



20 AP-style MCQs across topics 3.1 to 3.9. Practice, review, revisit.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- ✓ 20 MCQs, four options each, in the style of the real AP exam
- ✓ Every question tagged to a Unit 3 topic so you know what to revise
- ✓ Full answer key with a short explanation for every question
- ✓ Mix of standalone and stimulus-style stems, matching real AP question formats

HOW TO USE IT

- 1. Untimed pass.** Work through slowly, aiming for around 90 seconds per question. Read every option before you commit.
- 2. Timed pass.** Redo the pack in 24 minutes. That matches AP exam pace (72s per MCQ) and builds stamina.
- 3. Review.** Check the answer key and mark every miss. Revise those topics on Cognito, then retry after a week.

TOPICS COVERED

- **3.1** Themes and Methods in Developmental Psychology
- **3.2** Physical Development Across the Lifespan
- **3.3** Gender and Sexual Orientation
- **3.4** Cognitive Development Across the Lifespan
- **3.5** Communication and Language Development
- **3.6** Social-Emotional Development Across the Lifespan
- **3.7** Classical Conditioning
- **3.8** Operant Conditioning
- **3.9** Social, Cognitive, and Neurological Factors in Learning

STRUGGLING WITH A TOPIC?

Any topic tricky? Scan the QR to jump straight to the Unit 3 notes on Cognito. For the full AP Psychology course (all 5 units, lessons, quizzes, flashcards and past-paper FRQs), head to **cognitoedu.link/ap-psych-notes**. Rework the questions you got wrong a week later to lock the concepts in.

AP EXAM CONTEXT**15-25%**

UNIT WEIGHT (MCQ SECTION)

75

MCQS ON THE REAL EXAM

72s

AVERAGE TIME PER MCQ

AP PSYCHOLOGY

Unit 3: Development and Learning

SECTION I · MULTIPLE CHOICE

Time—24 minutes

20 Questions

Directions: Each of the questions or incomplete statements below is followed by four suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case and mark it clearly on your answer sheet or circle your choice below.

Questions 1, 2 refer to the following information.

Two research teams want to describe how vocabulary size changes between ages 4 and 10. Team A recruits 200 children age 4, 200 age 7, and 200 age 10, and tests every child once. Team B recruits 100 children at age 4 and re-tests each child at ages 7 and 10. Both teams administer the same standardized vocabulary measure.

- Which type of developmental research design does Team A use, and which does Team B use?
 - Team A uses a longitudinal design; Team B uses a cross-sectional design.
 - Both teams use cross-sectional designs because both measure vocabulary at multiple ages.
 - Team A uses a cross-sectional design; Team B uses a longitudinal design.
 - Both teams use longitudinal designs because both follow children across ages 4, 7, and 10.
- Which is a real advantage of Team B's approach over Team A's approach for describing how vocabulary changes with age?
 - It runs faster and finishes data collection in a single testing session.
 - It avoids cohort effects because within-child change is tracked directly over time.
 - It removes the need for a standardized vocabulary measure across the age range.
 - It rules out any influence of parenting or schooling on children's vocabulary growth.
- A researcher plans a study on whether shy temperament in toddlers predicts shy temperament in adolescence. Which choice provides the best operational definition of shy temperament for use in the study?
 - The child's overall personality style, as described in general terms by their parents at home during an informal chat.
 - The count of times the child initiates conversation with an unfamiliar adult during a 10-minute lab visit, coded by two observers.
 - Whether the child has a shy nature, judged holistically by the researcher during a brief meeting in the waiting room.
 - The parents' expectation, given at the start of the study, about how outgoing their child will become in future years.

Question 4 refers to the following information.

A pediatrician records the age at which each of 30 healthy infants first sits without support, first crawls, and first walks unaided. Across the sample, every infant sits before crawling and crawls before walking. The exact ages at which each milestone is reached, however, differ from infant to infant by several months.

- Which conclusion is best supported by the pediatrician's data?
 - The exact age at which each motor milestone appears is nearly identical across infants.
 - Environmental factors have essentially no influence on when a given infant reaches each milestone.
 - Motor development follows a predictable sequence even though the timing of each milestone varies.
 - Motor development shows large jumps in ability that appear suddenly without any transition period.
- A middle-aged adult reports that they can no longer read small print at close range and has recently started using reading glasses. This age-related change is most consistent with which of the following?
 - Presbyopia, a gradual decline in the lens's ability to focus on nearby objects with age.
 - Cataract formation, a clouding of the lens that blurs vision and typically affects distance and near sight together.
 - Menopause, the age-related end of reproductive cycles marking a physical developmental milestone.
 - Puberty, the growth spurt and reproductive changes that mark the physical transition into adolescence.

AP PSYCHOLOGY · Unit 3: Development and Learning · Section I (continued)

6. A textbook chapter distinguishes gender identity from biological sex. Which pair of definitions best captures how developmental psychologists treat these terms?
- Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being male, female, both, or neither; biological sex refers to physical and genetic characteristics assigned at birth.
 - Gender identity and biological sex are two labels for the same underlying category of person and are used interchangeably by developmental psychologists.
 - Gender identity is determined only by chromosomes; biological sex refers to how one is treated socially based on outward appearance and mannerisms.
 - Gender identity refers to a person's romantic or sexual attractions; biological sex refers to a person's internal sense of who they are.
- Questions 7, 8 refer to the following information.**
- A researcher shows a 4-year-old child two identical short, wide beakers filled with equal amounts of juice. The child agrees that both beakers contain the same amount. The researcher then pours the juice from one beaker into a tall, thin glass while the child watches, and asks whether the tall glass now has the same amount, more juice, or less juice than the untouched beaker. The child insists the tall glass has more juice because the level is higher.
7. According to Piaget, the child's response is best explained by the fact that they are in which stage of cognitive development?
- Sensorimotor stage, in which knowledge comes primarily from sensory input and motor action.
 - Preoperational stage, in which children center on one perceptual dimension and cannot mentally reverse actions.
 - Concrete operational stage, in which children can perform reversible mental operations on physical objects like liquids or blocks.
 - Formal operational stage, in which adolescents reason abstractly and consider hypothetical possibilities beyond immediate experience.
8. According to Piaget, which specific cognitive ability does the child in the scenario most clearly lack?
- Object permanence, the understanding that objects continue to exist even when they are out of sight.
 - Theory of mind, the awareness that other people can hold beliefs that differ from one's own.
 - Conservation, the recognition that a quantity stays the same when its shape or container changes.
 - Metacognition, the ability to reflect on one's own thinking and monitor one's learning strategies.
9. A tutor works with a student on a math problem that the student cannot solve alone but can solve with careful hints and prompts. As the student becomes able to solve similar problems without help, the tutor gradually withdraws the hints. Which Vygotskian idea does this pattern most directly illustrate?
- Scaffolding within the zone of proximal development, where guided support lifts performance the learner cannot yet achieve alone.
 - Assimilation, in which a learner fits new information into their existing mental schemas without changing those schemas.
 - Accommodation, in which a learner reshapes existing schemas to accept information the old structure cannot handle.
 - Egocentrism, in which a young child assumes that other people share their own perspective and viewpoint.
10. A researcher recruits 30 two-year-olds from a single university-affiliated day care in one city and reports that toddlers, on average, use about 200 words. Which limitation most directly threatens the generalizability of this claim?
- The study did not randomly assign children to different vocabulary conditions, so no causal claim is warranted.
 - The researcher used a standardized vocabulary measure, which introduces measurement error into every count.
 - The dependent variable (word count) was recorded numerically, which prevents any qualitative interpretation of the data.
 - The sample is drawn from one convenience site, so it may not represent toddlers from other regions or socioeconomic backgrounds.

AP PSYCHOLOGY · Unit 3: Development and Learning · Section I (continued)

Questions 11, 12 refer to the following information.

In a Strange Situation study, one-year-old infants are observed with their caregiver in an unfamiliar playroom across a sequence of separations and reunions. Independent coders classify each infant's reunion behavior. The percentages below reflect the classifications from a sample of 100 infants in the study.

Table 1. Attachment classifications from a Strange Situation study

Attachment style	Reunion behavior	Percent of sample
Secure	Seeks caregiver, is comforted, returns to play	62%
Insecure-avoidant	Avoids or ignores caregiver on return	22%
Insecure-resistant	Seeks contact but resists comfort	16%

11. Based on the table, what share of infants in this sample show one of the two insecure attachment styles, and which subtype occurs more often?
- (A) 38 percent fall into an insecure category, with insecure-avoidant the more common of the two subtypes.
 - (B) 38 percent fall into an insecure category, with insecure-resistant the more common of the two subtypes.
 - (C) 62 percent fall into an insecure category, with insecure-avoidant the more common of the two subtypes.
 - (D) 22 percent fall into an insecure category, with insecure-resistant the more common of the two subtypes.

12. A one-year-old in this study cries hard when the caregiver leaves, but on reunion arches away and refuses to be picked up, then goes limp when finally held. This behavior is best classified as which of the following?
- (A) Securely attached, since the infant is clearly distressed by the caregiver's absence during the separation episode.
 - (B) Insecure-avoidant, since the caregiver's return seems to have little visible effect on the infant's ongoing behavior.
 - (C) Insecure-resistant, since the infant seeks contact with the caregiver but resists and cannot be comforted by it.
 - (D) Displaying stranger anxiety, a normal reaction that appears around 8 months in almost all typically developing infants.

Questions 13, 14 refer to the following information.

In a lab study, a researcher plays a neutral tone and then, half a second later, gently directs a small burst of air at a rabbit's cornea. That burst reliably causes the rabbit to blink. After 40 pairings of tone followed by burst, the rabbit begins to blink to the tone alone, before any burst is delivered.

13. In this study, what is the unconditioned stimulus (US) and what is the conditioned stimulus (CS)?
- (A) The tone is the US and the air burst is the CS, since the tone is presented first in each pairing.
 - (B) The blink is the US and the tone is the CS, since the blink can occur before any air is delivered.
 - (C) The air burst is the US and the tone is the CS, since the burst automatically triggers a blink before any training.
 - (D) The air burst is the US and the blink is the CS, since both involve physical reactions at the rabbit's eye.
14. After conditioning, the researcher stops delivering the air burst and presents the tone alone many times in a row. Over the next 100 trials, the rabbit blinks to the tone less and less often until it barely blinks at all. This drop is best labeled as which of the following?
- (A) Stimulus generalization, in which the rabbit begins to blink to sounds similar to but different from the trained tone.
 - (B) Stimulus discrimination, in which the rabbit blinks to the trained tone but not to other tones nearby in pitch.
 - (C) Spontaneous recovery, in which a previously extinguished response reappears after a period of rest with no cue.
 - (D) Extinction, in which the conditioned response fades because the CS is repeatedly presented without the US.

AP PSYCHOLOGY · Unit 3: Development and Learning · Section I (continued)

15. A child develops a strong fear of a particular ringing bell after it repeatedly precedes a painful injection at the doctor's office. Later, the child also becomes fearful of a similar-sounding kitchen timer at home. This later fear is best explained by which classical conditioning process?
- (A) Stimulus discrimination, in which a conditioned response is produced only to a very specific matching stimulus.
 - (B) Stimulus generalization, in which a conditioned response is triggered by stimuli similar to the trained one.
 - (C) Higher-order conditioning, in which a fully neutral cue takes on the meaning of an already conditioned one.
 - (D) Spontaneous recovery, in which an extinguished response reappears after a period of rest and no exposure.

Questions 16, 17 refer to the following information.

A behavioral psychologist trains lab rats to press a lever for food pellets. In one condition, a pellet is delivered after every 10th lever press. In a second condition, a pellet is delivered on average every 10 presses, but the exact number of presses required varies unpredictably from one pellet to the next. The rats in both conditions receive the same total number of pellets over the session.

16. The two conditions in this experiment illustrate which pair of reinforcement schedules?
- (A) Fixed interval versus variable interval, based on time elapsed since the last reinforcer was delivered.
 - (B) Continuous reinforcement versus partial reinforcement, based on whether every response is reinforced.
 - (C) Primary reinforcement versus secondary reinforcement, based on the innate value of the reinforcer used.
 - (D) Fixed ratio versus variable ratio, based on the number of responses required for each reinforcer.
17. Which pattern of responding is the second condition (average every 10 presses, variable) most likely to produce compared with the first condition?
- (A) A slower, more even rate of responding with predictable brief pauses right after each pellet is delivered.
 - (B) A high, steady response rate that is unusually resistant to extinction once the pellets are stopped.
 - (C) A brief flurry of pressing at the start of the session followed by essentially no responding for the rest.
 - (D) No lever pressing at all until the very last minute of the session, when responding suddenly increases.

18. A driver notices that when the seatbelt warning chime is annoying them, buckling the seatbelt makes the chime stop. Over time, the driver buckles up the moment they sit down. In operant terms, buckling has been strengthened by which consequence?
- (A) Positive reinforcement, in which a pleasant stimulus is added after the response and this makes the response more likely to occur again.
 - (B) Positive punishment, in which an aversive stimulus is added after the response and this makes the response less likely to occur again.
 - (C) Negative reinforcement, in which an aversive stimulus is removed after the response, increasing the response.
 - (D) Negative punishment, in which a pleasant stimulus is removed after the response, decreasing the response.

Questions 19, 20 refer to the following information.

In a classroom experiment, preschoolers are randomly assigned to one of two videos. Children in the first group watch a short video of an adult hitting and yelling at an inflatable clown doll. Children in the second group watch a video of the same adult playing quietly with blocks. Each child is then placed alone in a room stocked with toys, including the same clown doll, and their behavior is coded for aggressive acts over ten minutes.

19. Which learning process is this experiment most directly designed to test?
- (A) Latent learning, in which knowledge is acquired without reinforcement and shown only when there is an incentive.
 - (B) Observational learning, in which behavior is acquired by watching a model and imitating what the model has done.
 - (C) Insight learning, in which a solution to a problem appears suddenly after a period of quiet unsuccessful effort.
 - (D) Classical conditioning, in which a previously neutral stimulus comes to trigger a reflex through repeated pairing.

AP PSYCHOLOGY · Unit 3: Development and Learning · Section I (continued)

20. Which feature of the study's design most strongly supports a causal claim that watching aggression increases aggressive play?
- (A) The children are observed alone in a room after watching, which minimizes peer-related social pressure on their play with the doll.
 - (B) The dependent measure counts aggressive acts, which are directly observable and much easier for trained coders to record reliably.
 - (C) The two groups of children watch two different videos of the same adult acting in different ways, giving a clean contrast between conditions.
 - (D) Random assignment to the two videos, with other conditions held constant, rules out pre-existing group differences.

Q1. Answer: C

Topic 3.1 · Themes and Methods in Developm...

A cross-sectional design measures different age cohorts at one point in time, while a longitudinal design follows the same participants across multiple time points. Team A tests different 4-, 7-, and 10-year-olds once, which is cross-sectional. Team B re-tests the same children at 4, 7, and 10, which is longitudinal. Options A and D reverse or misapply the definitions; B misses that Team B tracks the same children.

Q2. Answer: B

Topic 3.1 · Themes and Methods in Developm...

Following the same children over time isolates within-person change and avoids cohort effects, where two age groups differ not only in age but in when they grew up. A is wrong because a longitudinal design takes years, not one session; C is wrong because both teams still need a consistent measure; and D overstates what a research design can control, since parenting and schooling still vary within a longitudinal sample.

Q3. Answer: B

Topic 3.1 · Themes and Methods in Developm...

An operational definition specifies how a construct will be measured concretely enough that another researcher could replicate the procedure. A counted, time-limited behavior coded by independent observers meets that standard. A and C are vague judgments with no defined measurement procedure, and D describes an expectation about the future rather than a measurement of current temperament.

Q4. Answer: C

Topic 3.2 · Physical Development Across th...

The description highlights two features: every infant sits, crawls, and walks in the same order, and the ages at which they reach each milestone differ by months. That combination is exactly what the CED describes as a predictable sequence with variable timing. A misreads the timing part, B overreaches beyond what the data show about environment, and D is not supported by anything in the vignette.

Q5. Answer: A

Topic 3.2 · Physical Development Across th...

Presbyopia is the gradual loss of the lens's ability to focus on nearby objects and is a normal part of physical development in midlife, which is why reading glasses appear around this stage. Cataracts cause general clouding of vision rather than the specific near-focus loss the scenario describes, menopause is a reproductive milestone rather than a visual one, and puberty describes early-adolescent physical changes rather than midlife decline.

Q6. Answer: A

Topic 3.3 · Gender and Sexual Orientation

Gender identity is a person's internal sense of their gender, while biological sex refers to the physical and genetic characteristics used to categorize a person at birth. The two are distinct concepts, even though they line up for many people. B collapses that distinction, C reverses the two categories, and D confuses gender identity with sexual orientation, a separate construct in Topic 3.3.

Q7. Answer: B

Topic 3.4 · Cognitive Development Across t...

Piaget places conservation failures in the preoperational stage, roughly ages 2 to 7, when children center on one salient dimension (here, the height of the liquid) and cannot yet mentally reverse the pour. A describes an earlier stage focused on sensory and motor action, C is when conservation appears, and D describes adolescence and abstract reasoning rather than a 4-year-old's response.

Q8. Answer: C

Topic 3.4 · Cognitive Development Across t...

Conservation is the recognition that a quantity stays the same when its shape or container is rearranged, and the child's insistence that the tall glass has more juice is a textbook conservation failure. Object permanence is an earlier sensorimotor achievement, theory of mind concerns beliefs rather than physical quantities, and metacognition is a later executive skill unrelated to this task.

Q9. Answer: A

Topic 3.4 · Cognitive Development Across t...

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development names the range of tasks a learner cannot do alone but can do with guidance, and scaffolding names the temporary supports that get withdrawn as competence grows. That is the exact pattern in the tutor scenario. Assimilation and accommodation are Piagetian schema processes, and egocentrism is a limitation of Piaget's preoperational stage rather than a Vygotskian teaching idea.

Q10. Answer: D

Topic 3.5 · Communication and Language Dev...

Generalizability concerns whether findings from a sample apply to the wider population. A single convenience site at one university day care leaves out toddlers from other regions and socioeconomic groups, so the mean word count may not describe two-year-olds in general. A misapplies random assignment (which supports causal claims, not generalizability), B wrongly treats standardization as a limitation, and C confuses using numeric measurement with restricting interpretation.

Q11. Answer: A

Topic 3.6 · Social-Emotional Development A...

The two insecure categories add to $22 + 16 = 38$ percent of the sample, and 22 percent (avoidant) is larger than 16 percent (resistant), so avoidant is the more common insecure subtype in this sample. B reverses which subtype is larger, C uses the secure percentage (62 percent) instead of adding the two insecure rows, and D reports only the avoidant row (22 percent) rather than the combined insecure total.

Q12. Answer: C

Topic 3.6 · Social-Emotional Development A...

Insecure-resistant infants show high distress at separation, then seek contact on reunion but resist and cannot be soothed, which fits the arching-away-then-going-limp pattern. Securely attached infants are comforted by reunion, avoidant infants ignore the caregiver instead of seeking contact, and stranger anxiety concerns unfamiliar adults rather than the caregiver.

Q13. Answer: C

Topic 3.7 · Classical Conditioning

The unconditioned stimulus is the one that automatically produces a reflex before any learning has happened. The air directed at the cornea automatically triggers a blink before conditioning, so it is the US, and the tone (originally neutral) becomes the CS through repeated pairing. A and B misidentify which stimulus produces the reflex first, and D confuses a stimulus with a response.

Q14. Answer: D

Topic 3.7 · Classical Conditioning

Extinction is the gradual weakening of a conditioned response when the CS is repeatedly presented without the US, which fits presenting the tone alone until the blink fades. Generalization and discrimination concern responses to different stimuli than the trained CS, and spontaneous recovery is the reappearance of the response after a rest period rather than its initial fade.

Q15. Answer: B

Topic 3.7 · Classical Conditioning

Stimulus generalization is the tendency for a conditioned response to spread to stimuli that resemble the original CS, which fits the child fearing a similar-sounding kitchen timer after conditioning to a ringing bell. Discrimination is the opposite pattern (responding only to a very specific stimulus), higher-order conditioning links a new neutral stimulus to an already conditioned one, and spontaneous recovery follows extinction rather than initial acquisition.

Q16. Answer: D

Topic 3.8 · Operant Conditioning

Both schedules deliver a pellet after a set number of responses, which makes them ratio schedules rather than interval schedules. Condition 1 pays out after every 10 presses (fixed ratio), while Condition 2 pays out on average every 10 but with variable spacing (variable ratio). Interval schedules in A are time-based rather than response-based; continuous versus partial in B compares any partial schedule to always reinforcing rather than describing these two; primary versus secondary in C concerns reinforcer type rather than schedule.

Q17. Answer: B

Topic 3.8 · Operant Conditioning

Variable ratio schedules produce a high, steady rate of responding because the next pellet could come at any press, and behavior on these schedules is famously resistant to extinction. That contrasts with the post-reinforcement pauses seen after a fixed ratio pays out. A describes fixed ratio patterns, and C and D do not match established operant findings on ratio schedules.

Q18. Answer: C

Topic 3.8 · Operant Conditioning

Negative reinforcement works by removing an aversive stimulus after a behavior, which makes the behavior more likely. The chime (aversive) stops when the driver buckles up, and buckling behavior increases as a result. Positive reinforcement adds a pleasant stimulus rather than removing an aversive one, and both punishment options would decrease buckling rather than increase it.

Q19. Answer: B

Topic 3.9 · Social, Cognitive, and Neurolo...

Watching a model act on the clown doll and then measuring imitation of that behavior is a direct test of observational learning, the process Bandura's Bobo doll research is best known for. Latent learning does not require a model, insight learning concerns sudden problem solving rather than imitation, and classical conditioning involves pairing a neutral stimulus with a reflex-eliciting one rather than modeling a novel act.

Q20. Answer: D

Topic 3.9 · Social, Cognitive, and Neurolo...

Random assignment to conditions with everything else held constant is what allows a study to support a causal claim about the manipulated variable, since it rules out pre-existing group differences. Observing children alone (A) and coding aggression reliably (B) improve measurement but do not by themselves support causal inference, and simply showing two different videos (C) leaves selection effects on the table without random assignment.