



## **AP<sup>®</sup> Psychology 2005 Scoring Guidelines**

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**Question 1**

Describe a specific example that clearly demonstrates an understanding of how each of the following concepts can lead to an inaccurate perception, cognition, or conclusion. Each example must include an explanation of the relationship between the concept and the inaccuracy.

- Afterimage effect
- Availability heuristic
- Ethnocentrism
- Groupthink
- Lack of object permanence
- Nonrandom assignment of research participants
- Optimistic explanatory style
- Proactive interference

**General Issues**

1. Answers must be written in sentences (subject and verb), not outlines.
2. Expect answers to use psychological, not merely common, knowledge.
3. Defining a concept is not sufficient. However, a well-formed definition can provide the framework to interpret an example.
4. The answer for each point must contain two parts:
  - Specifics of a situation relevant to the concept—the origin of the inaccuracy.
  - A specific inaccuracy produced as a result of the situation.

**POINT 1: Afterimage Effect**

Requires:

- a. An example of misperception due to a sensory experience.
  - The example should use opponent process language and concepts (e.g., fatigue, passage of time, staring, stimulus intensity, complementary colors of red-green, blue-yellow, or black-white) OR mention a sensory or iconic event.  
HINT: Watch for language that describes a sensory event over a memory.
- b. Description of a specific afterimage.
  - The example does not have to specify opponent color; it can be “different” color or a positive afterimage.

**POINT 2: Availability Heuristic**

Requires:

- a. An example of information that is salient or readily available, whether derived from personal experience, the news, etc.
  - The origin of the information must be clear, e.g., the answer cannot just assert that a person “believes” planes are unsafe.
- b. An incorrect prediction based on information.
  - Overestimation is the typical direction, but underestimation could be valid example.

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**Question 1 (continued)**

**POINT 3: Ethnocentrism**

Requires:

- a. Identification of shared cultural characteristic.
    - Ethnocentrism refers to cultural perspectives of the perceiver, whether tied to racial/ethnic groups or not; it cannot be a personal circle of friends or local group.
    - The example must be of a cultural judgment, not simply an attitude based on ignorance.
- NOTE: In some cases, a definition contains elements of an example.
- b. An example that uses judgmental language (e.g., “superior to” or “looks down on” counts as the inaccuracy).

**POINT 4: Groupthink**

Requires:

- a. Identification of specific group decision and group dynamics.
  - Group members must desire harmony, be unwilling to dissent, or *ignore* or *dismiss* reasonable alternatives.  
NOTE: The group must dismiss the alternative view, not just decide differently, e.g., by majority rules or by consensus.
  - There must be a *group process*, not just one individual feeling pressure to conform.
- b. A specific group decision that was in error, led to a major mistake, or was a disaster.
  - Classic examples, e.g., Bay of Pigs or *Challenger* (shuttle) explosion, are assumed to be errors. Other examples must be represented explicitly as mistakes.

**POINT 5: Lack of Object Permanence**

Requires:

- a. Identification of an object viewed by child.
  - The child must have seen the object before it disappeared.
- b. A statement that the child believes the object of the example no longer exists.

**POINT 6: Nonrandom Assignment of Research Participants**

Requires:

- a. Identification of nonrandom assignment of participants into *two (or more) groups*.
  - It must be participant assignment, *not sampling* (must discuss groups).
- b. A specific statement of the error related to a subject or grouping variable.
  - The word “confound” is sufficient in characterizing the inaccuracy resulting from nonrandom assignment. Otherwise, the specific error must be described. For example, if all boys are shown a violent film while all girls are shown a neutral film, it would be an error to conclude that boys are more violent than girls.

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**Question 1 (continued)**

**POINT 7: Optimistic Explanatory Style**

Requires:

- a. An example of a personal, pervasive, or permanent attributional/behavioral style used in explaining a behavior of the person in the example.

NOTE: The example cannot be just an optimistic perspective.

- It must be a good thing described as stable, internal/dispositional, or global, OR a bad thing described as unstable, external/situational, or specific.
- b. Acknowledgment that there is an inaccuracy in the explanation.

**POINT 8: Proactive Interference**

Requires:

- a. Identification of two learning tasks where memory of old information interferes with learning or recall of new information.
  - Information in two learning situations must be similar in category (learning French, then Spanish).
  - Tasks must be sequential; one task cannot simply be a distraction to learning the second task.
- b. Identification of specific learning or memory deficit.
  - Interference can be in acquisition or retention (failure to learn or inability to remember or recall).

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**Question 2**

Psychologists conduct research to investigate controversial issues. Consider the following:

- The value of diagnostic labeling
  - Children's acquisition of language
  - Explanations of hypnosis
- A. Describe the opposing points of view on each of the psychological issues listed above. Your description must provide one argument on each side of the controversy.
- B. For each issue, choose one point of view to support. Using evidence from psychological research, justify why you think this point of view is correct.

**General Issues**

1. Lists of subpoints throughout these scoring guidelines are *not* exhaustive. They represent typical responses of students, but there may be other ways to earn a point.
2. Students may structure their answers in more than one way. Some speak to both part A and part B for each issue in a single paragraph. Others deal with part A for each issue in the first half of their answer and then do part B for each issue. In any case, it is important that they establish context:
  - In part A, it *must* be clear that the student is describing opposing or alternate points of view regarding the issue in question.
  - In part B, the student *must* indicate he or she is supporting a point of view, typically by using phrases such as "I think..." or "The majority of evidence seems to support..."
3. For part B, the student must indicate support for some point of view, whether that point of view is one of the two described for part A or a "blend" between the two positions.
4. To establish "evidence" for part B:
  - The student should use empirical rather than anecdotal (i.e., related to personal experience) data. The evidence may be in the form of broad, generally accepted conclusions based on research (e.g., "labeling may lead to discrimination") rather than specific research studies.
  - The student must go beyond stating support for a position. For example, "I believe language is acquired by observational learning" states the position but does not offer evidence. By itself, it does not earn a point.
  - The student's statement of evidence is often, but not always, signaled with the word "because."
  - The student may specifically refer to evidence already presented in part A to support the part B conclusion without actually repeating the evidence.
5. A student will not be penalized for misinformation unless it directly contradicts correct information that would otherwise have earned a point. In that case, the point is not awarded.
6. Answers must be presented in sentences, and sentences must be cogent enough for the student's meaning to come through. Spelling and grammatical mistakes do not reduce a student's score, but spelling must be close enough so that the reader is convinced of the word.

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**Question 2 (continued)**

**The Value of Diagnostic Labeling**

**POINT 1: Advantages of diagnostic labeling** can be established by briefly explaining any of the following. Labels can:

- a. Help professionals communicate clearly and efficiently with one another.
- b. Improve the reliability/consistency or validity/accuracy of diagnosis or categorization.
- c. Help determine an appropriate course of treatment.
- d. Help predict the course of a disorder.
- e. Increase insight to help cope with a disorder.
- f. Meet general scientific purposes or stimulate appropriate research on the nature of disorders.
- g. Allow for more objective discussion of disorders.
- h. Facilitate appropriate billing or record keeping.

**Do not score:** Do *not* award this point for advantages that are overly vague (e.g., “labels are good”).

**POINT 2: Disadvantages of diagnostic labeling** can be established by briefly explaining any of the following. Labels can:

- a. Stigmatize or dehumanize those with disorders, or lead to prejudice, discrimination, or stereotyping.
- b. Lead to self-fulfilling prophecy.
- c. Overemphasize a disease model.
- d. Be of questionable reliability/consistency or validity/accuracy (e.g., overlapping or wrong diagnoses).
- e. Fail to adequately account for cultural issues.
- f. Lead a person to not take responsibility for getting better.
- g. Be considered inappropriate from certain theoretical perspectives (e.g., humanism or Szasz’s work).
- h. Persist longer than the condition they identify.
- i. Create a false dichotomy between “normal” and “abnormal.”

**Do not score:** Do *not* award this point for disadvantages that are overly vague (e.g., “labels are bad” or “labels are unfair”).

**POINT 3: Point of view supported by evidence.**

- a. Advantages of diagnostic labeling can be supported by discussion of *general* research conclusions related to the following topics. Specific research does *not* need to be cited.
  - Increased reliability or validity of diagnosis because of effective labels.
  - Efficacy of outcomes-based treatment or placement strategies.
- b. Disadvantages of diagnostic labeling can be supported by:
  - Mention of Rosenhan’s research on being sane in insane places. (“Rosenhan’s research” is sufficient.)
  - Mention of Rosenthal’s research on self-fulfilling prophecy. (“Rosenthal’s research” is sufficient.)
  - Discussion of *general* research conclusions related to prejudice, discrimination, or stereotypes created by diagnostic labels.
- c. A blended point of view can be supported by appropriate use of evidence from one or both of subpoints (a) and (b) above.

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**Question 2 (continued)**

**Children's Acquisition of Language**

The most common controversy described will relate to the nature–nurture debate.

**POINT 4: Language development is influenced by nurture.** The word “nurture,” by itself, is *not* sufficient to earn this point without a brief description of what this means or naming a psychologist who supported this position. A student may earn the point by:

- a. Appropriately noting the importance of learning, behaviorism, associations, conditioning, reinforcement, imitation, modeling, experience, or environment in the acquisition of language.
- b. Identifying this position as the one Skinner advocated.
- c. Emphasizing the importance of *experience* within the cognitive neuroscience explanation of language acquisition.

**POINT 5: Language development is influenced by nature.** The word “nature,” by itself, is *not* sufficient to earn point 5 without a brief description of what this means or naming a psychologist who supported this position. A student may earn the point by:

- a. Appropriately noting the importance of biology, predisposition (accept predestination), innate factors, the language acquisition device (LAD), critical (or sensitive) periods, nativism, maturation, or genetics in the acquisition of language.
- b. Identifying this position as the one Chomsky, Lenneberg, or Pinker advocated.
- c. Emphasizing the importance of *neurological* or *biological predisposition* within the cognitive neuroscience explanation of language acquisition.

**Do not score:** Do *not* award credit if a student says that a child is born with a *particular language*. It is acceptable to say that a child is “born with language” or has “innate language ability.”

**POINT 6: Point of view supported by evidence.**

- a. The nurture point of view can be supported by:
  - Appropriate conclusions based on a *specific mechanism* from learning theory, such as reinforcement, imitation, or modeling. For example, a point would be awarded for a statement like, “I agree with this point of view because children will use words they are reinforced for.”
  - An explanation of the impact of culture or environment on language acquisition. For example, a point would be awarded for a statement like, “Children in France learn to speak French.”
  - Other appropriately developed examples from the research literature that support the influence of environment, such as Genie’s difficulty acquiring language after a childhood of isolation and abuse.
- b. The nature point of view can be supported by:
  - Appropriate conclusions based on a specific nature-oriented mechanism, such as a language acquisition device (LAD) or critical (or sensitive) period.
  - Appropriate conclusions regarding overgeneralization or overregularization.
  - Other appropriately developed examples from the research literature that support the influence of biology, such as Genie’s acquisition of some language despite a horrible environment, or the universal sequence of language development across cultures.
- c. A blended point of view can be supported by appropriate use of evidence from one or both of subpoints (a) and (b) above.

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**Question 2 (continued)**

**Do not score (points 4, 5, and 6):**

1. Points are not awarded for information related to Whorf's linguistic relativity hypothesis because it is not relevant to language acquisition.
2. A point is not awarded if its context depends solely on an interpretation of the misspelling "nuture," because the reader cannot determine if the student meant "nature" or "nurture."

NOTE: A discussion of other controversial language acquisition issues could replace the nature–nurture controversy and receive credit for these points. An example is the debate about whether or not critical periods exist for language development. Another is to contrast the cognitive neuroscience approach with either the nature position or the nurture position. A student would earn these points by following the same general pattern as used above: providing a clear explanation of the two sides (points 4 and 5) and supporting one of the points of view with reference to specific research or more general conclusions supported by research (point 6).

**Explanations of Hypnosis**

**POINT 7: Hypnosis is a divided state of consciousness.** This point is awarded if the student presents the point of view that hypnosis is a form of *divided*, *dissociated*, *neodissociated*, or *altered* consciousness (accept *hidden observer*).

**POINT 8: Hypnosis is a social phenomenon.** This point is awarded if the student presents the point of view that hypnosis is primarily a response to *social factors*, *role playing*, *sociocognition*, or other environmental factors created by the hypnotist.

**POINT 9: Point of view supported by evidence.**

- a. The dissociated consciousness point of view can be supported by:
  - Mention of Hilgard or his work on divided consciousness or the hidden observer.
  - Discussion of the ability of the brain to engage in unconscious processing.
  - Discussion of how part of the brain can operate as an interpreter or reporter of events.
- b. The social phenomenon point of view can be supported by:
  - Mention of Spanos, Kirsh, Orne, Barber, or their work.
  - Discussion of the difficulty finding behavioral, physiological, or neural markers for hypnosis.
  - Discussion of how hypnotic phenomena can be duplicated using placebos or imagination.
  - Discussion of how hypnotic phenomena can be explained by relating them to obedience to the hypnotist or conformity with other participants in a group hypnosis situation.
  - Discussion of how fantasy-prone individuals may be more prone to social influence.
  - Discussion of tests showing that people rendered blind or deaf by hypnosis can still see or hear even though their actions and beliefs suggest they cannot.
  - Discussion of evidence that hypnotic effects become more dramatic when the hypnotized individual is highly motivated or trusts the hypnotist.
- c. A blended point of view can be supported by appropriate use of evidence from one or both of subpoints (a) and (b) above.



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**Question 2 (continued)**

**Do not score (points 7, 8, and 9).**

1. Do *not* accept imprecise, vague words like “trance,” “levels of consciousness,” or “sleep” as adequate descriptors for hypnosis as a divided state of consciousness.
2. Do *not* accept hypnotic phenomena (e.g., posthypnotic suggestions, age regression) or uses (e.g., recovery of memory, therapy) as evidence for either point of view because they are not relevant to explaining hypnosis.