



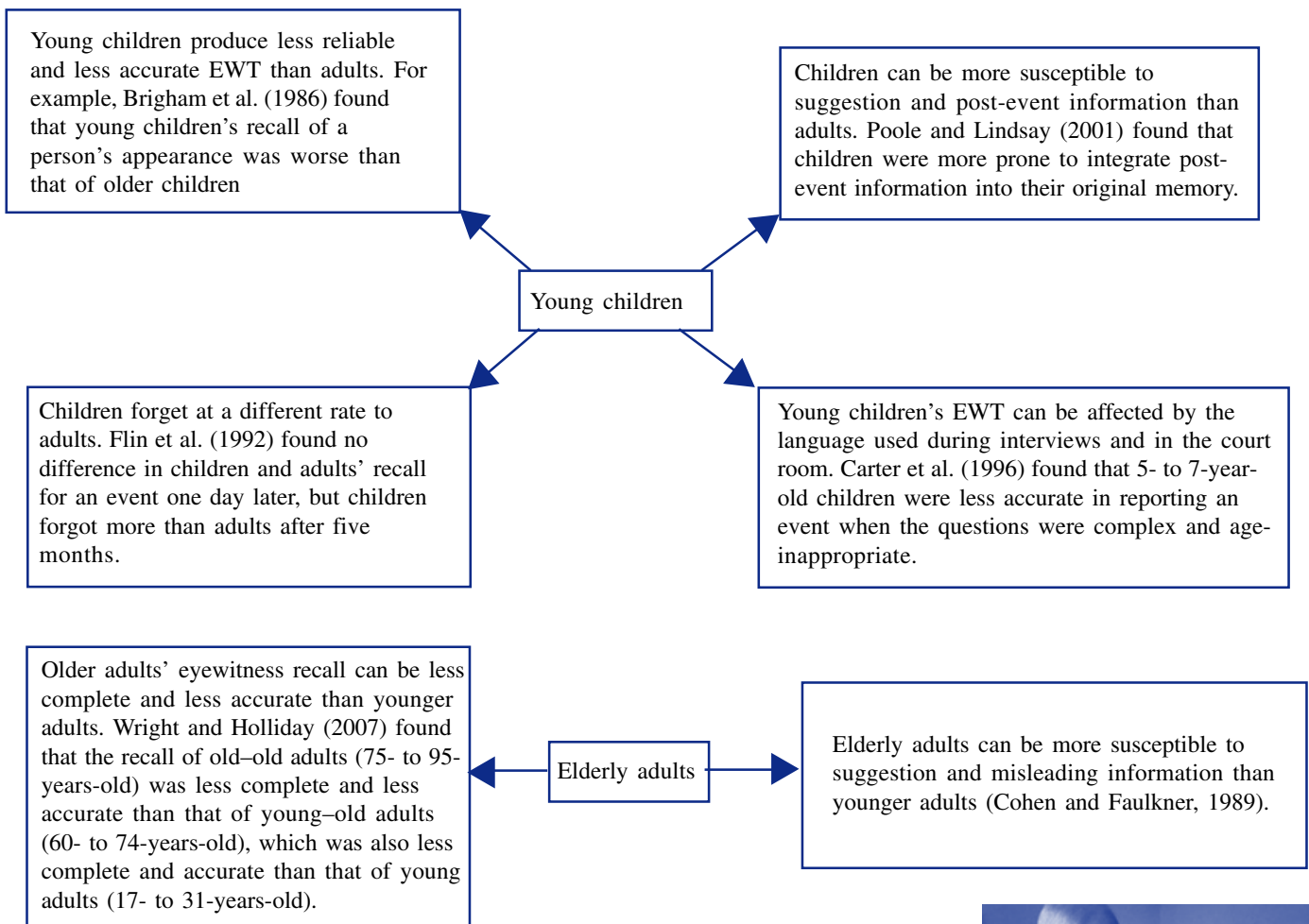
## Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony

This Factsheet summarises some research evidence about various factors which can affect the accuracy of people's eyewitness testimony.

Eyewitness testimony is covered in Curriculum Press Factsheets 12 and 18.

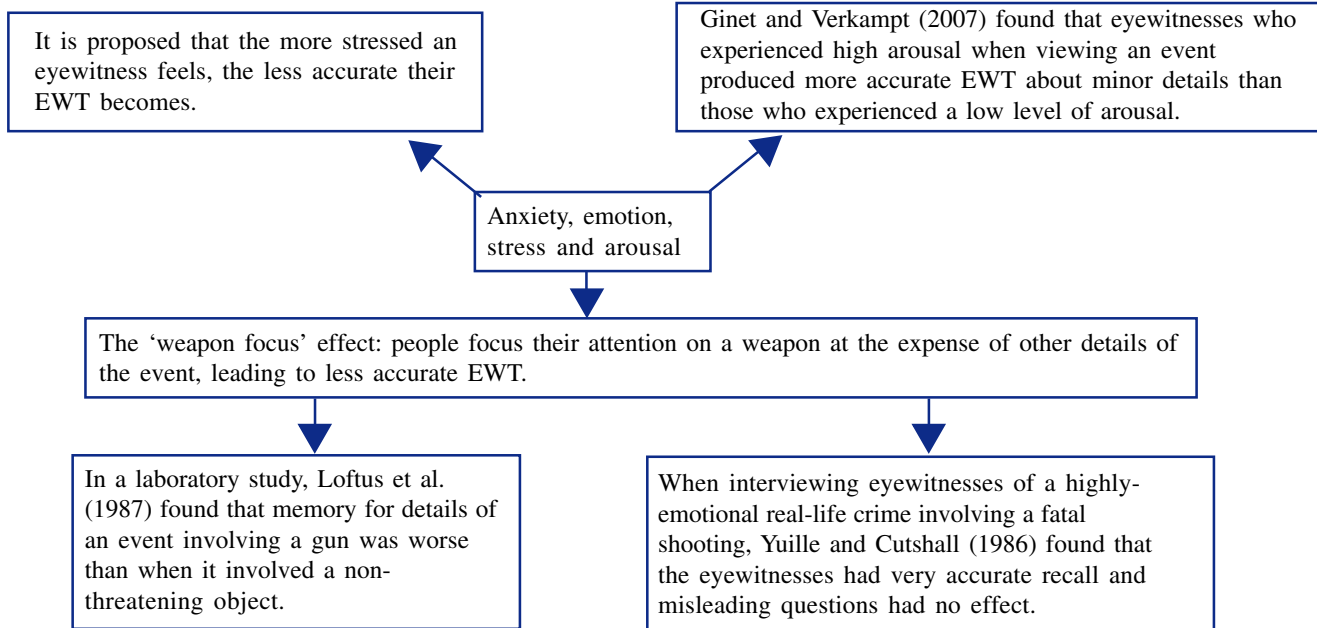
### A. The age of the witness

There is some evidence that the eyewitness testimony (EWT) of young children and elderly people is affected by certain factors. These factors may also affect adults' EWT, but to a different extent.

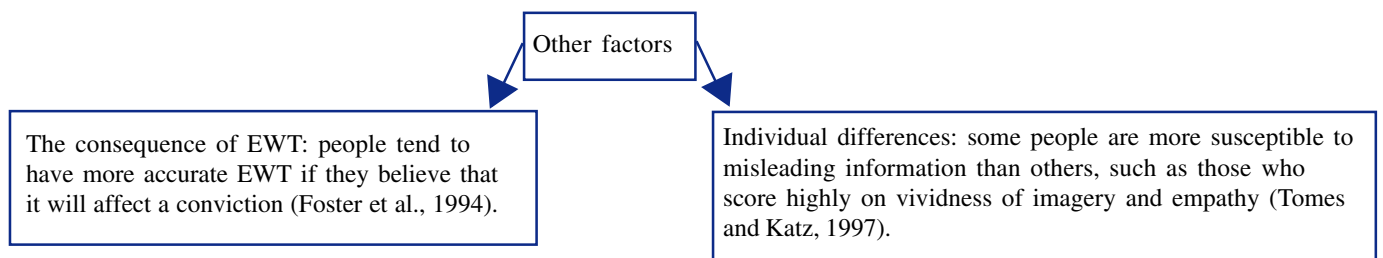


## B. Stress and anxiety

There is some evidence that stress, emotion, arousal and anxiety can affect EWT.



## C. Other factors



**Exam Hint:-** When asked to discuss factors affecting EWT, you can focus on one or two factors in depth or on several factors but in less depth.

## D. Evaluating the research

When evaluating any research, consider these points:

- Is there other research evidence which supports (agrees with) the findings of this research study?
- Is there other research evidence which does not agree with the findings of this research study?
  - For example: Some evidence suggests that children are more suggestible than adults (e.g., Poole and Lindsay, 2001). However, evidence from Duncan, Whitney and Kunen (1982) does not completely support this. They found that younger children were less susceptible to misleading post-event information than the older children.
- Has the study been conducted according to the British Psychological Society's code of ethics? Are there any ethical issues?
- What limitations and/or strengths does the research method have? Do these influence the findings?
  - For example: Laboratory studies tend to find that stress and anxiety negatively affect EWT. However, studies outside of the laboratory have found that people who had been in high-anxiety, real-life situations produce more accurate and detailed EWT (e.g., Christianson and Hubinette, 1993).
- How representative is the sample of participants?
- Are there any other issues?

**Exam Hint:-** For a high exam grade, you must be able to effectively evaluate research and theories. Examiners comment that the ability to evaluate is the main differentiator among all candidates.

**Acknowledgements:** This Psychology Factsheet was researched and written by **Amanda Albon**.  
The Curriculum Press, Bank House, 105 King Street, Wellington, Shropshire, TF1 1NU.

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### Worksheet: Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Describe in detail one research study which has investigated a factor which can affect the accuracy of eyewitness testimony.

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2. Complete the table below to evaluate that research study.

<p>Is there other research evidence which supports the findings? (Outline the study).</p>	
<p>Is there other research evidence which does not support the findings? (Outline the study).</p>	
<p>Are there any limitations of the sampling or sample used? How representative is the sample?</p>	
<p>What research method was used? State one advantage and one disadvantage of the method.</p>	
<p>What ethical issues arise (if any)?</p>	