

Psychological Processes

The AP Psych Exam, particularly the FRQ, may require students to understand a concept based on the step-by-step processes one may think or do in a situation. A student may be familiar with a concept but not get credit because the process was not understood or written correctly. The concepts below are described using processes that may need to be known for the exam. It is unlikely that you will be required to describe the steps, but knowing them might help you write out an application on the FRQ. These steps are meant to be exhaustive, meaning that incorporating them, whenever applicable, will hopefully maximize your chances of scoring the respective point on the FRQ. An example is provided for each statement. Notice that the example does not describe the steps, but notice how the steps are applied in the example.

Principle	Description of Steps			Example
Self-fulfilling prophecy	A person holds a particular belief about how something will turn out.	The person starts to act in a way that makes the prediction come true.	As a result of the behavior, the prediction (prophecy) comes true (fulfilled).	<i>Ryan believes he will break his best mile time at the next race. So he trains harder, gets better, and sets a new personal record.</i>
Cognitive Dissonance	A person is in a situation or is doing a behavior that is against one's belief.	The belief causes tension and discomfort (dissonance).	To lessen the tension, the person changes their belief.	<i>Laura, a huge Eagles fan, fell in love with George, a Cowboys fan. While she grew up disliking the Cowboys, the awkwardness of the situation made Laura decide that the Cowboys were not so bad after all.</i>
Door-in-the-face Technique	A person asks for a large request.	The large request is refused.	The person then asks for a smaller request, which is granted.	<i>When Luke found out that he would not get the pay raise he requested at work, he asked if he instead could get an extra vacation day, which was readily granted.</i>
Foot-in-the-door Technique	A person asks for a small request.	The request is granted.	The person then asks for a larger request, which is also granted.	<i>After Carl successfully got his co-worker to buy a box of cookies for his daughter's girl scout troop, he was able to get the co-worker to make a sizable donation to the group.</i>
Availability heuristic	A person needs to make a judgement, decision, or guess pertaining to their current situation.	The person easily recalls a specific example or recent memory that relates to the situation.	The person's judgement, decision, or guess is made based on that example or memory.	<i>Marina concluded that going on a cruise is dangerous after reading about a cruise ship that crashed.</i>
Representativeness heuristic	A person needs to make a judgement, decision, or guess pertaining to their current situation.	The person thinks of a "typical example", prototype, or stereotype that relates to the situation.	The person's judgement, decision, or guess is made based on that "typical example", prototype, or stereotype.	<i>Alex assumed that the Irish businessman he was about to meet wore green since Alex associates Ireland with shamrocks and leprechauns.</i>
Schachter Two-Factor Theory	A person experiences physiological (bodily) arousal.	The person looks to their situation and judges why they are experiencing the arousal (cognitive appraisal)	After identifying the stimulus, the person labels the emotion based on their judgement of the situation.	<i>James determined that his elevated heart rate is due to fear since the dog was barking right near him.</i>
Cannon Bard Theory of Emotion	A stimulus is perceived.	The perception of the stimulus goes to the brain (cortex).	The cortex activates the physiological arousal and the emotion <u>at the same time</u> .	<i>After her office co-workers surprised her with a birthday cake, Marge noticed that her heart rate increased at the same moment she felt excitement.</i>
James-Lange Theory of Emotion	A stimulus is perceived.	The perception of the stimulus activates physiological arousal.	One evaluates the physiological response and then judges what is the emotion they are experiencing.	<i>The tragic movie seen made Jen's eyes tear up. She decided she was crying because she was sad.</i>
General Adaptation Syndrome	The body fights (e.g., sympathetic nervous system activity) against an emergency or high-stressor situation. [Alarm]	The body fights against the effects of stress, e.g., keeps heart rate down despite knowledge of stressor. Person appears to be	Body can no longer fight. Illness may result. Person may feel overwhelmed by the stress. [Exhaustion]	<i>Flo was initially upset about losing her brother in a car accident. She now seems to be handling it well and actually appears to be in a</i>



		mentally okay. [Resistance]		<i>good mood. However, in time, she will likely break down in grief later on.</i>
Belief Perseverance	A person holds a belief about something.	That person is confronted with disconfirming evidence (evidence that refutes or disproves what is believed).	The person continues to hold onto the belief system.	<i>Eleanor was convinced that the Earth is flat. While her friend showed her strong evidence that the earth was round, Eleanor continued to hold on to her belief.</i>
Drive Reduction Theory	A person's body lacks a needed resource that throws its out of balance (homeostasis).	The lack of resource becomes a sort of tension that appears as a bodily need (e.g., lack of water = thirst), which is called a drive.	One does a behavior to lessen the need and maintain balance (homeostasis).	<i>Cheryl did not drink enough water this morning, so she feels thirsty. To satisfy her thirst, she drinks water.</i>
Opponent Process Theory (Emotion)	A person feels a certain emotion, which suppresses the opposite emotion (e.g., feeling happy holds back happiness).	The person, for whatever reason stops feeling the original emotion.	The opposite emotion is more readily and quickly experienced, though typically in lesser amounts.	<i>After laughing for ten minutes straight with his friends, Michael felt a slight feeling of sadness.</i>
Opponent Process Theory (Color Vision)	While a certain color is seen by the photoreceptors on the retina, its complementary (opposing) color is suppressed (red-green, blue-yellow, black-white).	A person looks away from seeing that color, and may look at a white or blank screen.	The person sees the complementary color as an afterimage.	<i>Kate looked at a yellow picture for an extended amount of time. She then looked at a white screen and saw a blue-ish afterimage.</i>
Acquisition (Classical Conditioning)	A neutral stimulus, which doesn't produce any response of interest, is paired with an unconditioned stimulus, which naturally produces a conditioned response.	The pairing may happen a number of different times.	The neutral stimulus is now no longer neutral, as it produces what was the unconditioned response. The neutral stimulus is now the conditioned stimulus, and the unconditioned response is now the conditioned response.	<i>The terrible tasting medicine, which came in a peculiar green bottle, always made me gag. Now, just seeing the bottle makes me gag.</i>
Acquisition (Operant Conditioning)	A behavior is performed	It is following by a favorable outcome.	The behavior occurs more frequently.	<i>Every time Andrew cleans his room, he gets \$5. As a result, he cleans his room more often.</i>
		It is following by an adverse consequence.	The behavior occurs less frequently.	
Escape Learning	A person is already in the middle of an unpleasant situation (e.g., obnoxious stimulus).	That person does something to get away from the unpleasant situation.	The person now knows what to do the next time the unpleasant situation occurs.	<i>When the fire alarm went off, the students knew to walk out of the building so they do not have to hear the loud alarm bell.</i>
Avoidance Learning	Through experience, a person knows that a signal foretells the appearance of an unpleasant situation (e.g., obnoxious stimulus).	The person realizes, after observing the signal, that a behavior can be performed to prevent the unpleasant situation.	The person now knows that to do when the signal appears in order to prevent the unpleasant situation.	<i>The students know that before the fire alarm bell rings, the teacher grabs his coat and keys and stands by the door. The students, not wanting to hear the alarm, run out of the school.</i>
Modeling (Observational Learning)	A person sees a behavior performed by someone else.	The person starts to mimic or copy the behavior.	The person does that behavior as a result of watching the behavior.	<i>Marianne notices that her sons often speak certain words. After a while, she starts saying them too.</i>
Self-Efficacy	A person looks to their self-concept and previous experiences. The person sees that they have had success with many life events	The person believes that they have control over the outcomes or results of what they do.	The person does many things with greater confidence and with an attitude that all things can be mastered through their own efforts.	<i>Donna knows that she does things very well. She believes she can do just about everything well if she tries. Therefore, she is highly confident in herself and her abilities.</i>
Overjustification Effect	A person is intrinsically motivated to do an activity. The activity is fun and rewarding in itself to do.	An extrinsic reward (e.g., money) is given for doing the activity.	The person finds to be less fun and inherently rewarding, and therefore has less intrinsic motivation to do something.	<i>Deneb loved to play piano for fun. However, when she started receiving major prizes for her performances and recitals, she found playing less fun.</i>

