimental results reject hypotheses A and B in the Introduction about the mechanisms involved in forming dual media associations. They support hypotheses C (bushy and skimpy concepts) and D (mental imagery), and do not distinguish between them.

Applications

If either hypothesis C or hypothesis D is not rejected by future experiments, the practical application to film makers of where to put narration is clear. Each hypothesis (C and D) makes the same claim, for a different reason: In a dual media presentation, the narration should follow, or be in synchrony with, the visual image, and never precede it.

Theoretically, the correct temporal overlap of visuals and narration is not restricted only to films with voice over narration. It should hold as well for illustrated lectures, slide shows, written text with pictures, etc. The principle is simple: One should present the visual part early, or simultaneous with the text. It is better to be too early with the visual part than too early with the text.
Reference Note

Baggett, P. The role of temporal overlap of visual and verbal material in dual media comprehension. Talk given at ONR contractors' meeting, Orlando, Florida, January 20, 1982.
References


Footnotes

Thanks go to James Otis for shooting, editing, and narrating the film used as stimulus material, to Jim Geidel and Ashley Godeaux for designing and implementing the electronic arrangement used when the film was projected, to Caroline Matsumoto for making the drawing for Figure 2, and to Steve Stewart and Kevin Carson for helping to run subjects. This work was supported by Office of Naval Research contract N00014-78-C-0433, and is 113 of the Institute of Cognitive Science's Technical Report Series.

1 We thank Michel Denis for suggesting this formulation.
Table 1

Words generated by 14 subjects who named the piece shown in Figure 2. The number of subjects generating each word is in parentheses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>modifiers</th>
<th>nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>large (10)</td>
<td>plate (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long (4)</td>
<td>platform (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base (6)</td>
<td>bar (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thick (1)</td>
<td>floor (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multipurpose (1)</td>
<td>fork (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perforated (1)</td>
<td>panel (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red (1)</td>
<td>waffle (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with holes (1)</td>
<td>zigzag (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Mean Percentage Correct on Recall of the 48 Names of the Pieces,
Given the Pieces as Cues, as a Function of Temporal Shift of Narration and Visuals,
and Delay (zero or 7-day) Between Film and Test. (Standard error in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>narration 21 sec before visuals</th>
<th>narration 14 sec before visuals</th>
<th>narration 7 sec before visuals</th>
<th>narration and visuals in synchrony</th>
<th>visuals 7 sec before narration</th>
<th>visuals 14 sec before narration</th>
<th>visuals 21 sec before narration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 delay</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>32.20</td>
<td>37.76</td>
<td>45.57</td>
<td>44.09</td>
<td>35.85</td>
<td>35.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.79)</td>
<td>(3.62)</td>
<td>(3.27)</td>
<td>(3.69)</td>
<td>(3.98)</td>
<td>(3.26)</td>
<td>(3.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 day delay</td>
<td>17.36</td>
<td>21.18</td>
<td>20.66</td>
<td>30.12</td>
<td>29.94</td>
<td>26.30</td>
<td>24.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.43)</td>
<td>(2.43)</td>
<td>(2.15)</td>
<td>(3.64)</td>
<td>(2.11)</td>
<td>(2.43)</td>
<td>(2.85)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In synchrony and visual 7 sec before

F(4, 115) = 1.115, p > 0.1

At zero delay, the five groups, excluding

versus the five other groups

visuals 7 sec before marretation

5. In synchrony and

before marretation

versus visuals 7 sec

4. In synchrony versus visuals 7 sec

and 4 sec before marretation

groups versus the groups with visuals 21

3. At 7-day delay, the 2 marretation first

sec before marretation

versus the groups with visuals 21 and 14

2. At zero delay, the 3 marretation first groups

(7 degrees of temporal shift x 2 delays)

Table 3: Statistical analyses and their results

Non-significant interaction of temporal shift x delay, F(6, 322) = 1.001

Significant main effect of delay, F(1, 322) = 7.98, p < 0.001

Significant main effect of temporal shift, F(6, 322) = 3.87, p < 0.05
Figure Captions

Figure 1: Predictions of performance in forming dual media associations made by four different theoretical frameworks. See the text for further explanation.

Figure 1a: Prediction of performance from dual code hypothesis, with associations formed at any time.

Figure 1b: Prediction of performance from dual code hypothesis, with associations formed at the time of encoding.
   (1) items are encoded at the time they are physically presented.
   (2) linguistic items have to be processed in cycles before the resulting conceptual unit is stored in memory.

Figure 1c: Prediction of performance from bushy versus skimpy concepts hypothesis, and from mental imagery hypothesis.

Figure 2: A piece from the Fischer Technik 50 assembly kit. Its actual size is 90 x 45 x 5 mm (3.54 x 1.77 x .2 in). Words that subjects generated in naming the piece are given in Table 1.

Figure 3: A direct association is wanted between concept X (bushy) and concept Y (skimpy). I shows the situation when X is presented to existing memory first. The probability that X and Y become associated is .5. II shows the situation when Y is presented to existing memory first. The probability that X and Y become associated is .25. Therefore, to increase the probability that X and Y are associated, the proper order is to present X first and Y later.

Figure 4: The results in Table 2 presented in graph form. Mean percentage correct on recall, as a function of temporal shift of narration and visuals, and delay (zero or 7-day) between film and test.
Figure 1

a. PERFORMANCE

narration early  in synchrony  visuals early

TEMPORAL SHIFT

b. PERFORMANCE

narration early  in synchrony  visuals early

1  2

TEMPORAL SHIFT

c. PERFORMANCE

narration early  in synchrony  visuals early

TEMPORAL SHIFT
Appendix I

Names for the 48 pieces in the assembly kit, grouped according to the six scenes in the film

1. blocks
   large block
   large block with holes
   small block
   small block with red knob

2. joints and rails
   cube joint
   triangle joint
   slanted joint
   H-joint
   flat square joint
   corner joint
   joint with half axle
   long red rail
   short red rail

3. platforms and plates
   large platform (shown in Fig. 2)
   small platform
   narrow platform with half axles
   large plate
   medium plate
   small plate

4. wheels, gears, and other round pieces
   smooth red wheel
   black ring
   wheel with movable handle
   tire
   large black gear
   small black gear
   large red gear
   small red gear
   large pulley wheel
   small pulley wheel

5. rods
   short metal rod
   medium metal rod
   long metal rod
   extra long metal rod
   short grey rod
   long grey rod
   grey rod with square end
   crankshaft
6. special pieces
string
crank
hook
spool
C-clip
red tube
spring
rubber band
1-hole hitch
2-hole hitch
3-hole hitch
Appendix 2

The opening narration to the film

This film is about an assembly kit that consists of 48 different plastic, metal, and rubber pieces. The largest piece is the large platform, and the smallest is the C-clip.

You can build many objects from the pieces. . . simple abstract structures. . . a unicorn. . . an antenna that moves when you turn the crank. . . a little car. . . a dump truck. . . that dumps! . . or even a fanciful antennaed creature with plates. This film will introduce you to the different pieces, their names, and some of their uses.

The first category is blocks. There are four blocks. The first one is called the large block. It has a knob on one side and grooves on its other five sides.

An interesting object can be built using only four large blocks. The secret is to build two separate L-shapes, each with two large blocks, and then to join them. The large block.

The next one is the large block with holes. It is identical to the large block, except that there are two holes through its center.

The third block is the small block. Like all blocks, it is grey, with a knob on one side and grooves on its other five sides.
Navy

1 Dr. Ed Aiken
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Meryl S. Baker
NPRDC
Code P309
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Dr. Robert Blanchard
Navy Personnel R&D Center
Management Support Department
San Diego, CA 92151

1 Dr. Robert Breaux
Code N-711
NAVTRAEEQUIPCEN
Orlando, FL 32813

1 CDR Mike Curran
Office of Naval Research
800 N. Quincy St.
Code 270
Arlington, VA 22217

1 Dr. Pat Federico
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Dr. John Ford
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Dr. Jim Hollan
Code 304
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 CDR Charles W. Hutchins
Naval Air Systems Command Hq
AIR-34OF
Navy Department
Washington, DC 20361

1 CDR Robert S. Kennedy
Head, Human Performance Sciences
Naval Aerospace Medical Research Lab
Box 29407
New Orleans, LA 70189

Navy

1 Dr. Norman J. Kerr
Chief of Naval Technical Training
Naval Air Station Memphis (75)
Millington, TN 38054

1 Dr. William L. Maloy
Principal Civilian Advisor for
Education and Training
Naval Training Command, Code 00A
Pensacola, FL 32508

1 CAPT Richard L. Martin, USN
Prospective Commanding Officer
USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70)
Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co.
Newport News, VA 23607

1 Dr. William Montague
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Ted M. I. Yellen
Technical Information Office, Code 201
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Library, Code P201L
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Technical Director
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

6 Commanding Officer
Naval Research Laboratory
Code 2627
Washington, DC 20390

1 Psychologist
ONR Branch Office
Bldg. 114, Sec. D
666 Summer Street
Boston, MA 02210

1 Office of Naval Research
Code 437
800 N. Quincy St.
Arlington, VA 22217
March 24, 1982

Navy

5 Personnel & Training Research Programs (Code 458)
Office of Naval Research
Arlington, VA 22217

1 Psychologist
ONR Branch Office
1030 E. Green St.
Pasadena, CA 91101

1 Special Asst. For Education & Training (OP-01E)
Rm. 2705 Arlington Annex
Washington, DC 20350

1 LT Frank C. Petho, MSC, USN, (Ph.D.)
Selection & Training Research Division
Human Performance Sciences Dept.
Naval Aerospace Medical Research Lab
Pensacola, FL 32508

1 Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
Research Development & Studies Branch (OP-115)
Washington, DC 20350

1 Dr. Gary Poock
Operations Research Dept.
Code 55PK
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93940

1 Roger W. Remington, Ph.D.
Code L52
NAMRL
Pensacola, FL 32508

1 Dr. Bernard Rimland (03B)
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Dr. Worth Scanland, Director
Research, Development, Test & Evaluation
N-5
Naval Education & Training Command
NAS, Pensacola, FL 32508

Navy

1 Dr. Robert G. Smith
Office of Chief of Naval Operations
OP-987H
Washington, DC 20350

1 Dr. Alfred F. Smode
Training Analysis & Evaluation Group (TAEG)
Department of the Navy
Orlando, FL 32813

1 Dr. Richard Sorensen
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Roger Weissinger-Baylon
Department of Administrative Sciences
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93940

1 Dr. Robert Wisher
Code 309
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Mr. John H. Wolfe
Code P310
U.S. Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152
March 24, 1982

Army

1 Technical Director
U.S. Army Research Institute for
the Behavioral & Social Sciences
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

1 Mr. James Baker
Systems Manning Technical Area
Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

1 Dr. Beatrice J. Farr
U.S. Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

1 Dr. Frank J. Harris
U.S. Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

1 Dr. Michael Kaplan
U.S. Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

1 Dr. Milton S. Katz
Training Technical Area
U.S. Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

1 Dr. Harold F. O'Neil, Jr.
Attn: PERI-OK
Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

1 Dr. Robert Sasmor
U.S. Army Research Institute for
the Behavioral & Social Sciences
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

1 Dr. Joseph Ward
U.S. Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

Air Force

1 U.S. Air Force Office of
Scientific Research
Life Sciences Directorate, NL
Bolling Air Force Base
Washington, DC 20332

1 Dr. Alfred R. Fregly
AFOSR/NL, Bldg. 410
Bolling AFB
Washington, DC 20332

1 Dr. Genevieve Haddad
Program Manager
Life Sciences Directorate
AFOSR
Bolling AFB, DC 20332

2 3700 TCHTW/TGTH Stop 32
Sheppard AFB, TX 76311
March 24, 1982

Marines

1 H. William Greenup
Education Advisor (E031)
Education Center, MCDEC
Quantico, VA 22134

1 Special Assistant for Marine Corps Matters
Code 100M
Office of Naval Research
800 N. Quincy St.
Arlington, VA 22217

1 Dr. A. L. Slafkosky
Scientific Advisor (Code RD-1)
HQ, U.S. Marine Corps
Washington, DC 20380

Coast Guard

Chief, Psychological Research Branch
U.S. Coast Guard (G-P-1/2/TP42)
Washington, DC 20593
March 24, 1982

Other DoD

2 Defense Technical Information Center
Cameron Station, Bldg. 5
Alexandria, VA 22314
Attn: TC

1 Military Assistant for Training & Personnel Technology
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering
Room 3D129, The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

1 DARPA
1400 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22209

Civil Govt

1 Dr. Susan Chipman
Learning & Development
National Institute of Education
1200 – 19th St. NW
Washington, DC 20208

1 Dr. John Mays
National Institute of Education
1200 – 19th St. NW
Washington, DC 20208

1 William J. McLaurin
66610 Howie Court
Camp Springs, MD 20031

1 Dr. Arthur Melmed
National Institute of Education
1200 – 19th St. NW
Washington, DC 20208

1 Dr. Andrew R. Molnar
Science Education Dev. & Research
National Science Foundation
Washington, DC 20550

1 Dr. Joseph P. Stokka
National Institute of Education
1200 – 19th St. NW
Washington, DC 20208

1 Dr. Frank Withrow
U.S. Office of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20202

1 Dr. Joseph L. Young, Director
Memory & Cognitive Processes
National Science Foundation
Washington, DC 20550
March 24, 1982

Non Govt

1 Dr. Erling B. Andersen
   Department of Statistics
   Studiestraede 6
   1455 Copenhagen
   DENMARK

1 Dr. John R. Anderson
   Department of Psychology
   Carnegie Mellon University
   Pittsburgh, PA 15213

1 Anderson, Thomas H., Ph.D.
   Center for the Study of Reading
   174 Children's Research Center
   51 Gerty Drive
   Champaign, IL 61820

1 Dr. John Annett
   Department of Psychology
   University of Warwick
   Coventry CV4 7AL
   ENGLAND

1 Psychological Research Unit
   Dept. of Defense (Army Office)
   Campbell Park Offices
   Canberra ACT 2600, Australia

1 Dr. Alan Baddeley
   Medical Research Council
   Applied Psychology Unit
   15 Chaucer Rd.
   Cambridge CB2 2EF
   ENGLAND

1 Dr. Jonathan Baron
   Dept. of Psychology
   University of Pennsylvania
   3813-15 Walnut St. T-3
   Philadelphia, PA 19104

1 Mr. Avron Barr
   Dept. of Computer Science
   Stanford University
   Stanford, CA 94305

Non Govt

1 Dr. Werner Birke
   DezWPs im Streitkraefteamt
   Postfach 20 50 03
   D-5300 Bonn 2
   WEST GERMANY

1 Liaison Scientists
   Office of Naval Research
   Branch Office, London
   Box 39 FPO, NY 09510

1 Dr. Lyle Bourne
   Department of Psychology
   University of Colorado
   Boulder, CO 80209

1 Dr. John S. Brown
   XEROX Palo Alto Research Center
   3333 Coyote Rd.
   Palo Alto, CA 94304

1 Dr. Bruce Buchanan
   Dept. of Computer Science
   Stanford University
   Stanford, CA 94305

1 Dr. C. Victor Bunderson
   WICAT Inc.
   University Plaza, Suite 10
   1160 S. State St.
   Orem, UT 84057

1 Dr. Pat Carpenter
   Dept. of Psychology
   Carnegie Mellon University
   Pittsburgh, PA 15213

1 Dr. John B. Carroll
   Psychometric Lab
   Univ. of N. Carolina
   Davie Hall, 013A
   Chapel Hill, NC 27514

1 Dr. William Chase
   Dept. of Psychology
   Carnegie Mellon University
   Pittsburgh, PA 15213
March 24, 1982

Non Govt

1 Dr. Micheline Chi
Learning R&D Center
University of Pittsburgh
3939 O'Hara Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

1 Dr. William Clancey
Dept. of Computer Science
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

1 Dr. Allan M. Collins
Bolt Beranek & Newman, Inc.
50 Moulton St.
Cambridge, MA 02138

1 Dr. Lynn A. Cooper
LRDC
University of Pittsburgh
3939 O'Hara St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

1 Dr. Meredith P. Crawford
American Psychological Assoc.
1200 - 17th St., NW
Washington, DC 20036

1 Dr. Kenneth B. Cross
Anacapa Sciences, Inc.
P.O. Drawer Q
Santa Barbara, CA 93102

1 LCOL J.C. Eggenberger
Directorate of Personnel Applied
Research
National Defense HQ
101 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K2

1 Dr. Ed Feigenbaum
Dept. of Computer Science
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

1 Dr. Richard L. Ferguson
American College Testing Program
P.O. Box 168
Iowa City, IA 52240

Non Govt

1 Mr. Wallace Feurzeig
Bolt Beranek & Newman, Inc.
50 Moulton St.
Cambridge, MA 01238

1 Dr. Victor Fields
Dept. of Psychology
Montgomery College
Rockville, MD 20850

1 Prof. Dr. Gerhard Fischer
Liebiggasse 5/3
A 1010 Vienna
AUSTRIA

1 Dr. John R. Frederiksen
Bolt Beranek & Newman
50 Moulton St.
Cambridge, MA 02138

1 Dr. Alinda Friedman
Dept. of Psychology
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
CANADA T6G 2E9

1 Dr. Robert Glaser
LRDC
University of Pittsburgh
3939 O'Hara St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

1 Dr. Marvin D. Glock
217 Stone Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853

1 Dr. Daniel Gopher
Industrial & Management Engineering
Technion-Israel Institute of Technology
Haifa
ISRAEL

1 Dr. James G. Greeno
LRDC
University of Pittsburgh
3939 O'Hara St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
March 24, 1982

Non Govt

1 Dr. Ron Hambleton
School Of Education
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01002

1 Dr. Harold Hawkins
Dept. of Psychology
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403

1 Dr. Barbara Hayes-Roth
The Rand Corporation
1700 Main St.
Santa Monica, CA 90406

1 Dr. Frederick Hayes-Roth
The Rand Corporation
1700 Main St.
Santa Monica, CA 90406

1 Dr. James R. Hoffman
Dept. of Psychology
University of Delaware
Newark, DE 19711

1 Dr. Kristina Hooper
Clark Kerr Hall
University of California
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

1 Glenda Greenwald, Ed.
"Human Intelligence Newsletter"
P.O. Box 1163
Birmingham, MI 48012

1 Dr. Earl Hunt
Dept. of Psychology
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98105

1 Dr. Ed Hutchins
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152

1 Dr. Steven W. Keele
Dept. of Psychology
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403

Non Govt

1 Dr. Walter Kintsch
Dept. of Psychology
University of Colorado
Boulder, CO 80309

1 Dr. David Kieras
Dept. of Psychology
University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ 85721

1 Dr. Stephen Kosslyn
Harvard University
Department of Psychology
33 Kirkland St.
Cambridge, MA 02138

1 Dr. Marcy Lansman
Dept. of Psychology, NI 25
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195

1 Dr. Jill Larkin
Dept. of Psychology
Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

1 Dr. Alan Lesgold
Learning R&D Center
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

1 Dr. Michael Levine
Dept. of Educational Psychology
210 Education Bldg.
University of Illinois
Urbana, IL 61801

1 Dr. Erik McWilliams
Science Education Dev. and Research
National Science Foundation
Washington, DC 20550
March 24, 1982

Non Govt

1 Dr. Mark Miller
TI Computer Science Lab
C/O 2824 Winterplace Circle
Plano, TX 75075

1 Dr. Allen Munro
Behavioral Technology Labs
1845 Elena Ave., 4th floor
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

1 Dr. Donald A. Norman
Dept. of Psychology C-009
Univ. of California
La Jolla, CA 92039

1 Committee on Human Factors
JH 811
2101 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20418

1 Dr. Jesse Orlansky
Institute for Defense Analyses
400 Army Navy Dr.
Arlington, VA 22202

1 Dr. Seymour A. Papert
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Artificial Intelligence Lab
545 Technology Square
Cambridge, MA 02139

1 Dr. James A. Paulson
Portland State University
P.O. Box 751
Portland, OR 97207

1 Dr. James W. Pelligrino
University of California
Santa Barbara, CA 93106

1 Mr. Luigi Petrucco
2431 N. Edgewood St.
Arlington, VA 22207

Non Govt

1 Dr. Richard A. Pollak
Director, Special Projects
Minnesota Educational Computing
Consortium
2520 Broadway Dr.
St. Paul, MN 55113

1 Dr. Martha Polson
Dept. of Psychology
University of Colorado
Campus Box 345
Boulder, CO 80309

1 Dr. Peter Polson
Dept. of Psychology
University of Colorado
Campus Box 345
Boulder, CO 80309

1 Dr. Steven Poltrock
Dept. of Psychology
University of Denver
Denver, CO 80208

1 Dr. Mike Posner
Department of Psychology
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403

1 Minrat M. L. Rauch
P II 4
Bundesministerium der Verteidigung
Postfach 1328
D-53 Bonn 1, Germany

1 Dr. Fred Reif
SESAME
c/o Physics Dept.
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

1 Dr. Lauren Resnick
LRDC
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
March 24, 1982

Non Govt

1 Mary Riley
LRDC
University of Pittsburgh
3939 O'Hara St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

1 Dr. Andrew M. Rose
American Institute for Research
1055 Thomas Jefferson St., NW
Washington, DC 20007

1 Dr. Ernst Rothkopf
Bell Laboratories
600 Mountain Ave.
Murray Hill, NJ 07974

1 Dr. David Rumelhart
Center for Human Information Processing
University of California
La Jolla, CA 92039

1 Dr. Walter Schneider
Dept. of Psychology
University of Illinois
Champaign, IL 61820

1 Dr. Alan Schoenfeld
Dept. of Mathematics
Hamilton College
Clinton, NY 13323

1 Dr. Robert J. Seidel
Instructional Technology Group
300 N. Washington St.
Alexandria, VA 22314

1 Committee on Cognitive Research
c/o Dr. Lonnie R. Sherrod
Social Science Research Council
605 Third Ave.
New York, NY 10016

1 Dr. Alexander W. Siegel
Department of Psychology
SR-1
University of Houston
Houston, TX 77004

Non Govt

1 Robert S. Siegler
Associate Professor
Carnegie-Mellon University
Dept. of Psychology
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

1 Dr. Edward E. Smith
Bolt Beranek & Newman, Inc.
50 Moulton St.
Cambridge, MA 02138

1 Dr. Robert Smith
Dept. of Computer Science
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, NJ 08903

1 Dr. Richard Snow
School of Education
Stanford University
Standord, CA 94305

1 Dr. Robert Sternberg
Dept. of Psychology
Yale University
Box 11A, Yale Station
New Haven, CT 06520

1 Dr. Albert Stevens
Bolt, Beranek & Newman, Inc.
50 Moulton St.
Cambridge, MA 02138

1 Dr. Thomas G. Sticht
Director, Basic Skills Division
HUMRRO
300 N. Washington St.
Alexandria, VA 22314

1 David E. Stone, Ph.D.
Hazeltine Corp.
7680 Old Springhouse Rd.
McLean, VA 22102

1 Dr. Patrick Suppes
Institute for Mathematical Studies in the Social Sciences
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305
March 24, 1982

Dr. Kikumi Tatsuoka
Computer Based Education
Research Laboratory
252 Engineering Research Lab.
University of Illinois
Urbana, IL 61801

Dr. John Thomas
IBM Thomas J. Watson
Research Center
P.O. Box 218
Yorktown Heights, NY 01598

Dr. Perry Thorndyke
The Rand Corp.
1700 Main St.
Santa Monica, CA 90406

Dr. Douglas Towne
University of Southern California
Behavioral Technology Labs
1845 S. Elena Ave.
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

Dr. J. Uhlman
Perceptronics, Inc.
6271 Variel Ave.
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

Dr. Gershon Weltman
Perceptronics Inc.
6271 Variel Ave.
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Dr. Keith T. Wescourt
Information Sciences Dept.
The Rand Corp.
1700 Main St.
Santa Monica, CA 90406

Dr. Susan E. Whitely
Psychology Department
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66044