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The effect of ceiling height on the symbolic distance effect

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Abstract: The present study investigated the effect of ceiling height on the symbolic distance effect (SDE). We hypothesized that a high/low ceiling height would produce a small/large SDE through divergent/convergent thinking. We prepared three SDE tasks: numerical, spatial, and temporal. Participants conducted these tasks in both high and low ceiling conditions. Results showed that in the spatial and temporal tasks, a high ceiling height produced smaller SDEs, and a low ceiling produced larger SDEs (but not in the numerical task). These results suggest that the environment affects not only cognitive performance but also the nature of mental representations.