

Definition: Orientation agnosia

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Orientation agnosia

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Orientation agnosia (OA) defines the difficulty of correctly reproducing, describing and recognizing the spatial orientation (typically the correct cardinal axis) of visually presented objects. The orientation difficulty is independent of the original orientation of the object (vertical or horizontal), and has been reported for drawings of real objects (like a house or a kangaroo), and for meaningless stimuli (such as the Rey Complex Figure). The term orientation agnosia is used only for substantial (and ideally repeatable) misorientations, of which dramatic rotations of 90 or 180° have often been reported.

Object orientation can be assessed in several ways: examples include copying an image directly, drawing a picture from memory, verbally describing the object's orientation, or choosing the stimulus orientation from among alternatives. Thus, while the phenomenon has been described as 'rotated drawing', it also appears when assessed using methods other than drawing.

Orientation agnosia is a selective disorder that dissociates from constructional apraxia and visual object agnosia. Thus, despite substantial orientation errors, patients are able to accurately reproduce and name visually presented objects, suggesting that the processing of shape information is more intact.

The label "Orientation agnosia" applies only when the orientation errors cannot be attributed to aphasia, sensory-motor impairments, intelligence deficits or any other disorders that could prevent task completion.

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