

Exercise walk-through

1.3

Sensation and Perception

GAC Psychology

You must be able to

- define sensation and perception
- distinguish absolute from difference threshold
- explain why difference thresholds depend on the starting level

1

The method

Method — Detect first; interpret second

Sensation 感觉 is a sense organ detecting a stimulus. **Perception** 知觉 is the brain interpreting it. Light reaching an eye is sensation; recognising a friend's face is perception.

An **absolute threshold** 绝对阈限 is the smallest stimulus detected at all. A **difference threshold** 差别阈限 is the smallest change noticed. One extra candle is easier to notice in a dark room than in a bright room.

2

Practice

Practice 2.1 ■ 1 mark

Define sensation.

Solution 2.1

Worked steps

- Detection of a stimulus by a sense organ. **B1**

Practice 2.2 ■ 1 mark

Define a difference threshold.

Solution 2.2

Method: Detect first; interpret second — p.4

Worked steps

- The smallest change in a stimulus that can be noticed. **B1**

Practice 2.3 ■ 2 marks

Explain why recognising a face is perception rather than sensation.

Solution 2.3

Method: Detect first; interpret second — p.4

Worked steps

- The eye detects light from the face. **B1**
- The brain interprets that information as a particular person. **A1**

3

Exam-style

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 4 marks

Explain why adding one candle is more noticeable in a room with two candles than in a room with fifty.

Solution 3.1

Method: Detect first; interpret second — p.4

Worked steps

- The difference threshold is proportional to the starting stimulus. **B1**
- One extra candle is a large change from two. **A1**
- It is a small change from fifty. **A1**
- Therefore it is more likely to be detected in the darker room. **B1**

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 4 marks

Compare an absolute threshold with a difference threshold.

Solution 3.2

Method: Detect first; interpret second — p.4

Worked steps

- Both concern detecting stimuli. **B1**
- An absolute threshold is the smallest stimulus detected at all. **A1**
- A difference threshold is the smallest change detected. **A1**
- One asks whether a stimulus is detected; the other asks whether a change is noticed. **B1**