



# PSYCHOLOGY

## Course Description

**Effective Fall 2014**

*AP Course Descriptions are updated regularly. Please visit AP Central® ([apcentral.collegeboard.org](http://apcentral.collegeboard.org)) to determine whether a more recent Course Description PDF is available.*

## **The College Board**

The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT® and the Advanced Placement Program®. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators, and schools. For further information, visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).

## **AP Equity and Access Policy**

The College Board strongly encourages educators to make equitable access a guiding principle for their AP programs by giving all willing and academically prepared students the opportunity to participate in AP. We encourage the elimination of barriers that restrict access to AP for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underserved. Schools should make every effort to ensure their AP classes reflect the diversity of their student population. The College Board also believes that all students should have access to academically challenging course work before they enroll in AP classes, which can prepare them for AP success. It is only through a commitment to equitable preparation and access that true equity and excellence can be achieved.

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## About AP<sup>®</sup>

The College Board's Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP<sup>®</sup>) enables students to pursue college-level studies while still in high school. Through more than 30 courses, each culminating in a rigorous exam, AP provides willing and academically prepared students with the opportunity to earn college credit, advanced placement, or both. Taking AP courses also demonstrates to college admission officers that students have sought out the most rigorous course work available to them.

Each AP course is modeled upon a comparable college course, and college and university faculty play a vital role in ensuring that AP courses align with college-level standards. Talented and dedicated AP teachers help AP students in classrooms around the world develop and apply the content knowledge and skills they will need later in college.

Each AP course concludes with a college-level assessment developed and scored by college and university faculty as well as experienced AP teachers. AP Exams are an essential part of the AP experience, enabling students to demonstrate their mastery of college-level course work. Most four-year colleges and universities in the United States and universities in more than 60 countries recognize AP in the admissions process and grant students credit, placement, or both on the basis of successful AP Exam scores. Visit [www.collegeboard.org/ap/creditpolicy](http://www.collegeboard.org/ap/creditpolicy) to view AP credit and placement policies at more than 1,000 colleges and universities.

Performing well on an AP Exam means more than just the successful completion of a course; it is a gateway to success in college. Research consistently shows that students who receive a score of 3 or higher on AP Exams typically experience greater academic success in college and have higher graduation rates than their non-AP peers<sup>1</sup>. Additional AP studies are available at [www.collegeboard.org/research](http://www.collegeboard.org/research).

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<sup>1</sup>See the following research studies for more details:

Linda Hargrove, Donn Godin, and Barbara Dodd, *College Outcomes Comparisons by AP and Non-AP High School Experiences* (New York: The College Board, 2008).

Chrys Dougherty, Lynn Mellor, and Shuling Jian, *The Relationship Between Advanced Placement and College Graduation* (Austin, Texas: National Center for Educational Accountability, 2006).

## **Offering AP Courses and Enrolling Students**

Each AP course and exam description details the essential information required to understand the objectives and expectations of an AP course. The AP Program unequivocally supports the principle that each school implements its own curriculum that will enable students to develop the content knowledge and skills described here.

Schools wishing to offer AP courses must participate in the AP Course Audit, a process through which AP teachers' syllabi are reviewed by college faculty. The AP Course Audit was created at the request of College Board members who sought a means for the College Board to provide teachers and administrators with clear guidelines on curricular and resource requirements for AP courses and to help colleges and universities validate courses marked "AP" on students' transcripts. This process ensures that AP teachers' syllabi meet or exceed the curricular and resource expectations that college and secondary school faculty have established for college-level courses. For more information on the AP Course Audit, visit [www.collegeboard.org/apcourseaudit](http://www.collegeboard.org/apcourseaudit).

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## **How AP Courses and Exams Are Developed**

AP courses and exams are designed by committees of college faculty and expert AP teachers who ensure that each AP subject reflects and assesses college-level expectations. To find a list of each subject's current AP Development Committee members, please visit [press.collegeboard.org/ap/committees](http://press.collegeboard.org/ap/committees). AP Development Committees define the scope and expectations of the course, articulating through a curriculum framework what students should know and be able to do upon completion of the AP course. Their work is informed by data collected from a range of colleges and universities to ensure that AP coursework reflects current scholarship and advances in the discipline.

The AP Development Committees are also responsible for drawing clear and well-articulated connections between the AP course and AP Exam — work that includes designing and approving exam specifications and exam questions. The AP Exam development process is a multiyear endeavor; all AP Exams undergo extensive review, revision, piloting, and analysis to ensure that questions are high quality and fair and that there is an appropriate spread of difficulty across the questions.

Throughout AP course and exam development, the College Board gathers feedback from various stakeholders in both secondary schools and higher education institutions. This feedback is carefully considered to ensure that AP courses and exams are able to provide students with a college-level learning experience and the opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications for advanced placement upon college entrance.

## How AP Exams Are Scored

The exam scoring process, like the course and exam development process, relies on the expertise of both AP teachers and college faculty. While multiple-choice questions are scored by machine, the free-response questions are scored by thousands of college faculty and expert AP teachers at the annual AP Reading. AP Exam Readers are thoroughly trained, and their work is monitored throughout the Reading for fairness and consistency. In each subject, a highly respected college faculty member fills the role of Chief Reader, who, with the help of AP Readers in leadership positions, maintains the accuracy of the scoring standards. Scores on the free-response questions are weighted and combined with the results of the computer-scored multiple-choice questions, and this raw score is converted into a composite AP Exam score of 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1.

The score-setting process is both precise and labor intensive, involving numerous psychometric analyses of the results of a specific AP Exam in a specific year and of the particular group of students who took that exam. Additionally, to ensure alignment with college-level standards, part of the score-setting process involves comparing the performance of AP students with the performance of students enrolled in comparable courses in colleges throughout the United States. In general, the AP composite score points are set so that the lowest raw score needed to earn an AP Exam score of 5 is equivalent to the average score among college students earning grades of A in the college course. Similarly, AP Exam scores of 4 are equivalent to college grades of A–, B+, and B. AP Exam scores of 3 are equivalent to college grades of B–, C+, and C.

## Using and Interpreting AP Scores

The extensive work done by college faculty and AP teachers in the development of the course and the exam and throughout the scoring process ensures that AP Exam scores accurately represent students' achievement in the equivalent college course. While colleges and universities are responsible for setting their own credit and placement policies, AP scores signify how qualified students are to receive college credit or placement:

AP Score	Qualification
5	Extremely well qualified
4	Well qualified
3	Qualified
2	Possibly qualified
1	No recommendation

## Additional Resources

Visit [apcentral.collegeboard.org](http://apcentral.collegeboard.org) for more information about the AP Program.

## **AP Psychology**

The Advanced Placement Program offers a course and exam in psychology to qualified students who wish to complete studies in secondary school equivalent to an introductory college course in psychology. The exam presumes at least one semester of college-level preparation, as is described in this book.

The inclusion of material in the Course Description and in the exam is not intended as an endorsement by the College Board or ETS of the content, ideas, or values expressed in the material. The material has been selected by experienced high school and college and university instructors of psychology who serve as members of the AP Psychology Development Committee. In their judgment, the material printed here reflects the content of a typical introductory college course in psychology.

### **T H E C O U R S E**

#### **Purpose**

The AP Psychology course is designed to introduce students to the systematic and scientific study of the behavior and mental processes of human beings and other animals. Students are exposed to the psychological facts, principles, and phenomena associated with each of the major subfields within psychology. They also learn about the ethics and methods psychologists use in their science and practice.

#### **Prerequisites**

##### **For Students**

All students who are willing to accept the challenge of a rigorous academic curriculum should be considered for admission to AP courses. The College Board encourages the elimination of barriers that restrict access to AP courses for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in the AP Program. Schools should make every effort to ensure that their AP classes reflect the diversity of their student population.

##### **For Teachers and Schools**

AP classes require extra time on the part of the teacher for preparation, individual consultation with students, and the reading of a much larger number of assignments than would normally be given to students in regular classes. The AP Psychology Development Committee strongly urges that any teacher offering such a class be assigned a reduced number of teaching preparations. To facilitate the teaching and learning of psychology, the committee also suggests that schools enrich the resource materials available to teachers and students in classrooms and libraries.

Because the AP Psychology course is designed to mirror an entry-level college course, and most college faculty use the most up-to-date textbooks and supplemental materials in their classes, the AP Psychology Exam is developed using current materials. It is highly recommended that AP Psychology teachers and students use current textbooks or supplement older texts with more recent material.



Although many schools are able to establish AP courses, some schools with fewer students offer tutorial work associated with a regular course or a program of independent study.

Examples of the content and organization of AP Psychology courses and equivalent college courses, as well as suggestions for appropriate resource materials, can be found in the *AP Psychology Teacher's Guide*. Go to AP Central ([apcentral.collegeboard.org](http://apcentral.collegeboard.org)) or see page 25 for ordering information.

## Goals

An introductory college course in psychology is generally one semester, with some variation among colleges. An AP Psychology course need not follow any specific college curriculum. Rather, the aim of the course is to provide the student with a learning experience equivalent to that obtained in most college introductory psychology courses.

## Topics and Learning Objectives

The following is a description of learning objectives for the major content areas covered in the AP Psychology Exam, as well as the approximate percentages of the multiple-choice section devoted to each area. This listing is not intended to be an exhaustive list of topics.

### I. History and Approaches (2–4%)

Psychology has evolved markedly since its inception as a discipline in 1879. There have been significant changes in the theories that psychologists use to explain behavior and mental processes. In addition, the methodology of psychological research has expanded to include a diversity of approaches to data gathering.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Recognize how philosophical and physiological perspectives shaped the development of psychological thought.
- Describe and compare different theoretical approaches in explaining behavior:
  - structuralism, functionalism, and behaviorism in the early years;
  - Gestalt, psychoanalytic/psychodynamic, and humanism emerging later;
  - evolutionary, biological, cognitive, and biopsychosocial as more contemporary approaches.
- Recognize the strengths and limitations of applying theories to explain behavior.
- Distinguish the different domains of psychology (e.g., biological, clinical, cognitive, counseling, developmental, educational, experimental, human factors, industrial–organizational, personality, psychometric, social).
- Identify major historical figures in psychology (e.g., Mary Whiton Calkins, Charles Darwin, Dorothea Dix, Sigmund Freud, G. Stanley Hall, William James, Ivan Pavlov, Jean Piaget, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, Margaret Floy Washburn, John B. Watson, Wilhelm Wundt).

## **II. Research Methods (8–10%)**

Psychology is an empirical discipline. Psychologists develop knowledge by doing research. Research provides guidance for psychologists who develop theories to explain behavior and who apply theories to solve problems in behavior.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Differentiate types of research (e.g., experiments, correlational studies, survey research, naturalistic observations, case studies) with regard to purpose, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Describe how research design drives the reasonable conclusions that can be drawn (e.g., experiments are useful for determining cause and effect; the use of experimental controls reduces alternative explanations).
- Identify independent, dependent, confounding, and control variables in experimental designs.
- Distinguish between random assignment of participants to conditions in experiments and random selection of participants, primarily in correlational studies and surveys.
- Predict the validity of behavioral explanations based on the quality of research design (e.g., confounding variables limit confidence in research conclusions).
- Distinguish the purposes of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.
- Apply basic descriptive statistical concepts, including interpreting and constructing graphs and calculating simple descriptive statistics (e.g., measures of central tendency, standard deviation).
- Discuss the value of reliance on operational definitions and measurement in behavioral research.
- Identify how ethical issues inform and constrain research practices.
- Describe how ethical and legal guidelines (e.g., those provided by the American Psychological Association, federal regulations, local institutional review boards) protect research participants and promote sound ethical practice.

## **III. Biological Bases of Behavior (8–10%)**

An effective introduction to the relationship between physiological processes and behavior — including the influence of neural function, the nervous system and the brain, and genetic contributions to behavior — is an important element in the AP course.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Identify basic processes and systems in the biological bases of behavior, including parts of the neuron and the process of transmission of a signal between neurons.
- Discuss the influence of drugs on neurotransmitters (e.g., reuptake mechanisms, agonists, antagonists).
- Discuss the effect of the endocrine system on behavior.

- Describe the nervous system and its subdivisions and functions:
  - central and peripheral nervous systems;
  - major brain regions, lobes, and cortical areas;
  - brain lateralization and hemispheric specialization.
- Discuss the role of neuroplasticity in traumatic brain injury.
- Recount historic and contemporary research strategies and technologies that support research (e.g., case studies, split-brain research, imaging techniques).
- Discuss psychology’s abiding interest in how heredity, environment, and evolution work together to shape behavior.
- Predict how traits and behavior can be selected for their adaptive value.
- Identify key contributors (e.g., Paul Broca, Charles Darwin, Michael Gazzaniga, Roger Sperry, Carl Wernicke).

#### **IV. Sensation and Perception (6–8%)**

Everything that organisms know about the world is first encountered when stimuli in the environment activate sensory organs, initiating awareness of the external world. Perception involves the interpretation of the sensory inputs as a cognitive process.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Discuss basic principles of sensory transduction, including absolute threshold, difference threshold, signal detection, and sensory adaptation.
- Describe sensory processes (e.g., hearing, vision, touch, taste, smell, vestibular, kinesthesia, pain), including the specific nature of energy transduction, relevant anatomical structures, and specialized pathways in the brain for each of the senses.
- Explain common sensory disorders (e.g., visual and hearing impairments).
- Describe general principles of organizing and integrating sensation to promote stable awareness of the external world (e.g., Gestalt principles, depth perception).
- Discuss how experience and culture can influence perceptual processes (e.g., perceptual set, context effects).
- Explain the role of top-down processing in producing vulnerability to illusion.
- Discuss the role of attention in behavior.
- Challenge common beliefs in parapsychological phenomena.
- Identify the major historical figures in sensation and perception (e.g., Gustav Fechner, David Hubel, Ernst Weber, Torsten Wiesel).

#### **V. States of Consciousness (2–4%)**

Understanding consciousness and what it encompasses is critical to an appreciation of what is meant by a given state of consciousness. The study of variations in consciousness includes an examination of the sleep cycle, dreams, hypnosis, circadian rhythms, and the effects of psychoactive drugs.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Describe various states of consciousness and their impact on behavior.
- Discuss aspects of sleep and dreaming:
  - stages and characteristics of the sleep cycle;
  - theories of sleep and dreaming;
  - symptoms and treatments of sleep disorders.
- Describe historic and contemporary uses of hypnosis (e.g., pain control, psychotherapy).
- Explain hypnotic phenomena (e.g., suggestibility, dissociation).
- Identify the major psychoactive drug categories (e.g., depressants, stimulants) and classify specific drugs, including their psychological and physiological effects.
- Discuss drug dependence, addiction, tolerance, and withdrawal.
- Identify the major figures in consciousness research (e.g., William James, Sigmund Freud, Ernest Hilgard).

## **VI. Learning (7–9%)**

This section of the course introduces students to differences between learned and unlearned behavior. The primary focus is exploration of different kinds of learning, including classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning. The biological bases of behavior illustrate predispositions for learning.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Distinguish general differences between principles of classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning (e.g., contingencies).
- Describe basic classical conditioning phenomena, such as acquisition, extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization, discrimination, and higher-order learning.
- Predict the effects of operant conditioning (e.g., positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment).
- Predict how practice, schedules of reinforcement, and motivation will influence quality of learning.
- Interpret graphs that exhibit the results of learning experiments.
- Provide examples of how biological constraints create learning predispositions.
- Describe the essential characteristics of insight learning, latent learning, and social learning.
- Apply learning principles to explain emotional learning, taste aversion, superstitious behavior, and learned helplessness.
- Suggest how behavior modification, biofeedback, coping strategies, and self-control can be used to address behavioral problems.
- Identify key contributors in the psychology of learning (e.g., Albert Bandura, John Garcia, Ivan Pavlov, Robert Rescorla, B. F. Skinner, Edward Thorndike, Edward Tolman, John B. Watson).

## **VII. Cognition (8–10%)**

In this unit students learn how humans convert sensory input into kinds of information. They examine how humans learn, remember, and retrieve information. This part of the course also addresses problem solving, language, and creativity.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Compare and contrast various cognitive processes:
  - effortful versus automatic processing;
  - deep versus shallow processing;
  - focused versus divided attention.
- Describe and differentiate psychological and physiological systems of memory (e.g., short-term memory, procedural memory).
- Outline the principles that underlie effective encoding, storage, and construction of memories.
- Describe strategies for memory improvement.
- Synthesize how biological, cognitive, and cultural factors converge to facilitate acquisition, development, and use of language.
- Identify problem-solving strategies as well as factors that influence their effectiveness.
- List the characteristics of creative thought and creative thinkers.
- Identify key contributors in cognitive psychology (e.g., Noam Chomsky, Hermann Ebbinghaus, Wolfgang Köhler, Elizabeth Loftus, George A. Miller).

## **VIII. Motivation and Emotion (6–8%)**

In this part of the course, students explore biological and social factors that motivate behavior and biological and cultural factors that influence emotion.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Identify and apply basic motivational concepts to understand the behavior of humans and other animals (e.g., instincts, incentives, intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation).
- Discuss the biological underpinnings of motivation, including needs, drives, and homeostasis.
- Compare and contrast motivational theories (e.g., drive reduction theory, arousal theory, general adaptation theory), including the strengths and weaknesses of each.
- Describe classic research findings in specific motivation systems (e.g., eating, sex, social)
- Discuss theories of stress and the effects of stress on psychological and physical well-being.
- Compare and contrast major theories of emotion (e.g., James–Lange, Cannon–Bard, Schachter two-factor theory).

- Describe how cultural influences shape emotional expression, including variations in body language.
- Identify key contributors in the psychology of motivation and emotion (e.g., William James, Alfred Kinsey, Abraham Maslow, Stanley Schachter, Hans Selye).

### **IX. Developmental Psychology (7–9%)**

Developmental psychology deals with the behavior of organisms from conception to death and examines the processes that contribute to behavioral change throughout the life span. The major areas of emphasis in the course are prenatal development, motor development, socialization, cognitive development, adolescence, and adulthood.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Discuss the interaction of nature and nurture (including cultural variations) in the determination of behavior.
- Explain the process of conception and gestation, including factors that influence successful fetal development (e.g., nutrition, illness, substance abuse).
- Discuss maturation of motor skills.
- Describe the influence of temperament and other social factors on attachment and appropriate socialization.
- Explain the maturation of cognitive abilities (e.g., Piaget’s stages, information processing).
- Compare and contrast models of moral development (e.g., Kohlberg, Gilligan).
- Discuss maturational challenges in adolescence, including related family conflicts.
- Explain how parenting styles influence development.
- Characterize the development of decisions related to intimacy as people mature.
- Predict the physical and cognitive changes that emerge as people age, including steps that can be taken to maximize function.
- Describe how sex and gender influence socialization and other aspects of development.
- Identify key contributors in developmental psychology (e.g., Mary Ainsworth, Albert Bandura, Diana Baumrind, Erik Erikson, Sigmund Freud, Carol Gilligan, Harry Harlow, Lawrence Kohlberg, Konrad Lorenz, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky).

### **X. Personality (5–7%)**

In this section of the course, students explore major theories of how humans develop enduring patterns of behavior and personal characteristics that influence how others relate to them. The unit also addresses research methods used to assess personality.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Compare and contrast the major theories and approaches to explaining personality (e.g., psychoanalytic, humanist, cognitive, trait, social cognition, behavioral).
- Describe and compare research methods (e.g., case studies and surveys) that psychologists use to investigate personality.

- Identify frequently used assessment strategies (e.g., the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory [MMPI], the Thematic Apperception Test [TAT]), and evaluate relative test quality based on reliability and validity of the instruments.
- Speculate how cultural context can facilitate or constrain personality development, especially as it relates to self-concept (e.g., collectivistic versus individualistic cultures).
- Identify key contributors to personality theory (e.g., Alfred Adler, Albert Bandura, Paul Costa and Robert McCrae, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers).

## **XI. Testing and Individual Differences (5–7%)**

An understanding of intelligence and assessment of individual differences is highlighted in this portion of the course. Students must understand issues related to test construction and fair use.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Define intelligence and list characteristics of how psychologists measure intelligence:
  - abstract versus verbal measures;
  - speed of processing.
- Discuss how culture influences the definition of intelligence.
- Compare and contrast historic and contemporary theories of intelligence (e.g., Charles Spearman, Howard Gardner, Robert Sternberg).
- Explain how psychologists design tests, including standardization strategies and other techniques to establish reliability and validity.
- Interpret the meaning of scores in terms of the normal curve.
- Describe relevant labels related to intelligence testing (e.g., gifted, cognitively disabled).
- Debate the appropriate testing practices, particularly in relation to culture-fair test uses.
- Identify key contributors in intelligence research and testing (e.g., Alfred Binet, Francis Galton, Howard Gardner, Charles Spearman, Robert Sternberg, Louis Terman, David Wechsler).

## **XII. Abnormal Behavior (7–9%)**

In this portion of the course, students examine the nature of common challenges to adaptive functioning. This section emphasizes formal conventions that guide psychologists' judgments about diagnosis and problem severity.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Describe contemporary and historical conceptions of what constitutes psychological disorders.

- Recognize the use of the most recent version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association as the primary reference for making diagnostic judgments.
- Discuss the major diagnostic categories, including anxiety disorders, bipolar and related disorders, depressive disorders, dissociative disorders, feeding and eating disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, neurocognitive disorders, obsessive-compulsive and related disorders, personality disorders, schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders, somatic symptom and related disorders, and trauma- and stressor-related disorders and their corresponding symptoms.
- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of various approaches to explaining psychological disorders: medical model, psychoanalytic, humanistic, cognitive, biological, and sociocultural.
- Identify the positive and negative consequences of diagnostic labels (e.g., the Rosenhan study).
- Discuss the intersection between psychology and the legal system (e.g., confidentiality, insanity defense).

### **XIII. Treatment of Abnormal Behavior (5–7%)**

This section of the course provides students with an understanding of empirically based treatments of psychological disorders. The topic emphasizes descriptions of treatment modalities based on various orientations in psychology.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Describe the central characteristics of psychotherapeutic intervention.
- Describe major treatment orientations used in therapy (e.g., behavioral, cognitive, humanistic) and how those orientations influence therapeutic planning.
- Compare and contrast different treatment formats (e.g., individual, group).
- Summarize effectiveness of specific treatments used to address specific problems.
- Discuss how cultural and ethnic context influence choice and success of treatment (e.g., factors that lead to premature termination of treatment).
- Describe prevention strategies that build resilience and promote competence.
- Identify major figures in psychological treatment (e.g., Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, Sigmund Freud, Mary Cover Jones, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, Joseph Wolpe).

### **XIV. Social Psychology (8–10%)**

This part of the course focuses on how individuals relate to one another in social situations. Social psychologists study social attitudes, social influence, and other social phenomena.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Apply attribution theory to explain motives (e.g., fundamental attribution error, self-serving bias).
- Describe the structure and function of different kinds of group behavior (e.g., deindividuation, group polarization).



- Explain how individuals respond to expectations of others, including groupthink, conformity, and obedience to authority.
- Discuss attitudes and how they change (e.g., central route to persuasion).
- Predict the impact of the presence of others on individual behavior (e.g., bystander effect, social facilitation).
- Describe processes that contribute to differential treatment of group members (e.g., in-group/out-group dynamics, ethnocentrism, prejudice).
- Articulate the impact of social and cultural categories (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity) on self-concept and relations with others.
- Anticipate the impact of behavior on a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Describe the variables that contribute to altruism, aggression, and attraction.
- Discuss attitude formation and change, including persuasion strategies and cognitive dissonance.
- Identify important figures in social psychology (e.g., Solomon Asch, Leon Festinger, Stanley Milgram, Philip Zimbardo).

## Content Outline

These are the major content areas covered by the AP Psychology Exam, as well as the approximate percentages of the multiple-choice section that are devoted to each area. For a more thorough description of the exam's content, please see the preceding pages.

<i>Content Area</i>	<i>Percentage Goals for Exam (multiple-choice section)</i>
I. History and Approaches . . . . .	2–4%
A. History of Psychology	
B. Approaches	
1. Biological	
2. Behavioral	
3. Cognitive	
4. Humanistic	
5. Psychodynamic	
6. Sociocultural	
7. Evolutionary	
8. Biopsychosocial	
C. Subfields in Psychology	
II. Research Methods . . . . .	8–10%
A. Experimental, Correlational, and Clinical Research	
B. Statistics	
1. Descriptive	
2. Inferential	
C. Ethics in Research	
III. Biological Bases of Behavior . . . . .	8–10%
A. Physiological Techniques (e.g., imaging, surgical)	
B. Neuroanatomy	
C. Functional Organization of Nervous System	
D. Neural Transmission	
E. Neuroplasticity	
F. Endocrine System	
G. Genetics	
H. Evolutionary Psychology	
IV. Sensation and Perception . . . . .	6–8%
A. Thresholds and Signal Detection Theory	
B. Sensory Mechanisms	
C. Attention	
D. Perceptual Processes	

<i>Content Area</i>	<i>Percentage Goals for Exam (multiple-choice section)</i>
V. States of Consciousness . . . . .	2–4%
A. Sleep and Dreaming	
B. Hypnosis	
C. Psychoactive Drug Effects	
VI. Learning . . . . .	7–9%
A. Classical Conditioning	
B. Operant Conditioning	
C. Cognitive Processes	
D. Biological Factors	
E. Social Learning	
VII. Cognition . . . . .	8–10%
A. Memory	
B. Language	
C. Thinking	
D. Problem Solving and Creativity	
VIII. Motivation and Emotion . . . . .	6–8%
A. Biological Bases	
B. Theories of Motivation	
C. Hunger, Thirst, Sex, and Pain	
D. Social Motives	
E. Theories of Emotion	
F. Stress	
IX. Developmental Psychology . . . . .	7–9%
A. Life-Span Approach	
B. Research Methods (e.g., longitudinal, cross-sectional)	
C. Heredity–Environment Issues	
D. Developmental Theories	
E. Dimensions of Development	
1. Physical	
2. Cognitive	
3. Social	
4. Moral	
F. Sex and Gender Development	
X. Personality . . . . .	5–7%
A. Personality Theories and Approaches	
B. Assessment Techniques	
C. Growth and Adjustment	

<i>Content Area</i>	<i>Percentage Goals for Exam (multiple-choice section)</i>
XI. Testing and Individual Differences . . . . .	5–7%
A. Standardization and Norms	
B. Reliability and Validity	
C. Types of Tests	
D. Ethics and Standards in Testing	
E. Intelligence	
XII. Abnormal Behavior . . . . .	7–9%
A. Definitions of Abnormality	
B. Theories of Psychopathology	
C. Diagnosis of Psychopathology	
D. Types of Disorders	
1. Anxiety	
2. Bipolar and Related	
3. Depressive	
4. Dissociative	
5. Feeding and Eating	
6. Neurodevelopmental	
7. Neurocognitive	
8. Obsessive-Compulsive and Related	
9. Personality	
10. Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic	
11. Somatic Symptom and Related	
12. Trauma- and Stressor-Related	
XIII. Treatment of Abnormal Behavior . . . . .	5–7%
A. Treatment Approaches	
1. Psychodynamic	
2. Humanistic	
3. Behavioral	
4. Cognitive	
5. Biological	
B. Modes of Therapy (i.e., individual, group)	
C. Community and Preventive Approaches	
XIV. Social Psychology . . . . .	8–10%
A. Group Dynamics	
B. Attribution Processes	
C. Interpersonal Perception	
D. Conformity, Compliance, Obedience	
E. Attitudes and Attitude Change	
F. Organizational Behavior	
G. Aggression/Antisocial Behavior	
H. Cultural Influences	

## **T H E E X A M**

The AP Psychology Exam includes a 70-minute multiple-choice section that accounts for two-thirds of the exam grade and a 50-minute free-response section made up of two questions that accounts for one-third of the exam grade.

Multiple-choice scores are based on the number of questions answered correctly. Points are not deducted for incorrect answers, and no points are awarded for unanswered questions. Because points are not deducted for incorrect answers, students are encouraged to answer all multiple-choice questions. On questions they do not know the correct answer to, students should eliminate as many choices as they can, and then select the best answer among the remaining choices.

Free-response questions are an appropriate tool for evaluating a student's mastery of scientific research principles and ability to make connections among constructs from different psychological domains (e.g., development, personality, learning). Students may be asked to analyze a general problem in psychology (e.g., depression, adaptation) using concepts from different theoretical frameworks or subdomains in the field, or to design, analyze, or critique a research study.

### **Sample Multiple-Choice Questions**

The following are examples of the kinds of multiple-choice questions found on the AP Psychology Exam. The distribution of topics and the levels of difficulty are illustrative of the composition of the exam. Answers to these questions can be found on page 22.

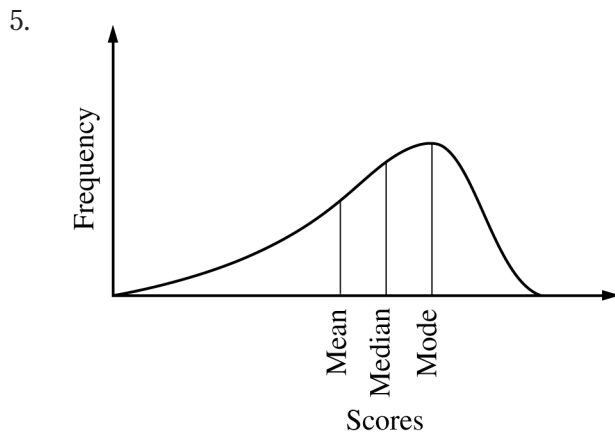
*Directions:* Each of the questions or incomplete statements is followed by five suggested answers or completions. Select the one that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. According to one theory of psychology, many people have mental illnesses because their maladaptive behaviors have proven rewarding for them in the past and thus have been continued. This belief is consistent with which of the following models?
  - (A) Behavioral
  - (B) Biological
  - (C) Cognitive
  - (D) Psychodynamic
  - (E) Sociocultural
2. Malia is 10 years of age, and her grandmother, Anna Rosa, is 60 years old. Which statement is likely to be true concerning their sleep patterns?
  - (A) Anna Rosa is more likely than Malia to have night terrors.
  - (B) Anna Rosa sleeps fewer hours per day than Malia does.
  - (C) Anna Rosa spends more of her sleep time in deep sleep than Malia does.
  - (D) Anna Rosa spends more of the night dreaming than Malia does.
  - (E) Anna Rosa and Malia have the same sleep patterns.

Sample Questions for **Psychology**

3. People listening to rock music played backward often perceive an evil message if specifically told what to listen for. That phenomenon best illustrates
- (A) parapsychology
  - (B) complementary afterimages
  - (C) perceptual constancy
  - (D) perceptual adaptation
  - (E) top-down processing

4. Damage to the cerebellum would most likely result in which of the following problems?
- (A) Aphasia
  - (B) Increased aggression
  - (C) A loss of vision
  - (D) A loss of motor coordination
  - (E) A change in personality



Which of the following best describes the graph above?

- (A) Histogram
  - (B) Frequency polygon
  - (C) Normal distribution
  - (D) Positively skewed distribution
  - (E) Negatively skewed distribution
6. A test that is valid must
- (A) have scores that fit a normal curve
  - (B) be reliable
  - (C) be normed on a random sample
  - (D) predict future behavior
  - (E) reveal important information

7. Jack believes that aliens are using electrical fields to steal thoughts from his head. It is most likely that Jack will be diagnosed with which of the following types of disorders?
- (A) Dissociative
  - (B) Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic
  - (C) Somatic symptom and related
  - (D) Anxiety
  - (E) Sleep-wake
8. Emiko's cat often meows for food. Emiko decides to eliminate the behavior by feeding the cat only when it does not meow. Over the next few weeks, she sometimes ignores the cat when it meows. Other times, she feeds the cat when it meows. Which of the following is the most reasonable prediction to make about the cat's meowing for food?
- (A) It will disappear due to extinction.
  - (B) It will decrease overall but not extinguish.
  - (C) It will remain unchanged due to a continuous schedule of reinforcement.
  - (D) It will increase due to a variable schedule of reinforcement.
  - (E) It will increase due to positive punishment.
9. Lee is about to skydive for the first time. He interprets his racing heart to be the result of his eager anticipation and excitement. This best represents which theory of emotion?
- (A) Cannon-Bard
  - (B) James-Lange
  - (C) Drive reduction
  - (D) Schachter's two factor
  - (E) Arousal
10. Which of the following scenarios is the best example of the mere-exposure effect?
- (A) After tasting a soft drink for the first time, Frank immediately decides it is his favorite drink.
  - (B) A year after beginning her exercise program, Georgina wants to expand her regimen.
  - (C) Hal begins to like a certain sports car after seeing it frequently on the road, even though he did not like the car at first.
  - (D) Kristy initially thinks her new neighbor is attractive, but once she becomes better acquainted with him, she finds him less appealing.
  - (E) After going away to college, Joy finds she is less and less interested in spending time with her old friends from high school.

11. Georgi believes she is capable of playing extremely well in the volleyball game scheduled for tonight. Albert Bandura would most likely say that Georgi's expectations for this task reveal that she is exhibiting high
  - (A) self-esteem
  - (B) self-actualization
  - (C) self-efficacy
  - (D) self-monitoring
  - (E) self-observation
  
12. Treating a patient for Parkinson's disease includes administering a chemical that will lead to increases in the patient's
  - (A) monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)
  - (B) acetylcholine
  - (C) norepinephrine
  - (D) dopamine
  - (E) serotonin
  
13. Projective tests, such as the Rorschach inkblot test, have been justifiably criticized as tools for assessing personality because
  - (A) it is difficult for the examinee to deceive the examiner
  - (B) they elicit only obvious information from the examinee
  - (C) they have not been found to be reliable and valid
  - (D) the stimuli for the tests are not standardized
  - (E) they provide a label for one's psychological well-being
  
14. To determine whether a cause-effect relationship exists between two variables, a researcher must use
  - (A) descriptive statistics
  - (B) archival data
  - (C) naturalistic observation
  - (D) an experimental approach
  - (E) a correlational study
  
15. A basic assumption underlying the definition of groupthink is that
  - (A) more reasonable decisions are made by groups than by individuals
  - (B) group members desire peace and harmony within the group
  - (C) group members are primarily interested in their own advancement within the group
  - (D) decisions made by groups of people tend to be more extreme than those made by individuals
  - (E) leadership positions within a group should be rotated among all members



16. Which of the following concepts refers to the structure and organization of a sentence?
- (A) Phoneme
  - (B) Morpheme
  - (C) Syntax
  - (D) Semantics
  - (E) Lexicon
17. The overjustification effect has led some psychologists to question the value of
- (A) set point theory
  - (B) framing
  - (C) locus of control theory
  - (D) intrinsic motivation
  - (E) extrinsic motivation
18. Which of the following behaviors is most clearly associated with Jean Piaget's concrete operational stage?
- (A) Sally thinks everyone's favorite color is blue, because it is her favorite color.
  - (B) Tom received the highest grade in his philosophy course.
  - (C) Gracie forgets about her toy because it is under her blanket.
  - (D) Nikos can consider both the height and width of a container.
  - (E) Ava does not like being around unfamiliar people.
19. Matthew's parents are physicists, and so are the parents of several of his best friends. Therefore, Matthew believes that many people are employed as physicists. Matthew's reasoning is based on
- (A) the availability heuristic
  - (B) the conjunction fallacy
  - (C) the representativeness heuristic
  - (D) risky decision making
  - (E) a mental set
20. Harry Harlow found that when infant monkeys were startled or frightened, they preferred a cloth surrogate mother over a wire mother who had food. The baby monkeys' response indicated that
- (A) the amygdala develops earlier in rhesus monkeys than in humans
  - (B) contact comfort was more important to them than food
  - (C) rhesus monkeys do not develop normally with artificial food sources
  - (D) being raised with a terry cloth mother leads to an insecure attachment style
  - (E) they had not developed object permanence
21. Introspection, a research tool used by early psychologists, is a technique which involves
- (A) correlational analyses
  - (B) machines designed for cognitive analysis
  - (C) survey methodology
  - (D) self-examination of mental processes
  - (E) teaching participants to multitask

Sample Questions for **Psychology**

22. Research has shown that the optimal arousal level of an individual performing a given task is
- (A) the level at which the person feels most comfortable
  - (B) the level at which the person feels least comfortable
  - (C) seldom an intermediate level
  - (D) related to task difficulty
  - (E) unrelated to task difficulty
23. The right occipital lobe receives visual information from the
- (A) entire retina of the left eye
  - (B) entire retina of the right eye
  - (C) entire retina of both eyes
  - (D) left half of both retinas
  - (E) right half of both retinas
24. Which of the following types of intelligence would be most important in answering trivia questions?
- (A) Fluid
  - (B) Crystallized
  - (C) Bodily kinesthetic
  - (D) Creative
  - (E) Practical
25. A clinical psychologist believes that Caroline's problems stem from the lack of consistency between her self-concept and reality. According to the psychologist, this discrepancy makes Caroline feel anxious and threatened. Caroline's psychologist most likely adheres to which of the following orientations?
- (A) Client-centered
  - (B) Psychoanalytic
  - (C) Behavioral
  - (D) Gestalt
  - (E) Cognitive

**Answers to Multiple-Choice Questions**

1 - A	6 - B	11 - C	16 - C	21 - D
2 - B	7 - B	12 - D	17 - E	22 - D
3 - E	8 - D	13 - C	18 - D	23 - E
4 - D	9 - D	14 - D	19 - A	24 - B
5 - E	10 - C	15 - B	20 - B	25 - A

## Sample Free-Response Questions

*Directions:* You have 50 minutes to answer both of the following questions. It is not enough to answer a question by merely listing facts. You should present a cogent argument based upon your critical analysis of the question posed, using appropriate psychological terminology.

### Abstract

1. We conducted a variation of Asch's (1951) conformity study in which participants made judgments about the length of lines. We randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions and told them that the study involved perceptual abilities. In the first condition, participants estimated the length of lines after hearing five people pretending to be participants (confederates) give inaccurate estimates. In the second condition, participants estimated the length of lines without hearing estimates of confederates. As we expected, participants in the first condition were less accurate in their estimates of line length, demonstrating the tendency to conform to majority influence.
  - A) How would each element below be related to the specific content of the experiment reported in the abstract?
    - Control group
    - Deception
    - Operational definition of the dependent variable
    - Hypothesis
    - Debriefing
  - B) How might participants' estimates of line length in the study be related to the following?
    - Cognitive dissonance
    - Maslow's hierarchy of needs
2. Dimitri and Linda are trying to learn a new routine to compete successfully in a dance competition. Give an example of how each of the following could affect their performance. Definitions without application do not score.
  - Extrinsic motivation
  - Punishment
  - Proactive interference
  - Endorphins
  - Vestibular system
  - Divergent thinking
  - Introversion

## **AP Psychology Free-Response Question Writing Expectations**

The free-response section of the AP Psychology exam consists of two questions worth 33% of the total exam score. The questions may require students to interrelate different content areas and analyze and evaluate psychological concepts and/or theoretical perspectives. Students are expected to use their analytical and organizational skills to formulate cogent answers in writing their essays.

To demonstrate an understanding of psychological concepts, perspectives, and research methodology, students must answer the questions clearly, in complete sentences, and within the context of the prompt. Outlines and lists alone are not acceptable responses. Providing definitions of the psychological terms alone may not score points but may help students better apply the concepts. Responses that contradict themselves, involve circular definitions, or simply restate the question are unacceptable.

The following are common directives used in the AP Psychology Free-Response Questions (FRQs).

- *Identify* requires that students name or point out psychological concepts as they pertain to the question.
- *Show or describe* requires students to detail the essential characteristics and/or examples of a particular concept, theory, or phenomenon.
- *Explain, discuss, and relate* require that students make logical and coherent connections among the prompt (or premise), question, and psychological concepts.

The above examples are not all inclusive. To gain a better understanding of the FRQ, it will be helpful to study previously released FRQs and their rubrics on the College Board website.

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