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Programming to Transition Psychological Experiments from SuperLab to Matlab

College of Sciences and Health Professions

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Abstract

For the past six years, our laboratory has conducted experiments programmed in Superlab, a software package designed exclusively for psychological experiments. Although Superlab has some attractive features, it also has some severe limitations. For example, Superlab cannot read files, meaning that for an experiment in which each participant has a unique stimulus list, a unique program has to be assembled for each participant. For an experiment in which each participant has a unique order of conditions, a unique program with the conditions in that order has to be assembled for each participant. Preparing numerous unique programs provides numerous opportunities for errors. Matlab, with Psychophysics toolbox, permits these limitations to be surmounted so that there need be only one program prepared for an experiment. For example, a general Matlab program can read a file containing the unique stimulus list for each participant, or a table that contains condition orders for all participants. We will describe the program we have devised for a set of classification experiments. We will address some of the problems we have encountered and how we have solved them.