

Orthographic similarity: The case of “reversed anagrams”

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How orthographically similar are words such as *paws* and *swap*, *flow* and *wolf*, or *live* and *evil*? According to the letter-position coding schemes used in models of visual word recognition, these “reversed anagrams” are considered to be less similar than words that share letters in the same absolute or relative positions (such as *home* and *hose* or *plan* and *lane*). Therefore, reversed anagrams should not produce the standard “orthographic similarity effects” found using substitution neighbors (e.g., *home*, *hose*). Simulations using the spatial coding model (Davis, 2010), for example, predict an inhibitory masked priming effect for substitution-neighbor word pairs, but a null effect for reversed anagrams. Nevertheless, we obtained significant inhibitory priming using both stimulus types (Experiment 1). We also demonstrate that robust repetition blindness can be obtained for reversed anagrams (Experiment 2). Reversed anagrams therefore provide a new test for models of visual word recognition and orthographic similarity.

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