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The Impact of Landmark Height, Distance, and Age on Communicative Judgments of Nearbyness

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Abstract: The ability to communicate about locations is an important task in everyday life. The goal of this experiment was to examine how preschool children and adults use landmarks to make communicative judgments about locations. In particular, we examined how relative distance and landmark height impact judgments regarding nearbyness. Three- and 4-year-old children and adults were asked to rate how well the word by described the relation between several locations and a central landmark. Landmark height varied across conditions. As expected, by ratings were highest for the locations closest to the landmark and declined at the larger distances for all ages, though rating systematicity increased over development. Interestingly, ratings at the larger distances varied across condition for adults, with the tall landmark leading to higher ratings than the short landmark. These findings help clarify the impact of landmark characteristics and distance on peoples understanding of nearbyness.