



Interviewing Preschoolers

A Selected Bibliography

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Scope

This bibliography provides citations and abstracts to research literature covering a variety of topics related to the forensic interview of preschool age children. Publications are English language books and articles. Unless otherwise stated, author abstracts are provided.

Organization

Publications are listed in date descending order.

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Interviewing Preschoolers

A Selected Bibliography

Malloy, L. C., Orbach, Y., Lamb, M. E., & Walker, A. G. (2016). "How" and "Why" prompts in forensic investigative interviews with preschool children. *Applied Developmental Science*, 1-9.

Although young children may frequently be asked "How" and "Why" questions, it is unclear whether they have the ability to respond well enough to justify the use of these words during investigative interviews. The range of possible uses and interpretations of the words "How" and "Why" makes it critical to examine their use when communicatively immature children are interviewed. In this study, police interviews of 3- to 5-year-old suspected victims of sexual abuse ($n = 49$) were examined. The use of How/Why prompts by interviewers and children's responses to interviewers' How/Why prompts were coded. How/Why prompts represented 22% of all interviewer prompts. Of all details provided by children, however, 8.5% were in response to How/Why prompts. In addition, children provided the information sought in response to only 20% of the interviewers' How/Why prompts, whereas uninformative responses were relatively common. Children responded to more How/Why prompts with the information sought by interviewers as they grew older. The findings suggest that How/Why prompts may not be particularly effective when interviewing preschool children.

Mehrani, M. B., & Peterson, C. (2015). Recency tendency: Responses to forced-choice questions. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 29(3), 418-424.

The present study was conducted to investigate whether forced-choice questions would lead to any particular tendency in young children's responses. Two experiments were conducted in which 3- to 5-year-olds children were shown a short animation and then were asked a set of two-option, forced-choice questions. Consistent findings were obtained: (i) Forced-choice questions influenced children's responses; (ii) Children displayed a consistent 'recency tendency.' That is, they tended to choose the second option in forced-choice questions; (iii) This tendency grew weaker as children aged. The findings suggest that forced-choice questions carry some suggestibility load and can bias children's responses. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Evans, A. D., Stolzenberg, S., Lee, K., & Lyon, T. D. (2014). Young children's difficulty with indirect speech acts: Implications for questioning child witnesses. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 32, 775-788.

Prior research suggests that infelicitous choice of questions can significantly underestimate children's actual abilities, independently of suggestiveness. One possibly difficult question type is indirect speech acts such as "Do you know..." questions (DYK, e.g., "Do you know where it happened?"). These questions directly ask if respondents know, while indirectly asking what respondents know. If respondents answer "yes," but fail to elaborate, they are either ignoring or failing to recognize the indirect question (known as pragmatic failure). Two studies examined the effect of indirect speech acts on maltreated and non-maltreated 2- to 7-year-olds' post-event interview responses. Children were read a story and later interviewed using DYK and Wh-questions. Additionally, children completed a series of executive functioning tasks. Both studies revealed that using DYK questions increased the chances of pragmatic failure, particularly for younger children and those with lower inhibitory control skills. Copyright # 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Fivush, R., & Merrill, N. (2014). The personal past as historically, culturally and socially constructed. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 28(3), 301-303.

Korkman, J., Juusola, A., & Santtila, P. (2014). Who made the disclosure? Recorded discussions between children and caretakers suspecting child abuse. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 20(10), 994-1004.

Within investigations of suspected child abuse, the child's account is often at the core of the judicial process. When analysing the child's account, it is therefore important to consider how parents may have discussed the suspected abuse prior to the official investigation. However, no studies up to the present time have investigated discussions in real cases where parents suspect that their children have been abused. We analysed a sample (N = 19) of recorded conversations between parents and their children, delivered to the police as evidence for alleged physical or sexual abuse. Analyses of the questions used and the information provided in the discussions showed that the parent's strategies when questioning their children were extremely leading and that in the majority of the cases, all new information was provided by the parents. In spite of this,

the parents deemed the recorded conversations as records of the children's accounts. While the sample was small and likely to be unrepresentative of child abuse suspicions in general, the findings have important practical implications. The results indicate that when planning an interview in a case where the alleged abuse relies on what a child allegedly has told a parent, particular caution should be taken when referring to these conversations.

Evans, A. D., & Lee, K. (2013). Emergence of lying in very young children. *Developmental Psychology, 49*(10), 1958-1963.

Lying is a pervasive human behavior. Evidence to date suggests that from the age of 42 months onward, children become increasingly capable of telling lies in various social situations. However, there is limited experimental evidence regarding whether very young children will tell lies spontaneously. The present study investigated the emergence of lying in very young children. Sixty-five 2- to 3-year-olds were asked not to peek at a toy when the experimenter was not looking. The majority of children (80%) transgressed and peeked at the toy. When asked whether they had peeked at the toy, most 2-year-old peekers were honest and confessed to their peeking, but with increased age, more peekers denied peeking and thus lied. However, when asked follow-up questions that assessed their ability to maintain their initial lies, most children failed to conceal their lie by pretending to be ignorant of the toy's identity. Additionally, after controlling for age, children's executive functioning skills significantly predicted young children's tendency to lie. These findings suggest that children begin to tell lies at a very young age. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2013 APA, all rights reserved).

Heather Fritzley, V., Lindsay, R. C., & Lee, K. (2013). Young children's response tendencies toward yes-no questions concerning actions. *Child Development, 84*(2), 711-725.

Two experiments investigated response tendencies of preschoolers toward yes-no questions about actions. Two hundred 2- to 5-year-old children were asked questions concerning actions commonly associated with particular objects (e.g., drinking from a cup) and actions not commonly associated with particular objects (e.g., kicking a toothbrush). The impact of delay and comprehension of questions were also investigated. Results revealed a consistent developmental transition: Younger children tended to display a yes bias whereas older children did not display a

bias unless they faced incomprehensible questions, in which case they displayed a nay-saying bias. Delay shifted children's responses in such a way that “no” answers were given more often. These findings hold important implications regarding the use of yes–no questions with children.

Okanda, M., Kanda, T., Ishiguro, H., & Itakura, S. (2013). Three- and 4-year-old children's response tendencies to various interviewers. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 116*(1), 68-77.

Unlike young preschoolers, older preschoolers may exhibit a response bias under social pressure from authoritative interviewers. To examine this, 3- and 4-year-old preschoolers were asked yes–no questions about familiar and unfamiliar objects in three conditions. In one condition an adult asked them questions in a live interaction, in a second condition an adult asked questions via video, and in a third condition a robot asked questions via video. The 3-year-olds exhibited a yes bias—a tendency to say “yes”—in nearly all conditions. The only exception was when they were asked questions about unfamiliar objects by the human interviewer via video, where they did not respond in a biased manner. The 4-year-olds exhibited a yes bias in only one condition—when they were questioned by a live human interviewer about both objects. They also exhibited a nay-saying bias when asked questions about unfamiliar objects in both video conditions, and they did not show any response bias in other conditions. The results suggest that the social pressure from an authoritative adult in a live interaction is problematic.

Walker, A. G. (2013). *Handbook on Questioning Children: A Linguistic Perspective* (3rd edition). Washington DC: ABA Center on Children and the Law.

Waterman, A., & Blades, M. (2013). The effect of delay and individual differences on children's tendency to guess. *Developmental Psychology, 49*(2), 215-226.

Few researchers have investigated the factors that influence children's tendency to indicate correctly when they do not know the answer to a question. In this study, 5- to 8-year-olds witnessed a staged event in their classroom and were subsequently interviewed about that event either the following day or after 5 months. Some of the questions were answerable based on the information

in the event, and some were unanswerable such that children would have had to guess to provide an answer. Individual-difference measures were taken of children's verbal ability and self-perceptions. Delay, verbal ability, and children's self-perceptions all affected whether children correctly indicated when they did not know the answer to a question. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2013 APA, all rights reserved)

Battin, D. B., Ceci, S. J., & Lust, B. C. (2012). Do children really mean what they say? The forensic implications of preschoolers' linguistic referencing. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 33*(4), 167-174.

This study compared younger ($M=53$ months) and older ($M=90$ months) children's use of linguistic referential devices to make a positive identification. Children were shown a 4-minute video that concluded with a wrongful act. They were interviewed 24 hours later and asked to identify the perpetrator of the wrongful act with open-ended and directive questions. Younger children were significantly more likely to fail to provide any pertinent information ($p<.001$) or employ a restrictive modifier to accomplish singular definite reference to a specific perpetrator ($p<.001$). When children made an initial ambiguous reference, but failed to respond to directive questions by appropriately restricting their reference, a false suggestion was presented by the interviewer to resolve the ambiguity. Ultimately, 42% of the younger and 91% of the older children made an identification, with 13% and 62% correct, respectively. The implications of these findings for forensic interviewers are discussed.

Carrick, N., & Ramirez, M. (2012). Preschoolers' fantasy–reality distinctions of emotional events. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 112*(4), 467-483.

Research suggests that emotions influence children's ability to discern fantasy from reality; however, reasons for this association remain unknown. The current research sought to better understand the mechanisms underlying children's distinctions by examining the roles discrete emotions and context have in 3- to 5-year-olds' evaluations of fantasy and reality. In Study 1, children's fantasy–reality distinctions of images depicting happy, frightening, or sad events were obtained under two conditions: Children responded freely or were motivated to respond accurately. When responding freely, older children reported that happy and sad fantastic and real events could

occur but frightening events could not. When motivated to respond accurately, children's accuracy improved for fantasy but not for reality. Study 2 examined real events exclusively and found that children may lack the knowledge that frightening, but not happy or sad, real events can occur. The findings provide new insight into how emotions affect children's fantasy–reality distinctions. © 2012 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M. E., Orbach, Y., Katz, C., & Horowitz, D. (2012). The development of communicative and narrative skills among preschoolers: Lessons from forensic interviews about child abuse. *Child Development, 83*(2), 611-622.

This study examined age differences in 299 preschoolers' responses to investigative interviewers' questions exploring the suspected occurrence of child abuse. Analyses focused on the children's tendencies to respond (a) at all, (b) appropriately to the issue raised by the investigator, and (c) informatively, providing previously undisclosed information. Linear developmental trends characterized all types of responding. When the types of prompts were considered, 3- to 4-year-olds responded slightly more informatively to specific (directive) recall prompts than to open-ended prompts whereas children aged 5 and older were more responsive to open-ended recall prompts. The findings suggest that even 3-year-olds can provide information about experienced events when recall processes are activated, although the ability to provide narrative responses to open ended recall prompts only becomes reliable later in development.

Ahern, E. C., Lyon, T. D., & Quas, J. A. (2011). Young children's emerging ability to make false statements. *Developmental psychology, 47*(1), 61-66.

This study examined the origins of children's ability to make consciously false statements, a necessary component of lying. Children 2 to 5 years of age were rewarded for claiming that they saw a picture of a bird when viewing pictures of fish. They were asked outcome questions ("Do you win/lose?"), recognition questions ("Do you have a bird/fish?"), and recall questions ("What do you have?"), which were hypothesized to vary in difficulty depending on the need for consciousness of falsity (less for outcome questions) and self-generation of an appropriate response (more for recall questions). The youngest children (2½ to 3½ years old) were above

chance on outcome questions, but it was not until age 3 1/2 that children performed above chance on recognition questions or were capable of maintaining false claims across question types. Findings have implications for understanding the emergence of deception in young children.

Thierry, K. L., Lamb, M. E., Pipe, M. E., & Spence, M. J. (2010). The flexibility of source-monitoring training: Reducing young children's source confusions. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 24*(5), 626-644.

The effect of source-monitoring training on the ability of 3- to 4-year-old children to discriminate between events seen live and those described in a story was examined. All children saw a live presentation of a target event and heard about a similar target event from a storybook. Three to 4 days later, the children received either source-monitoring or control training involving a different set of events. Within each training condition, the children were taught to discriminate events (source training) or identify features of events (control training) acquired from sources that were either analogous (live-story events) or partially analogous (live—video events) to the target-event sources. Immediately after training, all children were asked to monitor the source of the target events seen a few days earlier. The children in both the analogous and partially analogous source-monitoring training groups more accurately distinguished between the target live and story events than did children in the control training groups. Copyright © 2009 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Kulkofsky, S., Wang, Q., & Ceci, S. J. (2008). Do better stories make better memories? Narrative quality and memory accuracy in preschool children. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 22*(1), 21-38.

The present study examines how the quality of children's narratives relates to the accuracy of those narratives. Sixty-one 3- to 5-year-olds played a novel game with a researcher in their schools. Children were questioned in an interview that included an open-ended free recall prompt followed by a series of directed questions. Children's narratives were coded for volume, complexity and cohesion as well as for accuracy. Correlational results showed that overall, narrative skills enable the reporting of more information, while decreasing the proportion of information that was accurate. These results appeared to be driven by a quantity-accuracy trade-off; in an ensuing regression analysis with all narrative variables entered into the model, volume was associated with

decreases in accuracy while narrative cohesion was associated with increases in accuracy. We discuss the results in terms of their relationship to the development of autobiographical memory as well as implications for forensic contexts. Copyright © 2007 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Fivush, R., Haden, C. A., & Reese, E. (2006). Elaborating on elaborations: Role of maternal reminiscing style in cognitive and socioemotional development. *Child Development*, 77(6), 1568-1588.

Initial research on maternal reminiscing style established clear and consistent individual differences that vary along a dimension of maternal elaboration and that are related to children's developing autobiographical skills. More recent research has linked maternal elaborative reminiscing to strategic memory development, language and literacy skills, developing attachment relationships, and understanding of self, other, and mind. In this review, this research is placed in theoretical context by arguing for the critical role of reminiscing in developmental process and outcome.

Tang, C. M. (2006). Developmentally sensitive interviewing of preschool children: Some guidelines drawn from basic psychological research. *Criminal Justice Review*, 31(2), 132-145.

Interviewing preschool children who are victims or witnesses of crime to ensure accuracy and completeness of their recall is no easy task. Rising up to the challenge, a large number of empirical psychological studies related to interviewing young children have been conducted in the past decades. Most of these studies were applied research, simulating circumstances of real forensic interviews. It is believed, however, that more basic research could also be informative. The present article thus selectively reviews more basic psychological research in the areas of memory development, language development, and conceptual development as they relate to the forensic interviewing of preschool children. Based on characteristics of preschool children's development in these areas, some useful guidelines are generated for forensic interviewers. Recommendations for future research are also made.

Cordón, I. M., Saetermoe, C. L., & Goodman, G. S. (2005). Facilitating children's accurate responses: Conversational rules and interview style. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 19*(3), 249-266.

This study examined the effectiveness of teaching young children a set of social conversational rules as a method of reducing errors in children's memory reports. Forty children (aged 3 to 6 years) interacted with a confederate 'teaching assistant.' Three conversational rules were examined as possible means of decreasing inaccuracies. For comparison purposes, three placebo rules were also developed. To test the limitations of teaching young children a set of conversational rules, three interview styles (neutral, repetitive, accusatory) were used. Results indicated that children who received all three target rules provided a smaller proportion of incorrect responses than did children who received fewer target rules or than children in a placebo control group, regardless of interview style. Theoretical and applied issues are discussed. Copyright © 2005 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Ryder, N., & Leinonen, E. (2003). Use of context in question answering by 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 32*(4), 397-415.

This study investigates, within the theory of relevance of Sperber & Wilson (1995), how 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children (n = 45) use context when answering questions. The children were required to answer questions that placed differing contextual and processing demands on them, as predicted by the theory. The results indicate that an increasing ability to use complex contextual information was related to age and was reflected in the children's ability to answer questions appropriately. A developmental pattern became evident in terms of how the children assigned referents, enriched semantic underdetermination, and recovered implicatures. It also became evident that even at the age of 5 years 6 months the children were in the process of becoming more skilled at integrating contextually complex inferences. It was further shown how children's selection of the appropriate context, given the focus of the question, depended on how relevance was achieved in that context.

Talwar, V., & Lee, K. (2002). Development of lying to conceal a transgression: Children's control of expressive behavior during verbal deception. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 26*(5), 436-444.

The present study examined lying behaviour in children between 3 and 7 years of age with two experiments. A temptation resistance paradigm was used in which children were left alone in a room with a music-playing toy placed behind their back. The children were told not to peek at the toy. Most children could not resist the temptation and peeked at the toy. When the experimenter asked them whether they had peeked, about half of the 3-year-olds confessed to their transgression, whereas most older children lied. Naïve adult evaluators (undergraduate students and parents) who watched video clips of the children's responses could not discriminate lie-tellers from nonliars on the basis of their nonverbal expressive behaviours. However, the children were poor at semantic leakage control and adults could correctly identify most of the lie-tellers based on their verbal statements made in the same context as the lie. The combined results regarding children's verbal and nonverbal leakage control suggest that children under 8 years of age are not fully skilled lie-tellers.

Waterman, A., Blades, M., & Spencer, C. (2002). How and why do children respond to nonsensical questions? In H. L. Westcott, G. M. Davies, & R. H. C. Bull (Eds.), *Children's Testimony: A Handbook of Psychological Research and Forensic Practice* (pp.147-160). West Sussex, England: Wiley.

Bauer, P. J., & Mandler, J. M. (2001). Remembering what happened next: Very young children's recall of event sequences. In R. Fivush & J. A. Hudson (Eds.), *Knowing and Remembering in Young Children* (pp. 9-29). Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Dorado, J. S., & Saywitz, K. J. (2001). Interviewing preschoolers from low-and middle-SES communities: A test of the Narrative Elaboration recall improvement technique. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 30*(4), 568-580.

Tested the effectiveness of Narrative Elaboration (NE), a memory enhancement and interview preparation technique, with 99 preschool children from middle- and low-socioeconomic status (SES) communities. Half were trained with the NE intervention to utilize generic visual cue cards

to provide forensically relevant details within four information categories: participants, settings, actions, conversation. One day after the NE training, interviewers asked participants to recount an event staged 1 week earlier. Analyses revealed that NE-trained children from both SES levels recalled significantly more about the event than control children, without producing more errors, particularly when given an opportunity to elaborate on initial free recall using the visual cue cards. No such difference in free recall alone was found. Additionally, preschoolers from low-SES communities generated more errors than their middle-SES counterparts, regardless of treatment condition.

Farrar, M. J., & Goodman, G. S. (2001). Developmental differences in the relation between scripts and episodic memory: Do they exist? In R. Fivush & J. A. Hudson (Eds.), *Knowing and Remembering in Young Children* (pp.30-64). Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Brady, M. S., Poole, D. A., Warren, A. R., & Jones, H. R. (1999). Young children's responses to yes-no questions: Patterns and problems. *Applied Developmental Science, 3*(1), 47-57.

Concern about the accuracy of children's responses to "yes-no" questions has created controversy regarding the appropriateness of these questions for forensic interviews. To evaluate response patterns, 56 children (3-7 years old) were twice asked a set of yes-no questions, either in standard or in a modified, forced-choice format, about a videotaped event. Younger children were less accurate and consistent than were older children. Unlike the older children, the younger children were less accurate on questions that adults rated as probing central information compared to those involving more peripheral details. Question format did not alter children's accuracy, their tendency to answer "I don't know," or their consistency across repeated questions. No clear response biases were observed for the majority of children regardless of question format, and accuracy was equivalent on "yes-correct" and "no-correct" questions. Consistency and answers to suggestibility check questions were not predictive of performance. Because multiple mechanisms underlie errors on yes-no questions, the goal of postdicting the accuracy of children's responses remains elusive.

Hewitt, S. K. (1999). *Assessing Allegations of Sexual Abuse in Preschool Children*. Interpersonal Violence Practice Series. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Peterson, C., Dowden, C., & Tobin, J. (1999). Interviewing preschoolers: Comparisons of yes/no and wh-questions. *Law and Human Behavior*, 23(5), 539-555.

This study investigated the influence of question format on preschool-aged children's errors, their response accuracy, and their tendency to say "I don't know" when given non-misleading questions in a neutral, unbiased context. Children (3 to 5 years old) participated in a craft-making session that included a staged "accident" with two experimenters differing in gender and appearance, the environment also had several distinctive features. One week later children were interviewed about actions, participants, and environment; questions were yes/no format with the veridical response "yes" ("yes" questions), yes/no format with the veridical response "no" ("no" questions), and specific wh- format questions. Question format substantially influenced children's responses: they were most likely to make errors if asked "no" questions, and were unlikely to answer either yes/no question with "I don't know." In contrast, children spontaneously and frequently said "I don't know" to wh- questions about content they did not recall (environment), but not about content that was well recalled (actions). Implications of question format for reliability of eyewitness testimony by preschoolers are discussed. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2012 APA, all rights reserved)

Roberts, K. P., Lamb, M. E., & Sternberg, K. J. (1999). Effects of the timing of postevent information on preschoolers' memories of an event. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 13(6), 541-559.

Few researchers have investigated whether the timing of postevent information affects the accuracy of children's reports of events they have experienced. In this study, four-year-olds dressed up in costumes and had their photographs taken. An unfamiliar adult spoke to the children about the event either a day (immediate condition) or a month (delayed condition) later, providing both accurate and misleading information about the staged event. When questioned five weeks after the event, children in a control group who had not received the review were more inaccurate answering focused questions than children who had been reminded of the event. A review a while after the event but shortly before the interview increased the amount of details recalled and this was not at

the expense of accuracy. Misinformation was seldom reported spontaneously, although children in all groups acquiesced to leading questions in line with the misleading suggestions. Copyright © 1999 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Poole, D. A., & Lindsay, D. S. (1995). Interviewing preschoolers: Effects of nonsuggestive techniques, parental coaching, and leading questions on reports of nonexperienced events. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 60(1), 129-154.

This study explored preschoolers' eyewitness testimony under conditions designed to maximize (session 1) or degrade (session 2) the quality of their event reports. In session 1, thirty-nine 3- to 4-year-olds and twenty-nine 5- to 7-year-olds interacted with Mr. Science and were immediately interviewed using nonsuggestive techniques. The children did well in this immediate interview, and nonsuggestive prompts elicited substantial amounts of new accurate information. Three months later 21 of the children heard their parents read a story about Mr. Science that described experienced and nonexperienced events preparatory to an interview in which children were asked nonleading, leading, and source monitoring questions about their experiences with Mr. Science. The children made many erroneous reports in this second interview (e.g., 41% of the 3- to 4-year-olds spontaneously reported that Mr. Science had done things that were mentioned only in the story). Patterns of errors in response to free recall, leading, and source monitoring questions are described.

Reese, E., & Fivush, R. (1993). Parental styles of talk about the past. *Developmental Psychology*, 29(3), 596-606.

Past research indicates that mothers have different styles of reminiscing with their children (e.g., R. Fivush and F. A. Fromhoff, 1988). This study examined fathers' styles of talking about the past as well. Mothers and fathers from 24 2-parent families talked separately with their 3-yr-olds about shared 1-time events. Consistent with previous research on mothers, parents displayed 2 distinct narrative styles. The styles were not associated with gender of parent. However, parents of daughters were generally more elaborative (i.e., they provided more narrative structure and talked longer) than parents of sons. In turn, daughters participated in the conversations to a greater extent

than sons, but sons and daughters had similar linguistic skills. Parents do not appear to be basing their narrative styles on the memory or language capabilities of their children. Instead, the practice of reminiscing may be a sex-typed activity. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2012 APA, all rights reserved)

Peterson, C. (1990). The who, when, and where of early narratives. *Journal of Child Language*, 17(2), 433-455.

To be well understood, narratives need to be embedded within appropriate contextual information. The early development of key orientation (participants, location and time) was traced with an 18-month longitudinal study of real-experience narratives produced by 10 children aged approximately 2-3; 6. Listener knowledge or inference was required to decode most named participants and many were not specified at all. There was no developmental improvement. Orientation to when was rare at first and involved formula words indiscriminately applied. There was steady developmental improvement in frequency as well as differentiation of time references. where information was more common at all ages, particularly when the narrated events occurred away from home. It also showed developmental improvement, but only for away-from-home locations. Overall, very young children can produce narratives in an unscaffolded context to adults unfamiliar with their experiences. The potential role of parental scaffolding in teaching orientation skills is discussed.