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**INCLUDES**

- ✓ Course framework
- ✓ Instructional section
- ✓ Sample exam questions

# AP<sup>®</sup> Psychology

COURSE AND EXAM DESCRIPTION

Effective  
Fall 2020

# AP<sup>®</sup> Psychology

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## COURSE AND EXAM DESCRIPTION

Effective  
**Fall 2020**

**AP COURSE AND EXAM DESCRIPTIONS ARE UPDATED PERIODICALLY**

Please visit AP Central ([apcentral.collegeboard.org](https://apcentral.collegeboard.org)) to determine whether a more recent course and exam description is available.

# Introduction

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*The AP Psychology framework was adapted from the 2014 AP Psychology Course and Exam Description. The framework is organized into units to support teaching and learning. The focus of the framework is to provide the student with a learning experience that supports mastery of introductory psychology content.*

The inclusion of material in the framework 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, college, and university instructors of psychology who have served as members of the AP Psychology Development Committee. In their judgment, the material presented in the framework reflects the content of a typical introductory college course in psychology.

# Course Framework Components

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## Overview

This course framework provides a clear and detailed description of the course requirements necessary for student success. The framework specifies what students should know, be able to do, and understand to qualify for college credit or placement.

### The course framework includes two essential components:

#### 1 COURSE SKILLS

The course skills are central to the study and practice of psychology. Students should develop and apply the described skills on a regular basis over the span of the course.

#### 2 COURSE CONTENT

The course content is organized into units of study that provide a suggested sequence for the course. These units comprise the content and skills that colleges and universities typically expect students to master to qualify for college credit and/or placement.

# 1

## AP PSYCHOLOGY

# Course Skills

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The AP Psychology skills describe what a student should be able to do while exploring course concepts. The table that follows presents the skills that students should develop during the AP Psychology course. These skills form the basis of tasks on the AP Exam.

The unit guides later in this publication provide teachers with one way to integrate the skills in the course content with sufficient repetition to prepare students to transfer those skills when taking the AP Exam. Course content may be paired with a variety of skills on the AP Exam.

More detailed information about teaching the course skills can be found in the Instructional Approaches section of this publication.



# AP Psychology Skills

## Skill Category 1

### *Concept Understanding* 1

Define, explain, and apply concepts, behavior, theories, and perspectives.

## Skill Category 2

### *Data Analysis* 2

Analyze and interpret quantitative data.

## Skill Category 3

### *Scientific Investigation* 3

Analyze psychological research studies.

## SKILLS

- 1.A** Define and/or apply concepts.
- 1.B** Explain behavior in authentic context.
- 1.C** Apply theories and perspectives in authentic contexts.

## 2

## AP PSYCHOLOGY

# Course Content

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The course framework provides a clear and detailed description of the course requirements necessary for student success. The framework specifies what students must know, be able to do, and understand, with a focus on ideas that encompass core principles, theories, and processes of the discipline. The framework also encourages instruction that prepares students for advanced coursework in the field of psychology at the undergraduate level.

### UNITS

The nine units in AP Psychology and their weighting on the multiple-choice section of the AP Exam are listed on the following page.

Pacing recommendations at the unit level and on the Course at a Glance provide suggestions for how to teach the required course content and administer the Personal Progress Checks. The suggested class periods are based on a schedule in which the class meets five days a week for 45 minutes each day. While these recommendations have been made to aid planning, teachers should of course adjust pacing based on the needs of their students, alternate schedules (e.g., block scheduling), or their school's academic calendar.

### TOPICS

Each unit is broken down into teachable segments called topics. The topic pages (starting on page 32) contain the required content for each topic.

<b>Units</b>	<b>Exam Weighting</b>
<b>Unit 1:</b> Scientific Foundations of Psychology	<b>10–14%</b>
<b>Unit 2:</b> Biological Bases of Behavior	<b>8–10%</b>
<b>Unit 3:</b> Sensation and Perception	<b>6–8%</b>
<b>Unit 4:</b> Learning	<b>7–9%</b>
<b>Unit 5:</b> Cognitive Psychology	<b>13–17%</b>
<b>Unit 6:</b> Developmental Psychology	<b>7–9%</b>
<b>Unit 7:</b> Motivation, Emotion, and Personality	<b>11–15%</b>
<b>Unit 8:</b> Clinical Psychology	<b>12–16%</b>
<b>Unit 9:</b> Social Psychology	<b>8–10%</b>



# Course at a Glance

## Plan

The Course at a Glance provides a useful visual organization of the AP Psychology curricular components, including:

- Sequence of units, along with approximate weighting and suggested pacing. Please note, pacing is based on 45-minute class periods, meeting five days each week for a full academic year.
- Progression of topics within each unit.
- Course skills across units.

## Teach

### SKILL CATEGORIES

- 1** Concept Understanding
- 2** Data Analysis
- 3** Scientific Investigation

## Assess

Assign the Personal Progress Checks—either as homework or in class—for each unit. Each Personal Progress Check contains formative multiple-choice and free-response questions. The feedback from the Personal Progress Checks shows students the areas where they need to focus.

### UNIT 1 Scientific Foundations of Psychology

**~13–14** Class Periods | **10–14%** AP Exam Weighting

<b>1</b>	<b>1.1</b> Introducing Psychology
<b>3</b>	<b>1.2</b> Research Methods in Psychology
<b>3</b>	<b>1.3</b> Defining Psychological Science: The Experimental Method
<b>3</b>	<b>1.4</b> Selecting a Research Method
<b>2</b>	<b>1.5</b> Statistical Analysis in Psychology
<b>1</b>	<b>1.6</b> Ethical Guidelines in Psychology

### UNIT 2 Biological Bases of Behavior

**~11–12** Class Periods | **8–10%** AP Exam Weighting

<b>1</b>	<b>2.1</b> Interaction of Heredity and Environment
<b>1</b>	<b>2.2</b> The Endocrine System
<b>1</b>	<b>2.3</b> Overview of the Nervous System and the Neuron
<b>1</b>	<b>2.4</b> Neural Firing
<b>1</b>	<b>2.5</b> Influence of Drugs on Neural Firing
<b>1</b>	<b>2.6</b> The Brain
<b>2</b>	<b>2.7</b> Tools for Examining Brain Structure and Function
<b>1</b>	<b>2.8</b> The Adaptable Brain
<b>1</b>	<b>2.9</b> Sleep and Dreaming

### Personal Progress Check 1

**Multiple-choice: ~15 questions**  
**Free-response: 2 questions**

- Research Design (partial)
- Research Design (partial)

### Personal Progress Check 2

**Multiple-choice: ~25 questions**  
**Free-response: 2 questions**

- Concept Application (partial)
- Concept Application (partial)

**NOTE:** Partial versions of the free-response questions are provided to prepare students for more complex, full questions that they will encounter on the AP Exam.

**UNIT**  
**3**

## Sensation and Perception

**~11–12** Class Periods **6–8%** AP Exam Weighting

- 1 3.1 Principles of Sensation
- 1 3.2 Principles of Perception
- 1 3.3 Visual Anatomy
- 1 3.4 Visual Perception
- 1 3.5 Auditory Sensation and Perception
- 3 3.6 Chemical Senses
- 1 3.7 Body Senses

### Personal Progress Check 3

**Multiple-choice:** ~20 questions  
**Free-response:** 1 question

- Concept Application

**UNIT**  
**4**

## Learning

**~9–10** Class Periods **7–9%** AP Exam Weighting

- 1 4.1 Introduction to Learning
- 1 4.2 Classical Conditioning
- 1 4.3 Operant Conditioning
- 1 4.4 Social and Cognitive Factors in Learning

### Personal Progress Check 4

**Multiple-choice:** ~10 questions  
**Free-response:** 1 question

- Research Design

**UNIT**  
**5**

## Cognitive Psychology

**~17–18** Class Periods **13–17%** AP Exam Weighting

- 1 5.1 Introduction to Memory
- 1 5.2 Encoding
- 1 5.3 Storing
- 1 5.4 Retrieving
- 1 5.5 Forgetting and Memory Distortion
- 1 5.6 Biological Bases of Memory
- 1 5.7 Introduction to Thinking and Problem Solving
- 1 5.8 Biases and Errors in Thinking
- 1 5.9 Introduction to Intelligence
- 3 5.10 Psychometric Principles and Intelligence Testing
- 1 5.11 Components of Language and Language Acquisition

### Personal Progress Check 5

**Multiple-choice:** ~30 questions  
**Free-response:** 1 question

- Concept Application

**UNIT  
6**

**Developmental Psychology**

**~9–10** Class Periods

**7–9%** AP Exam Weighting

- 3** 6.1 The Lifespan and Physical Development in Childhood
- 1** 6.2 Social Development in Childhood
- 1** 6.3 Cognitive Development in Childhood
- 1** 6.4 Adolescent Development
- 1** 6.5 Adulthood and Aging
- 3** 6.6 Moral Development
- 1** 6.7 Gender and Sexual Orientation

**Personal Progress Check 6**

**Multiple-choice: ~20 questions**  
**Free-response: 1 question**  
 • Research Design

**UNIT  
7**

**Motivation, Emotion, and Personality**

**~16–17** Class Periods

**11–15%** AP Exam Weighting

- 3** 7.1 Theories of Motivation
- 1** 7.2 Specific Topics in Motivation
- 1** 7.3 Theories of Emotion
- 1** 7.4 Stress and Coping
- 3** 7.5 Introduction to Personality
- 1** 7.6 Psychoanalytic Theories of Personality
- 1** 7.7 Behaviorism and Social Cognitive Theories of Personality
- 1** 7.8 Humanistic Theories of Personality
- 1** 7.9 Trait Theories of Personality
- 1** 7.10 Measuring Personality

**Personal Progress Check 7**

**Multiple-choice: ~30 questions**  
**Free-response: 1 question**  
 • Research Design

**UNIT  
8**

**Clinical Psychology**

**~17–18** Class Periods

**12–16%** AP Exam Weighting

- 1** 8.1 Introduction to Psychological Disorders
- 1** 8.2 Psychological Perspectives and Etiology of Disorders
- 1** 8.3 Neurodevelopmental and Schizophrenic Spectrum Disorders
- 1** 8.4 Bipolar, Depressive, Anxiety, and Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders
- 1** 8.5 Trauma- and Stressor-Related, Dissociative, and Somatic Symptom and Related Disorders
- 1** 8.6 Feeding and Eating, Substance and Addictive, and Personality Disorders
- 1** 8.7 Introduction to Treatment of Psychological Disorders
- 1** 8.8 Psychological Perspectives and Treatment of Disorders
- 3** 8.9 Treatment of Disorders from the Biological Perspective
- 3** 8.10 Evaluating Strengths, Weaknesses, and Empirical Support for Treatments of Disorders

**Personal Progress Check 8**

**Multiple-choice: ~30 questions**  
**Free-response: 1 question**  
 • Research Design

UNIT  
**9**

Social  
Psychology

**~10-11**

Class  
Periods

**8-10%**

AP Exam  
Weighting

1

**9.1 Attribution Theory and  
Person Perception**

3

**9.2 Attitude Formation and  
Attitude Change**

3

**9.3 Conformity,  
Compliance, and  
Obedience**

1

**9.4 Group Influences on  
Behavior and Mental  
Processes**

1

**9.5 Bias, Prejudice, and  
Discrimination**

1

**9.6 Altruism and  
Aggression**

1

**9.7 Interpersonal  
Attraction**

**Personal Progress Check 9**

**Multiple-choice: ~20 questions**

**Free-response: 1 question**

- Concept Application