Unit 3 Cheat Sheet: Development and Learning

AP® Psychology · Unit 3 Review · Topics 3.1 to 3.9

> **The big idea:** Unit 3 is about change: how we develop from before birth to old age, and how experience changes what we do. It is 15 to 25 percent of the multiple-choice section, and students often confuse classical and operant conditioning.
>
> **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

Methods, growth, and gender (Topics 3.1 to 3.3)

Nature and nurture	Heredity and experience interact; adoption studies help separate the two.
Stability vs. change	Which traits last vs. which ones shift.
Continuity vs. discontinuity	Gradual change, like a ramp, vs. distinct stages, like a staircase.
Teratogens	Harmful agents before birth, like alcohol and nicotine; timing matters.
Rooting reflex	A newborn turns toward a touch on the cheek; a sign of on-track development.
Critical period and imprinting	A window of strong effects (language); ducklings follow the first moving object.
Sex vs. gender	Biological traits vs. culturally linked attitudes, behaviors, and roles.

Thinking and language (Topics 3.4 and 3.5)

Sensorimotor (birth to about 2)	Senses and actions; object permanence (knowing unseen things still exist).
Preoperational (about 2 to 7)	Pretend play; egocentrism, animism, no conservation; theory of mind begins.
Concrete operational (about 7 to 11)	Logical about concrete situations but struggles to think systematically.
Formal operational (about 12 and up)	Abstract, hypothetical thinking; Piaget said not everyone reaches it.
Conservation	Knowing an amount stays the same despite a new shape or arrangement.
Zone of proximal development	Tasks doable only with help (Vygotsky); scaffolding: support removed bit by bit.
Crystallized vs. fluid intelligence	Knowledge, vocabulary (hold or grow) vs. quick reasoning (tends to decline).
Phoneme vs. morpheme	Smallest unit of sound (/b/ in bat) vs. of meaning (walk, -ed in walked).
Language stages	In order: cooing (ooh), babbling (ba-ba), one-word (Up!), telegraphic (want juice).
Overgeneralization	A grammar rule used too broadly (goed).

Parenting and attachment (Topic 3.6)

Authoritarian vs. authoritative	Strict rules, no reasons vs. clear rules explained with warmth.
Permissive parenting	Warm, but few rules or limits.
Secure attachment	Upset when the caregiver leaves, soothed on return; a secure base.
Insecure attachment	Avoidant (seems not to care), anxious (hard to comfort), or disorganized.

Social contexts and life stages (Topic 3.6)

Ecological systems theory	Micro: direct contact. Meso: links. Exo: indirect. Macro: culture. Chrono: time.
Erikson's psychosocial stages	Trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity, integrity.
Social clock	A culture's timetable for life events.
Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)	Stressful or traumatic childhood events; can affect relationships for life.

Classical conditioning (Topic 3.7)

UCS and UCR	Unconditioned stimulus and response: food triggers drooling with no learning.
CS and CR	Conditioned stimulus and response: a paired tone alone now triggers drooling.
Acquisition	Learning the pairing; works best when the CS comes just before the UCS.
Generalization vs. discrimination	Similar stimuli also trigger the CR vs. responding only to the CS.
Higher-order conditioning	An established CS acts like a UCS to condition a new stimulus.
Biological preparedness	Wired to learn some links (taste and illness) more easily than others.
Habituation	Responding less to a repeated stimulus.

Operant and social learning (Topics 3.8 and 3.9)

Law of effect	Reinforced behaviors become more likely, punished ones less (Thorndike).
Reinforcers: primary vs. secondary	Meet biological needs (food) vs. get their power through learning (money).
Shaping	Reinforcing successive approximations, steps closer and closer to a goal.
Instinctive drift	Trained animals slide back to instinct.
Learned helplessness	Giving up after learning you have no control, even when escape is possible.
Continuous vs. partial reinforcement	Every response (fast learning, fast extinction) vs. some (lasts much longer).
Fixed vs. variable ratio	A set number of responses vs. an unpredictable number (slot machine).
Fixed vs. variable interval	A set time (scalloped graph) vs. an unpredictable time (checking texts).
Observational learning	Learning by watching a model; the more similar the model, the more we copy.
Vicarious conditioning	Seeing a model rewarded or punished changes your own behavior.

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REINFORCEMENT AND PUNISHMENT (TOPIC 3.8): POSITIVE MEANS ADDED, NEGATIVE MEANS REMOVED

CONSEQUENCE	WHAT HAPPENS	EXAMPLE
Positive reinforcement	Adds something desirable; behavior increases	Gets a sticker for finished homework
Negative reinforcement	Removes something unpleasant; behavior increases	Stops the car's beeping by buckling up
Positive punishment	Adds something unpleasant; behavior decreases	Gets extra chores for lying
Negative punishment	Removes something desirable; behavior decreases	Loses phone time for missing curfew

DON'T CONFUSE THESE

Classical vs. operant conditioning	Classical pairs two stimuli and involves automatic responses (drooling, fear); operant links a voluntary behavior to its consequence.
Negative reinforcement vs. punishment	Taking away something unpleasant so a behavior increases vs. any consequence that makes a behavior decrease.
Extinction vs. spontaneous recovery	The response fades when the CS keeps appearing without the UCS vs. a faded response briefly returns after a rest.
Cross-sectional vs. longitudinal	Different age groups at one time (watch for cohort effects from when each group grew up) vs. the same people over years (watch for attrition, as people drop out).
Assimilation vs. accommodation	Fitting new information into an existing schema, or mental framework (calling a horse a doggy) vs. changing the schema to fit (learning horses are a different animal).
Imaginary audience vs. personal fable	Two kinds of teen egocentrism: "Everyone is watching me" vs. "I'm unique, and nothing bad will happen to me," which can fuel risk taking.
Foreclosure vs. moratorium	Committed without exploring, often to a family's plan vs. exploring without committing yet. (Identity achievement: explored, then committed. Diffusion: neither.)
Latent vs. insight learning	Learning without reinforcement that shows up once there's a reason to use it vs. a sudden "aha" solution with no associations, consequences, or model (Köhler's chimpanzee).

STUDIES TO KNOW COLD

Gibson and Walk's visual cliff	Most crawling infants refused to cross a glass table that looked like a drop-off, even when a parent called: early depth perception, tested without words.
Harlow's infant monkeys	The monkeys clung to a soft cloth mother rather than a wire one that gave milk: comfort matters more than food in attachment.
The "Little Albert" study	Watson and Rayner paired a white rat with a loud noise until a baby feared the rat (and a rabbit: generalization). Causing fear and not removing it failed to protect him from harm.
Bandura's Bobo doll studies	Children who watched an adult hit an inflatable doll often copied the aggression: they learned by watching a model, with no consequence of their own.
Tolman's maze rats	Rats that got no food in a maze until day 11 did no better than unfed rats, then quickly caught up to rats fed every day: they had formed a cognitive map (latent learning).

FRQ: HOW UNIT 3 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 3 FRQ angles

- Identify the method, like correlational; state an operational definition.
- Describe what a statistic shows, like average maze errors.
- Identify an ethical guideline used, like parental permission.
- Explain how far the findings generalize, given who took part.
- Explain how a result supports or refutes the hypothesis.
- Propose a claim; support it with two sources, a different concept each (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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