

AP Psychology Course Revisions

Learn more about changes to the AP Psychology course for the 2024-25 school year.

Highlights of the Revised AP Psychology Course

- The course framework features 5 content units instead of 9.
- Key terms are included in each unit.
- Argumentation skills are now included in the science practices.
- Research methods and data interpretation are now part of the science practices.

Five Units

The AP Psychology course framework now features five content units instead of nine:

1. Biological Bases of Behavior
2. Cognition
3. Development and Learning
4. Social Psychology
5. Mental and Physical Health

These are based on the APA’s recommended core content domains, or “pillars,” for introductory psychology: Biological, Cognitive, Developmental, Social and Personality, and Mental and Physical Health.

Below are tables comparing the APA pillar topics for introductory psychology and the topics in each unit of the revised AP Psychology course framework.

Unit 1: Biological Bases of Behavior	
Biological Pillar Topics	Unit 1 Topics
Neuroscience	Interaction of Heredity and Environment

Unit 1: Biological Bases of Behavior

Biological Pillar Topics	Unit 1 Topics
	Overview of the Nervous System
	The Neuron and Neural Firing
	The Brain
Consciousness	Sleep
Sensation	Sensation

Unit 2: Cognition

Cognitive Pillar Topics	Unit 2 Topics
Perception	Perception
Cognition	Thinking, Problem-Solving, Judgments, and Decision-Making
Memory	Introduction to Memory
	Encoding Memories
	Storing Memories
	Retrieving Memories
	Forgetting and Other Memory Challenges

Unit 2: Cognition

Cognitive Pillar Topics	Unit 2 Topics
Intelligence	Intelligence and Achievement

Unit 3: Development and Learning

Developmental Pillar Topics	Unit 3 Topics
Lifespan Development	Themes and Methods in Developmental Psychology
	Physical Development Across the Lifespan
	Gender and Sexual Orientation
	Cognitive Development Across the Lifespan
	Social-Emotional Development Across the Lifespan
Learning	Classical Conditioning
	Operant Conditioning
	Social, Cognitive, and Neurological Factors in Learning
Language	Communication and Language

Unit 4: Social Psychology

Social and Personality Pillar Topics	Unit 4 Topics
Social Multicultural	Attribution Theory and Person Perception
	Attitude Formation and Attitude Change
	Psychology of Social Situations
Personality	Psychoanalytic and Humanistic Theories of Personality
	Social-Cognitive and Trait Theories of Personality
Motivation	Motivation
Emotion	Emotion

Unit 5: Mental and Physical Health

Mental and Physical Health Pillar Topics	Unit 5 Topics
Health	Introduction to Health Psychology
	Positive Psychology
Abnormal	Explaining and Classifying Psychological Disorders
	Selection of Categories of Psychological Disorders
Therapies	Treatment of Psychological Disorders

Key Terms

Each unit now includes key terms to better focus the scope of the course for teachers and students.

Recent studies have examined how many key terms are found in introductory psychology texts, finding that the top five most popular textbooks covered almost 4000 terms, with only 154 common to all five (Slade and Gurung, 2022). The sheer volume of terminology poses a logistical challenge for teachers preparing students for an AP Psychology Exam that could address so many different key terms.

We researched the most-commonly taught concepts in introductory psychology and focused the scope of the course to about 750 key terms.

Focusing on the key terms presented in the course and exam description (CED) allows for more instruction on content and skills needed to be successful in subsequent courses in psychology in college.

Science Practices

AP Psychology's skill categories are now called science practices.

In keeping with AP Psychology's new dual designation as both a science and a social science, its four science practices align with the other AP sciences:

1. Content Application
2. Research Methods and Design
3. Data Interpretation
4. Argumentation

A New Practice: Argumentation

Argumentation skills are now included in the science practices.

The revised AP Psychology CED adds the new science practice of Argumentation alongside the science practices of Concept Application, Research Methods and Design, and Data Interpretation.

This practice has long been a feature of other AP science courses, and aspects of argumentation are recommended by the APA for introductory psychology students. This new practice in AP Psychology enables students to demonstrate the ability to propose defensible claims about behavior and mental processes and use scientifically derived evidence to support or refute those claims.

After taking AP Psychology, students should be able to read or hear about psychological research and know whether the claims made are supported by the data.

Research Methods and Data Interpretation

Research methods and data interpretation are now part of the science practices.

The APA recommends that research methods be taught throughout an introductory psychology course. The revised AP Psychology course has incorporated the first unit of the current course (Scientific Foundations of Psychology) into the science practices of Research Methods and Design and Data Interpretation so that teachers can integrate methods into all five content units.

Learn More

View the updated course framework in the [AP Psychology Course and Exam Description, Effective Fall 2024 \(.pdf\)](#).