# Unit 2 Cheat Sheet: Cognition

**AP® Psychology · Unit 2 Review · Topics 2.1 to 2.8**

> **The big idea:** Your brain doesn't record the world like a camera: it interprets what your senses send, takes shortcuts to think and decide, and rebuilds memories at each recall. Unit 2 is 15 to 25 percent of the multiple-choice section.
>
> **How to use it:** Fill in the blank version from memory first, then check it here. Star anything you missed. Those are your review targets.

## KEY TERMS

### Perception, Gestalt, and attention (Topic 2.1)

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| **Perceptual set** | Readiness to perceive what you expect. |
| **Figure and ground** | A shape stands out from its background. |
| **Proximity and similarity** | Grouping things that are close together, or that look alike. |
| **Closure** | Filling in gaps to see a complete shape. |
| **Selective attention** | Focusing on one thing (cocktail party effect: your name cuts through noise). |
| **Perceptual constancy** | An object's size, shape, and color seem stable as its image changes. |

### Monocular depth cues (Topic 2.1)

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| **Relative size** | Of two same-size objects, the smaller-looking one seems farther. |
| **Interposition** | An object that blocks another is closer. |
| **Relative clarity** | Hazier objects seem farther away. |
| **Texture gradient** | Detail gets finer with distance. |
| **Linear perspective** | Parallel lines seem to meet far away. |

### Thinking and problem-solving (Topic 2.2)

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| **Prototype** | A concept's best example: a robin fits bird better than a penguin. |
| **Assimilation vs. accommodation** | Fitting new information into a schema vs. changing the schema to fit it. |
| **Algorithm vs. heuristic** | Tries every solution (slow, guaranteed) vs. a fast shortcut that can mislead. |
| **Divergent vs. convergent thinking** | Generating many answers (creativity) vs. narrowing to one best answer. |

### Types and models of memory (Topic 2.3)

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|---|---|
| **Explicit memory** | Easy to describe: episodic (personal experiences) and semantic (facts). |
| **Implicit memory** | Hard to describe, like procedural skills. |
| **Prospective memory** | Remembering to do things in the future. |
| **Multi-store model** | Sensory (iconic: images; echoic: sounds) to short-term to long-term. |
| **Automatic vs. effortful processing** | Encoding without trying (where you sat) vs. with attention and work. |
| **Working memory model** | A central executive, phonological loop (sounds), and visuospatial sketchpad. |
| **Levels of processing** | Structural (looks) to phonemic (sound) to semantic (meaning); deeper lasts. |
| **Long-term potentiation** | Connections between neurons that fire together often grow stronger. |

### Encoding and storage (Topics 2.4 and 2.5)

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|---|---|
| **Mnemonic devices** | Memory aids, like the method of loci: items linked to places on a route. |
| **Chunking** | Grouping into meaningful units: FBI, CIA. |
| **Spacing effect** | Spread-out (distributed) practice beats cramming (massed) in the long run. |
| **Serial position effect** | The first (primacy) and last (recency) items in a list are recalled best. |
| **Short-term vs. long-term memory** | About 7 items for about 20 seconds unless rehearsed vs. no known limit. |
| **Maintenance vs. elaborative rehearsal** | Repeating it vs. linking it to meaning (far better for long-term memory). |

### Retrieval and forgetting (Topics 2.6 and 2.7)

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|---|---|
| **Recall vs. recognition** | Retrieving with no cues (fill-in-the-blank) vs. with cues (multiple choice). |
| **Context- and state-dependent memory** | Recall is better in the same place, or physical state, as when you learned. |
| **Mood-congruent memory** | Recall is better in the same mood; a sad mood brings sad memories to mind. |
| **Retrieval practice** | Testing effect: quizzing beats rereading. Metacognition: thinking about thinking. |
| **Encoding failure vs. tip-of-the-tongue** | It never got into memory vs. it's stored, but retrieval fails for now. |
| **Misinformation effect** | Misleading later details alter memory. |
| **Source amnesia** | Remembering a fact but not its source. |
| **Constructive memory** | Memories can change as they're stored (consolidation) and at each recall. |
| **Imagination inflation** | Imagining an event inflates belief in it. |

### Intelligence and achievement (Topic 2.8)

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|---|---|
| **General (g) vs. multiple abilities** | One ability that shows up across tasks vs. a set of separate abilities. |
| **Intelligence quotient (IQ)** | Early tests: mental age ÷ chronological age × 100 (12 ÷ 10 × 100 = 120). |
| **Standardized test** | Same procedures and conditions for all. |
| **Stereotype threat vs. lift** | Worry about a stereotype of your group lowers scores; of another, raises them. |
| **Flynn effect** | IQ scores rose across much of the world over time (linked to health, nutrition). |
| **Achievement vs. aptitude test** | Measures what you've already learned vs. predicts future performance. |
| **Growth vs. fixed mindset** | Believing intelligence can grow with effort vs. that it's set from birth. |

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## SHORTCUTS AND ERRORS IN THINKING (TOPIC 2.2): WHERE JUDGMENTS GO WRONG

| SHORTCUT OR ERROR | WHAT THE PERSON DOES | EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|
| **Representativeness heuristic** | Judges by how well something fits a prototype | Assumes a very tall stranger plays basketball |
| **Availability heuristic** | Judges by how easily examples come to mind | Rates flying riskier after crash news |
| **Mental set** | Sticks with an approach that worked before | Reuses an old formula that no longer fits |
| **Functional fixedness** | Sees an object only in its usual role | Never thinks to use a shoe as a doorstop |
| **Priming** | Is nudged by an earlier stimulus, often unaware | Names a banana faster after seeing "yellow" |
| **Framing** | Is swayed by how the same facts are worded | Prefers "80 percent lean" to "20 percent fat" |
| **Gambler's fallacy** | Believes past random events change the odds | Bets that tails is due after five heads |
| **Sunk-cost fallacy** | Keeps investing because of what's already spent | Goes to a show sick because the ticket cost $80 |

## DON'T CONFUSE THESE

| | |
|---|---|
| **Bottom-up vs. top-down processing** | Building from raw sensory details vs. interpreting through what you know and expect. |
| **Inattentional vs. change blindness** | Missing something in plain view vs. missing that something in a scene changed. |
| **Binocular vs. monocular cues** | Need both eyes: retinal disparity (images differ more up close) and convergence (eyes turn in more up close; brain merges the images) vs. work with one eye, even in a photo. |
| **Representativeness vs. availability** | Judging by fit with a stereotype or prototype vs. by how easily examples come to mind. |
| **Mental set vs. functional fixedness** | Stuck on a strategy that worked before vs. stuck on an object's usual use. |
| **Proactive vs. retroactive interference** | Old learning blocks new (pro points forward) vs. new blocks old (retro points backward). |
| **Anterograde vs. retrograde amnesia** | No new memories after the injury vs. lost memories from before it. Neither is infantile amnesia: adults can't recall their first few years. |
| **Reliability vs. validity** | Consistent (test-retest: similar scores twice; split-half: halves agree) vs. accurate (construct: captures the trait; predictive: forecasts performance). Reliable isn't always valid. |

## STUDIES AND CASES TO KNOW COLD

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|---|---|
| **Ebbinghaus's forgetting curve** | Testing himself on lists of nonsense syllables, he found forgetting is fastest right after learning, then levels off. He measured memory as savings in relearning. |
| **Godden and Baddeley's divers** | Divers recalled more words when tested in the same place they learned them, underwater or on land: context-dependent memory. |
| **Loftus and Palmer's crash study** | Asked how fast cars in a filmed crash "smashed into" (not "hit") each other, viewers gave higher speed estimates; a week later, more falsely recalled broken glass: misinformation effect. |
| **Henry Molaison (H.M.)** | After surgery removed much of his hippocampus, he could not form new explicit memories (anterograde amnesia), yet his mirror-drawing skill improved with practice he couldn't recall. |
| **Spencer, Steele, and Quinn** | On a hard math test, women scored lower than equally prepared men when told the test showed gender differences, but about the same when told it did not: stereotype threat. |

## FRQ: HOW UNIT 2 SHOWS UP

| PROMPT SAYS | WHAT TO DO |
|---|---|
| **Identify or state** | Name it. No explanation needed. |
| **Describe** | Give its key features or details. |
| **Explain** | Say how or why, using evidence or reasoning. |
| **Propose** | Make a claim of your own that answers the question. |
| **Support or refute** | Say whether the evidence backs the claim, and why. |
| **Use evidence** | Give specific results or conclusions from the source. |

### Likely Unit 2 FRQ angles

- Identify the method, and state recall's operational definition.
- Describe what a statistic shows, like a gap in mean recall.
- Identify an ethical guideline used, like informed consent.
- Explain how far the findings generalize, given who took part.
- Explain how a result supports or refutes the hypothesis.
- Propose a claim, then use two sources, each with a different concept (EBQ).

> **FRQ rules:** Apply each concept to the study or source; a definition alone earns nothing. Cite EBQ sources by number (Source 1, 2, or 3). Write in complete sentences.

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