AP PSYCHOLOGY | UNIT 2

TOPIC 2.1

Perception

Perception is the brain's interpretation of sensory information, shaped by input, expectations, context, and attention.



same input

different interpretation

HOW SENSORY INPUT BECOMES EXPERIENCE

INPUT → sensory data

SELECTION → attention

ORGANIZATION → Gestalt rules

INTERPRETATION → meaning

BY THE END, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO...

1. Compare bottom-up processing with top-down processing.
2. Apply schemas, Gestalt principles, context, culture, and attention.
3. Distinguish depth cues, perceptual constancies, and apparent movement.

BIG IDEA

Sensation supplies the data. Perception organizes and interprets it, so the same input can produce different experiences.

1 Building a perceptual experience

Perception combines incoming evidence with knowledge, organization, and selective attention.

BOTTOM-UP AND TOP-DOWN

BOTTOM-UP

Starts with sensory features and builds toward a whole interpretation. Useful when the input is new or clear.

DATA -> MEANING

TOP-DOWN

Uses schemas, expectations, context, culture, and a perceptual set to interpret ambiguous input.

EXPECTATION -> MEANING

GESTALT: THE WHOLE IS ORGANIZED

CLOSURE



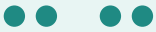
fill missing parts

FIGURE-GROUND



object vs background

PROXIMITY



near items group

SIMILARITY



alike items group

ATTENTION: WHAT GETS THROUGH?

SELECTIVE ATTENTION Focuses limited awareness on some input while filtering other input.

COCKTAIL PARTY EFFECT a meaningful signal, such as your name, captures attention

CHANGE BLINDNESS a visible change is missed because attention is elsewhere

2 Depth, stability, and movement

The brain uses visual cues to build a stable three-dimensional world from changing retinal images.

DEPTH CUES

BINOCULAR uses both eyes

RETINAL DISPARITY

The two eyes receive slightly different images; greater difference often signals a nearer object.

CONVERGENCE

Eyes turn inward more for near objects.

MONOCULAR works with one eye

RELATIVE SIZE	smaller image seems farther
INTERPOSITION	blocked object seems farther
LINEAR PERSPECTIVE	parallel lines appear to meet
TEXTURE GRADIENT	detail decreases with distance

PERCEPTUAL CONSTANCY

The retinal image changes... → ...but perception stays stable.

SIZE	stable despite distance
SHAPE	stable despite angle
COLOR	stable despite lighting

APPARENT MOVEMENT



Perceived motion

Rapidly changing stationary images can be interpreted as continuous movement even though no object actually moves.

REMEMBER Name the cue or principle, then explain exactly how it changes what a person notices or interprets.