
PART IV:

TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

Strategies for the Multiple-Choice Questions

Your AP Psychology Exam will begin with a 70-minute section containing 100 multiple-choice questions. Each multiple-choice question is worth 1 point. The 100 multiple-choice questions are worth a total of 100 points, or two-thirds of the exam's 150 points. Like the SAT, the SAT Subject Tests, and other AP exams, the College Board divides the number of your correct answers by 4 and subtracts the result from your total number of correct answers. For example, if you answer 72 questions correctly and miss 28, your raw score will be 72 minus 7 for a total of 65.

The “guessing penalty” causes students much consternation. Don't let it. If you do not have any idea how to answer a question, skip it and move on. If you can eliminate two or more answers, you should use the process of elimination to make an educated guess.

A GRAND STRATEGY

The multiple-choice questions are vital to achieving a high score. Fortunately, they cover very predictable topics. The AP Psychology Course Description booklet provides a very precise outline of the 14 major content areas covered on the AP Psychology exam and the approximate percentage of the multiple-choice section devoted to each area. For example, 8–10 percent of the multiple-choice questions are devoted to social psychology. Chapter 1 provides a complete list of the 14 topical areas and the percentage of multiple-choice questions in each of these areas.

The members of the AP Psychology Development Committee have all studied the principles of good test construction. They strive to write a comprehensive test that is both reliable and valid. As a result, the 100 multiple-choice questions are very evenly

distributed across each area of the Course Description outline. For example, 7–9 percent of the multiple-choice questions are devoted to the unit on learning. The test writers do not concentrate all or most of their questions on classical conditioning and short-change the other topics. Instead, they typically devote 3 questions to classical conditioning, 3 questions to operant conditioning, 1 question to biological factors, and 1 or 2 questions to social learning.

You can use this pattern of evenly distributed questions to your advantage. Your primary strategic goal is to build a winning coalition of points. You don't have to fully master each topic to score a 5 or a 4. Never forget that you only need about 110 points to score a 5 and about 90 points to score a 4. As a result, you can safely devote minimal study time to topics that you find boring or confusing. For example, although neural communication, the nervous system, and the endocrine system are important topics, they typically only generate about 4 multiple-choice questions per test. Carefully design a study strategy based on which topics you want to emphasize, which ones you want to deemphasize, and which ones you want to omit.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

The AP Psychology multiple-choice questions are very straightforward attempts to evaluate your understanding of key concepts and theories. The questions rarely use the “EXCEPT” or “NOT” formats that confuse or trick many students. For example, there were just 3 “except” questions and 2 “not” questions out of a total of 200 multiple-choice questions on the 2007 and 2004 released exams.

The overwhelming majority of AP Psychology multiple-choice questions fall into two broad categories. About two-thirds of the questions use definitions and examples to test your knowledge of key concepts. Another 15 percent of the questions test your knowledge of key psychologists and key theories. The following two sections provide you with 10 multiple-choice questions designed to test your knowledge of key concepts and 5 multiple-choice questions designed to test your knowledge of key psychologists and theories.

PRACTICE WITH KEY CONCEPTS

1. A preschool child says, "The clouds are angry." This child is demonstrating which of the following Piagetian concepts?
 - (A) Egocentric thinking
 - (B) Object permanence
 - (C) Conservation
 - (D) Irreversibility
 - (E) Animism

The correct answer is E. According to Piaget, children in the preoperational stage believe that inanimate objects, such as clouds, have feelings. Answer choice A is incorrect because egocentric thinking is the inability to consider another person's point of view. Answer choice B is incorrect because object permanence is the ability to form internal images or mental representations of objects. Answer choice C is incorrect because conservation is the ability to understand that two equal quantities remain equal, even though their form or appearance is rearranged. Answer choice D is incorrect because irreversibility refers to a child's inability to mentally reverse a sequence of events or logical operations.

2. On a test with a negatively skewed distribution, one student received the mean score, one student received the median score, and one student received the mode score. Which of these scores has the lowest percentile ranking?
 - (A) The mean
 - (B) The median
 - (C) The mode
 - (D) All three scores are equal
 - (E) It cannot be determined from the data given.

The correct answer is A because a negatively skewed distribution contains a preponderance of scores on the high end of the scale. As a result, the mean will be lower than both

the median and the mode. Answer choices B, C, D, and E are therefore all incorrect.

3. Which of the following is the best example of the defense mechanism of repression?
- (A) Sophia refuses to accept her doctor's suggestion that she needs to lose weight and exercise more, saying "I look fine and I don't have the time to go to a gym."
 - (B) Jessica scolds her brother after being told by her parents that she is grounded for a week.
 - (C) Unaware of her reputation for being stubborn and opinionated, Lily complains that her friends are inflexible and rigid.
 - (D) Allison insists that she can't remember what she said that provoked a big argument with her boyfriend.
 - (E) After receiving a rejection letter from one of his top college choices, John insists that he really did not want to attend the college because "it is too far from home. "

The correct answer is D. Allison demonstrates repression because she prevents anxiety-producing thoughts and painful feelings from entering consciousness. Answer choice A is incorrect because it is an example of denial. Answer choice B is incorrect because it is an example of displacement. Answer choice C is incorrect because it is an example of projection. And answer choice E is incorrect because it is an example of rationalization.

4. Members of an investment club initially believe that they should buy 100 shares of a company they believe will report strong earnings. After additional discussion, the members of the club decide to buy 500 shares of the company's stock. This example best illustrates
- (A) the fundamental attribution error
 - (B) group polarization

- (C) social facilitation
- (D) social loafing
- (E) cognitive dissonance

The correct answer is B. Group polarization is the tendency for a group's predominant opinion to become stronger or more extreme after an issue is discussed. Answer choice A is incorrect because the fundamental attribution error is the tendency to overemphasize dispositional factors and to underestimate situational factors when making attributions about the cause of another person's behavior. Answer choice C is wrong because social facilitation is the tendency for an individual's performance to improve when simple or well-rehearsed tasks are performed in the presence of others. Answer choice D is incorrect because social loafing is the phenomenon of people making less effort to achieve a goal when they work in a group rather than when they work alone. And answer choice E is incorrect because cognitive dissonance is the state of psychological tension, anxiety, and discomfort that occurs when an individual's attitude and behavior are inconsistent.

5. Which of the following is a brain structure that plays a crucial role in encoding memories?
- (A) Amygdala
 - (B) Corpus callosum
 - (C) Hippocampus
 - (D) Broca's area
 - (E) Hypothalamus

The correct answer is C. The hippocampus is involved in forming and retrieving memories. Answer choice A is incorrect because the amygdala is linked to the production and regulation of emotions. Answer choice B is incorrect because the corpus callosum is a bundle of nerve fibers connecting the brain's left and right hemispheres. Answer choice D is incorrect because Broca's area is linked to speech production. Answer choice E is incorrect because the hypothalamus helps govern hunger, thirst, and other drives.

6. After studying a long list of SAT vocabulary words, Marvin was able to recall the first and last words but had trouble remembering the words in the middle of the list. This situation is an example of
- (A) episodic memory
 - (B) proactive interference
 - (C) the serial-position effect
 - (D) retrograde amnesia
 - (E) the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon

The correct answer is C. According to the serial-position effect, information at the beginning and end of a list is remembered better than material in the middle. Answer choice A is incorrect because episodic memory is a subdivision of declarative memory that stores memories of personal experiences and events. Answer choice B is incorrect because proactive interference occurs when old information interferes with recalling new information. Answer choice D is incorrect because people suffering from retrograde amnesia are unable to remember some or all of their past. And finally, answer choice E is incorrect because the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon is a common retrieval failure that describes the feeling that, at any moment, a name or place you are trying to remember is just out of reach, but will soon pop out from the “tip of your tongue.”

7. Aileen wants to test her hypothesis that new drug X is more effective than standard drug Y in inhibiting arousal. Which of the following types of research methods is most appropriate for testing Aileen’s hypothesis?
- (A) Experimental
 - (B) Case study
 - (C) Longitudinal
 - (D) Naturalistic observation
 - (E) Survey

The correct answer is A because only the experimental method can establish a cause-and-effect relationship. All of the other answer choices are therefore incorrect.

8. James checks the coin return every time he passes a vending machine. According to the principles of operant conditioning, his behavior is probably being maintained by which of the following schedules of reinforcement?
- (A) Variable ratio
 - (B) Fixed ratio
 - (C) Fixed interval
 - (D) Continuous interval
 - (E) The Premack principle

The correct answer is A. In a variable ratio schedule, reinforcement is unpredictable because the ratio varies. Answer choice B is incorrect because in a fixed ratio schedule, reinforcement occurs after a predetermined set of responses. Answer choice C is incorrect because in a fixed interval schedule, reinforcement occurs after a predetermined time has elapsed. Answer choices D and E are both incorrect because they are not schedules of reinforcement.

9. During one of her therapy sessions, Julia tells Dr. Yang, "I must be successful at everything I do or I am a complete failure." Which therapeutic method is Dr. Yang employing when she disputes Julia's statement?
- (A) Humanistic therapy
 - (B) Systematic desensitization therapy
 - (C) Aversive conditioning therapy
 - (D) Free association therapy
 - (E) Rational emotive therapy

The correct answer is E. In rational emotive therapy, the therapist disputes a client's irrational "must" and "should" beliefs. Answer choices A, B, C, and D are incorrect because

these therapies do actively dispute a client's self-defeating beliefs.

10. Which of the following is characterized by a long history of complaints about physical problems that are caused by psychological factors?
- (A) Dissociative fugue
 - (B) Somatoform disorder
 - (C) Antisocial personality disorder
 - (D) Narcissistic personality disorder
 - (E) Schizophrenia

The correct answer is B. A somatoform disorder is characterized by physical complaints or conditions caused by psychological factors. Answer choice A is incorrect because dissociative fugue is characterized by suddenly and inexplicably leaving home and taking on a completely new identity, with no memory of a former life. Answer choice C is incorrect because antisocial personality disorder is characterized by a profound disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others. Answer choice D is incorrect because narcissistic personality disorder is characterized by a grandiose sense of self-importance, fantasies of unlimited success, and a need for excessive admiration. And finally, answer choice E is incorrect because schizophrenia is characterized by delusional beliefs, hallucinations, and disorganized speech.

KEY PSYCHOLOGISTS AND THEORIES

11. The terms "genuineness," "unconditional positive regard," and "empathetic understanding" are used to describe a type of therapy developed by which of the following psychologists?
- (A) Sigmund Freud
 - (B) B.F. Skinner

- (C) Albert Ellis
- (D) Paul Costa
- (E) Carl Rogers

The correct answer is E. These statements are all key elements of Carl Rogers's client-centered humanistic therapy. Answer choice A is incorrect because Freud is the founder of the psychoanalytic school of therapy. Answer choice B is incorrect because B.F. Skinner was a behaviorist. Answer choice C is incorrect because Albert Ellis was a cognitive therapist. And finally, answer choice D is incorrect because Paul Costa is best known for his work on the Five-Factor Model of Personality.

12. According to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory, the process of development occurs

- (A) in response to the type of attachment formed between a child and his or her mother
- (B) in response to parenting styles used by a child's parents
- (C) throughout life in a series of psychosocial stages
- (D) as children learn their culture's habits of mind through a process of internalization
- (E) through increasing gains in moral reasoning

The correct answer is E. Kohlberg is best known for his influential theory of the stages of moral development. Answer choice A is incorrect because it refers to Mary Ainsworth's study of the attachment between an infant and his or her mother. Answer choice B is incorrect because it refers to Diana Baumrind's research on parenting styles. Answer choice C is incorrect because it refers to Erik Erikson's theory of development. And finally, answer choice D is incorrect because it refers to Lev Vygotsky's study of how culture and social interaction influence a child's cognitive development.

13. According to Hans Selye, which of the following is the sequence of stages in the general adaptation syndrome?

- (A) Activating event, beliefs, consequences
- (B) Stimulus, arousal, subjective experience
- (C) Alarm, resistance, exhaustion
- (D) Openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness
- (E) Schema, assimilation, accommodation

The correct answer is C. According to Selye, alarm, resistance, and exhaustion are the three stages of stress in the general adaptation syndrome. Answer choice A is incorrect because these are part of the “ABC” model in rational emotive therapy. Answer choice B is incorrect because these are the three stages in the James-Lange theory of emotion. Answer choice D is incorrect because these are three of the Big Five dimensions of personality. And finally, answer choice E is incorrect because these are three key concepts from Piaget’s theory of cognitive development.

14. Wilhelm Wundt is best known for

- (A) his pioneering study of dreams
- (B) demonstrating that the brain’s right and left hemispheres have specialized functions
- (C) his research on hypnosis and pain control
- (D) establishing the first psychology research laboratory
- (E) formulating the law of effect

The correct answer is D. Wilhelm Wundt was a German psychologist who established the first psychology research laboratory. Answer choice A is incorrect because it refers to Sigmund Freud’s pioneering work. Answer choice B is incorrect because it refers to Roger Sperry’s pioneering work. Answer choice C is incorrect because it refers to Ernest Hilgard’s pioneering work. And finally, answer choice E is incorrect because it refers to Edward Thorndike’s pioneering work.

15. Elizabeth Loftus's research findings demonstrated that

- (A) humans learn language through an innate language acquisition device
- (B) gifted children lead happy and fulfilling lives
- (C) overcoming the inferiority complex is the primary driving force in the development of personality
- (D) individuals who have a strong need for achievement seek out tasks that are moderately difficult
- (E) eyewitness memories can be altered if a person is exposed to misleading information

The correct answer is E. Loftus is renowned for her work on the effect of misleading information. Answer choice A is incorrect because it refers to Noam Chomsky's work on language development. Answer choice B is incorrect because it refers to Lewis Terman's famous longitudinal study of gifted children. Answer choice C is incorrect because it refers to Alfred Adler's theory of personality. And finally, answer choice D is incorrect because it refers to David McClelland's research on achievement motivation.

Bonus Practice Test

For a complete AP Psychology practice test go to www.pearson.com/crashcourse. The test is carefully designed to give you extra practice identifying key concepts and applying them to everyday life examples.