
AP[®] Psychology

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

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Free-Response Question 2

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FRQ 2: Evidence-Based Question (EBQ)

7 Points

General Considerations

1.

Answers must be cogent enough for the meaning to come through. Spelling and grammatical mistakes do not reduce a score, but spelling must be close enough so that the reader is convinced of the word.
2.

A student can earn points only if the student is clearly addressing the topic of the source material in their response.
3.

The response must apply the concept to the prompt. A definition alone will not earn the point, but a clear definition can support the application.
4.

Examples provided in the Scoring Guidelines for each of the points are not to be considered exhaustive.
5.

Within a question part, a response will not be penalized for incorrect information unless it directly contradicts correct information that otherwise would have earned the point(s). For example, if a student applies a concept by defining it in two contradictory ways (such as applying proactive interference as both interference from older and newer information), the point is not earned.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Part A Claim (0–1 points)	0 points Does not propose a claim that is relevant to the question	1 point Proposes a claim that is relevant to the question
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none">The response describes the question without making a claim.The response proposes a claim unrelated to the question.The response proposes an oversimplified conclusion or evidence from a provided source.	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none">The response proposes specific effects on the question.The response proposes a claim that suggests a positive or negative effect on the question.The response proposes recommendations for the application of the question.
	Examples that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none">“Does the presence of others influence performance?”“Using animals in research can tell us a lot about ourselves.”“Studying the factors that influence performance is important to social psychologists.”	Examples that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none">“The presence of others makes a difference in whether someone performs well on a specific task or set of tasks.”“When someone else is present during a performance, it is more likely that the participant will perform well.”“The presence of others will make them do worse at what they are doing.”“People should have an audience for tasks they are good at.”
	Additional Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none">A claim that meets the criteria can be awarded the point regardless of whether the responses in Parts B and C successfully support the claim.	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Part B (i) Evidence (0–1 points)	0 points Does not identify nor correctly cite one piece of specific evidence from one of the provided sources to support the claim. Any evidence provided is not relevant to the question.	1 point Uses one piece of correctly cited, specific, accurate, and relevant evidence from one of the provided sources to support the claim.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response identifies no evidence. • The evidence is not correctly cited. • The evidence is nonspecific or inaccurate. • The response provides evidence not relevant to the claim. 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evidence is correctly cited and provides specific and accurate evidence relevant to the claim.
	Examples that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The presence of others impacts what we do.” [No evidence.] • “The baboon study shows that the presence of other baboons made the baboons do worse on the task that required more cognitive control.” [No citation.] • “The baboons were influenced by other baboons.” [Nonspecific evidence.] • “In Source 2, researchers used rewards to change the baboon’s behavior.” [Evidence not relevant to the claim.] 	Examples that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The results of the bar graph (Source 1) show a longer amount of time for participants to complete a new and difficult task in front of an audience than when they were alone.” • “According to Source 3, performance was improved when participants were observed by an evaluator and when they were monitored electronically.” • “According to Source 2, researchers found that the delayed reaction time was greatest for male baboons in the presence of older males with a higher social rank.” • “According to Source 1, participants were able to perform a well-learned task quicker than those who were alone.”
	Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses that use a correct citation style other than the methods prescribed by the question can earn this point for citing the source. • “Accurate evidence” refers to the accuracy of the general pattern of the evidence cited. Since citing specific numbers is not required to score the point, slight errors in reporting specific data can still score when the direction of the difference or relationship of the data cited is correct. 	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Part B (ii) Explanation and Application (Reasoning) (0–2 points)	0 points Does not explain the relationship between the evidence and the claim	1 point Explains the relationship between the evidence and the claim	2 points Applies a psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding to explain how the evidence supports the claim
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response does not accurately interpret the evidence. • The response identifies evidence without explanation of how it relates to the claim. • The response provides opinions with no reference to the sources provided. 	Responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response correctly interprets the evidence in supporting the claim, but does not apply a psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding. 	Responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response correctly interprets the evidence and correctly applies a psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding.
	Examples that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Performance on tasks is not impacted by the presence of others.”</i> • <i>“When people feel they are being directly evaluated by either an in-person or electronic observer, they perform better.”</i> • <i>“It’s good to have others around when you are completing a task.”</i> 	Examples that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The evidence demonstrates that the presence of others is generally helpful for improving performance, but if a task is difficult, performance can suffer.”</i> • <i>“Since the time needed to complete the new and difficult task increased in the presence of others, this shows that the presence of others has a negative effect on performance.”</i> • <i>“The studies show that if you are an expert at something, having an audience helps.”</i> 	Examples that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The study showed that participants who completed the task when being observed detected more correct pairs than those who did it alone. This is called social facilitation.”</i> • <i>“The reason for the delayed reaction times of younger male baboons was probably due to social norms. Because the younger males must be submissive to dominant older males, their awareness of that made their performance worse.”</i> • <i>“The study showed that participants were able to perform a well-learned task such as putting on their socks quicker than those who were alone. This is an example of the Yerkes-Dodson Theory, which states that well-learned tasks can be performed well even if under high states of arousal such as being watched.”</i>
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The explanation and application points can be earned even if the response did not earn the point in B (i) due to incorrectly cited and/or non-specific evidence. • The psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding must be explicitly identified in the <i>AP Psychology Course and Exam Description</i> (2024). • The presence of a citation indicates the sentence or phrase is intended to be evidence. All text before the citation will be considered evidence. Text after a citation will be considered reasoning, unless accompanied by another citation. • Concepts used in the sources that are not eligible to be used for the application point are “confederate,” “statistically significant,” and “operant conditioning.” 			

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Part C (i) Evidence (0–1 points)	0 points Does not identify nor correctly cite a different piece of specific evidence from either of the other two provided sources to support the claim	1 point Uses a different piece of correctly cited, specific, accurate, and relevant evidence from either of the other two provided sources to support the claim
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response identifies no evidence. • The evidence is not correctly cited. • The evidence is nonspecific or inaccurate. • The evidence is from the same source as the one used in Part B. • The response provides evidence not relevant to the claim. 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response provides specific, accurate, and correctly cited evidence relevant to the claim that is from a different source than the one used in Part B.
	Examples that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The presence of others impacts what we do.”</i> [No evidence.] • <i>“In one study, people who just thought they were being monitored performed better.”</i> [No citation.] • <i>“Research shows that behavior changes when in a group.”</i> [Nonspecific evidence.] • <i>“In Source 2, researchers found that baboons performed worse on the conflicting trial task when they were in the presence of other baboons.”</i> [The response used the same source as used in Part B.] • <i>“In Source 2, researchers used rewards to change the baboon’s behavior.”</i> [Evidence not relevant to the claim.] 	Examples that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Source 3 shows that when people believe they are being monitored, either by a human or a web cam, they will perform better on a task than when they think they are not being monitored.”</i> • <i>“Source 2 shows that when the baboons did the harder task, they did worse in the presence of other baboons.”</i> • <i>“When participants were taking off and putting on their shoes, they did better with an audience (Source 1).”</i>
Additional Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses that use a correct citation style other than the methods prescribed by the question can earn this point for citing the source. • “Accurate evidence” refers to the accuracy of the general pattern of the evidence cited. Since citing specific numbers is not required to score the point, slight errors in reporting specific data can still score when the direction of the difference or relationship of the data cited is correct. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Part C (ii) Explanation and Application (Reasoning) (0–2 points)	0 points Does not explain the relationship between the evidence and the claim	1 point Explains the relationship between the evidence and the claim	2 points Applies a different psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding to explain how the evidence supports the claim. The psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding is not the same one used in Part B (ii).
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response does not accurately interpret the evidence. The response identifies evidence without explanation of how it relates to the claim. The response provides opinions with no reference to the sources provided. 	Responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response correctly interprets the evidence, but does not apply a psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding. The response applies the same psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding that was used in Part B; however, the response explains the relationship between the evidence and the claim that does not rely on the application. 	Responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response correctly interprets the evidence and applies a psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding that is different from the one used in Part B.
	Examples that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“The evidence supports my claim.”</i> <i>“The evidence shows baboons perform better if they are being watched.”</i> [The response provides an incorrect interpretation of the evidence.] 	Examples that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“The research shows that being in the presence of others improves performance if you are doing a task that is well-learned.”</i> <i>The research shows that if you are doing something with superiors watching, you will do worse.”</i> <i>“The research shows that whether you are being watched live or by video, you will do better on an easy task such as subtraction.”</i> 	Examples that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“When doing an easy, well-learned task, like putting on or taking off your own shoes, people might be extrinsically motivated to complete the task better in order to get the approval of others.”</i> <i>“Since the baboons performed worse in front of an audience, that could be an example of increased distress, which could get in the way of their ability to complete a complex task.”</i> <i>“The participants in Source 3 did an easy task, such as subtraction, better when they were being watched directly than when they were alone. The participants were not affected by an imaginary audience where people think that others are watching and judging them.”</i>
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The explanation and application points can be earned even if the response did not earn the point in C (i) due to incorrectly cited and/or non-specific evidence. The explanation and application points can be earned if the response uses the same source in both Parts B and C, provided that the evidence used in Part B and Part C is different. The psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding must be explicitly identified in the <i>AP Psychology Course and Exam Description (2024)</i> and is different from the perspective, theory, concept, or research finding used in Part B. The presence of a citation indicates the sentence or phrase is intended to be evidence. All text prior to the citation will be considered evidence. Text after a citation will be considered reasoning, unless accompanied by another citation. Concepts used in the sources that are not eligible to be used for the application point are “confederate,” “statistically significant,” and “operant conditioning.” 			

Part A: Claim

When in the presence of others, People are more likely to perform better on tasks than they would if no one was present during a task.

Part B: (i) Evidence and (ii) Explanation and Application (Reasoning)

The idea the people are more likely to perform well when in the presence of others is supported by the evidence found in source 3. Source 3's findings showed that participants doing a vigilance task with numbers do worse when an audience is not present. They found that participants "who completed the vigilance task alone detected significantly fewer correct number pairs than those who completed the task in the electronic observer condition or the evaluative observer condition." The evidence shows that when an audience was present, Participants were able to get more numbers correct for their task, supporting the belief that task performance is enhanced by having an audience.

Source 3's findings found that an audience enhances a person's ability to complete a task. This is explained through the psychological concept of social facilitation, which states that having an audience can enable someone to do better on a task than if an audience was not present. This adds to the idea that people can do better on tasks when in the presence of an audience.

Part C: (i) Evidence and (ii) Explanation and Application (Reasoning)

The belief that an audience enhances a person's ability to perform a task is further supported by the findings in source 1. Source 1 found that when completing "well-learned" tasks, Participants in a study were able to reduce the overall time it took for them to complete that task when being viewed by an audience, both intentional and incidental. The findings, which researchers found to be statistically significant, showed that having an audience present for well-learned tasks reduced the time necessary to complete that task as opposed to doing the task alone. This backs up the idea that the presence of others does improve task performance.

The findings from source 1 relate closely, and are supported by, the Yerkes Dodson idea of optimal arousal through an inverted U graph. The psychological concept here states that people perform well when given a stable level of arousal, not too much or too little. Therefore in this experiment, participants were able to complete well-learned tasks comfortably when an audience was present but were unable to complete "difficult tasks" as easily because it exceeded their optimum level of arousal. Therefore, when doing familiar tasks, an audience can be necessary for improving task performance when optimal arousal is present. This supports the belief that having an audience present can improve performance on a task.

Part A: Claim

When being watched or observed by others, there is a tendency to perform slower on difficult tasks and more quickly on easier tasks. This is due to social pressures on an individuals, as well as fear of public humiliation.

Part B: (i) Evidence and (ii) Explanation and Application (Reasoning)

i. In Source 1, the bar graph shows that when there was an audience and or an incidental audience when doing a difficult task, the participant performed the task in about 32-34 seconds compared to the participant that was alone and was able to do it in about 29 seconds. however when the task changed to a well learned task, the participants with an audience of some capacity was able to perform it much faster (about 11-13 seconds) than the individual that was alone (about 16 seconds).

ii. This information helps to support my claim by exemplyfiying the effect that an audience has on individuals performing either easy or difficult tasks. This can then be supported by the psychological perspective of sociocultural. When there is any sort of social influence when performing a task, it can cause pressure on the individual that is performing it, then causing a negative or positive impact on the performace depending on the context. Lev Vygotskys learning theory helps to prove that the more comfortable invividuals are when performing a learned task especically in the presence of others, the overall time spent doing the task will be significantly lower than if the individual was on their own.

Part C: (i) Evidence and (ii) Explanation and Application (Reasoning)

i. Another peice of evidence that supports my claim is from Source 2. While the participants of the study were baboons, they are very closely related to humans cognitively and biologically. Because of this the researchers were able to test the performance level for treats with and without the presence of others. The researchers concluded, the 20% of baboons placed in the conflicting setup, in the presence of others; more specifically older males with a higher social rank; task completion had a much longer delay than those with no audience, this helps to again show how outstanding social pressure effects the perfmance of tasks.

ii. The evidnece above highlights that there is social schemas that are in place more specifically relating to gender. In this study it can be seen that when a male participant was being observed by an older male baboon with a higher social rank it had the longest delay out of any other participant. This then shows that unconsciously we fear those of which that represent power and wanting to protect our selfesteem in a public setting. All of these ideas and concept feed into the psychological perspective of psychodynamic ideas. Freuds research shows us that our unconscious mind is very powerful, which is why there was such an impact on the male baboons that were in the presence of older males with high social ranks.

Part A: Claim

When in the presence of an audience, people tend to perform better than completing a task when they would when they are alone. This is done as a result of the innate desire to please audiences and present oneself as knowledgeable.

Part B: (i) Evidence and (ii) Explanation and Application (Reasoning)

The presence of an audience does not necessarily improve the performance of others, as it can slow down performance on difficult tasks, specifically in the presence of someone with a higher hierarchical status. As seen in Source 2, baboons who were given tasks that were different from what they are used to had delayed reactions to the tasks. Their reaction time was even further delayed in the presence of a male baboon with a higher social rank. This comes from the innate desire for approval that is implemented into all of us. Research has found that when in the presence of a figure of authority (Someone with a higher status could be considered one), people will change answers to questions even if they know that it is correct. This study shows just the impacts of authority and social status on our minds. Performance will slow down when authority is present as a result of the desire to be approved by them.

Part C: (i) Evidence and (ii) Explanation and Application (Reasoning)

The presence of other people is not beneficial in regards to performance because it slows people down when performing a difficult task. An experiment revealed in Source 1 shows that when an audience is present, performance time increases, even if the audience is not necessarily paying attention to the participants. Humans are designed to feel anxiety when dealing with new or difficult tasks. Anxiety can be heightened when you are being watched or monitored, which causes the slowing of behavior, out of caution and to prevent the possibility of messing up. Adding another source of anxiety to an already stressful task is not beneficial to performance and will lead to a decline in performance quality. To prevent this from happening, it is best to just let people perform new tasks alone, so they can better adapt and learn what works without any new anxiety sources.

Question 2

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses on AP Central*.

Sample: 2A

EBQ A Claim Score: 1

EBQ B(i) Evidence Score: 1

EBQ B(ii) Reasoning Score: 2

EBQ C(i) Evidence Score: 1

EBQ C(ii) Reasoning Score: 2

Total Score: 7

Part A: Claim (0–1 points): 1

The response earned the point because the proposed claim is relevant to the question (“People are more likely to perform better on tasks than they would if no one was present during a task.”).

Part B(i): Evidence (0–1 points): 1

The response earned the point because one piece of correctly cited, specific, accurate, and relevant evidence is provided from one of the sources. (“Source 3’s findings showed that participants doing a vigilance task with numbers do worse when an audience is not present. They found that participants ‘who completed the vigilance task alone detected significantly fewer correct number pairs than those who completed the task in the electronic observer condition or the evaluative observer condition.’”).

Part B(ii): Explanation and Application (Reasoning) (0–2 points): 2

The response earned the first point because the evidence supports the proposed claim about performing better on tasks and is correctly interpreted (“found that an audience enhances a person’s ability to complete a task.”). The response earned the second point because a psychological concept is correctly applied as part of the explanation of how the evidence supports the claim (“social facilitation, which states that having an audience can enable someone to do better on a task than if an audience was not present”).

Part C(i): Evidence (0–1 points): 1

The response earned the point because one piece of correctly cited, specific, accurate, and relevant evidence from a different source than the one used in Part B(i) is provided (“Source 1 found that when completing ‘well-learned’ tasks, Participants in a study were able to reduce the overall time it took for them to complete that task when being viewed by an audience, both intentional and incidental.”).

Part C(ii): Explanation and Application (Reasoning) (0–2 points): 2

The response earned the first point because the evidence supports the proposed claim about performing better on tasks and is correctly interpreted (“showed that having an audience present for well-learned tasks reduced the time necessary to complete that task as opposed to doing the task alone.”). The response earned the second point because a different psychological concept is correctly applied as part of the explanation of how the evidence supports the claim (“This backs up the idea that the presence of others does improve task performance ... supported by, the Yerkes Dodson idea of optimal arousal through an inverted U graph ... Therefore in this experiment, participants were able to complete well-learned tasks comfortably when an audience was present but were unable to complete ‘difficult tasks’ as easily because it exceeded their optimum level of arousal.”).

Question 2 (continued)**Sample: 2B****EBQ A Claim Score: 1****EBQ B(i) Evidence Score: 1****EBQ B(ii) Reasoning Score: 1****EBQ C(i) Evidence Score: 1****EBQ C(ii) Reasoning Score: 1****Total Score: 5****Part A: Claim (0–1 points): 1**

The response earned the point because the proposed claim is relevant to the question (“When being watched or observed by others, there is a tendency to perform slower on difficult tasks and more quickly on easier tasks.”).

Part B(i): Evidence (0–1 points): 1

The response earned the point because one piece of correctly cited, specific, accurate and relevant evidence is provided (“In Source 1, the bar graph shows that when there was an audience and or an incidental audience when doing a difficult task, the participant performed the task in about 32–34 seconds compared to the participant that was alone and was able to do it in about 29 seconds.”).

Part B(ii): Explanation and Application (0–2 points): 1

The response earned the first point because the evidence supports the proposed claim about the presence of an audience and the difficulty of tasks and is correctly interpreted (“exemplifying the effect that an audience has on individuals performing either easy or difficult tasks.”). The response did not earn the second point because none of the psychological concepts provided (“sociocultural,” “social influence,” or “Lev Vygotskys learning theory”) is applied accurately as part of the explanation.

Part C(i): Evidence (0–1 points): 1

The response earned the point because one piece of correctly cited, specific, accurate and relevant evidence is provided from a different source than the one used in Part B(i) (“Another peice of evidence that supports my claim is from Source 2. The researchers concluded, the 20% of baboons placed in the conflicting setup, in the presence of others; ... task completion had a much longer delay than those with no audience”).

Part C(ii): Explanation and Application (Reasoning) (0–2 points): 1

The response earned the first point because the explanation demonstrates how the evidence supports the claim (“which is why there was such an impact on the male baboons that were in the presence of older males with high social ranks”). The response did not earn the second point because none of the psychological concepts used (“social schemas,” “self-esteem,” “psychodynamic” perspective) is used to explain how the evidence supports the claim of task performance in the presence of an audience. The psychological terminology explains why the social rank of the observer related to task performance in the baboons but did not address the claim of performing slower on difficult tasks or more quickly on easier tasks in the presence of others.

Question 2 (continued)**Sample: 2C****EBQ A Claim Score: 1****EBQ B(i) Evidence Score: 0****EBQ B(ii) Reasoning Score: 0****EBQ C(i) Evidence Score: 0****EBQ C(ii) Reasoning Score: 0****Total Score: 1****Part A: Claim (0–1 points): 1**

The response earned the point because the proposed claim is relevant to the question (“When in the presence of an audience, people tend to perform better than completing a task than they would when they are alone.”).

Part B(i): Evidence (0–1 points): 0

The response did not earn the point because the evidence provided does not support the claim of improved performance when completing a task (“in Source 2, baboons had delayed reactions to the tasks. Their reaction time was even further delayed in the presence of a male baboon.”). This evidence contradicts the claim that performance is better when in the presence of an audience.

Part B(ii) Explanation and Application (Reasoning) (0–2 points): 0

The response did not earn the first point because the explanation does not support the claim of improved performance on a task. (“Research has found that when in the presence of a figure of authority ... people will change answers to questions even if they know that it is correct.”). The response did not earn the second point because the psychological concepts applied (“authority”) is not used to explain how the evidence supports the claim of improved task performance in the presence of an audience. The response instead refutes the claim and argues that task performance “will slow down” in the presence of an audience consisting of an authority figure.

Part C(i) Evidence (0–1 points): 0

The response did not earn the point because the evidence provided does not support the claim of improved performance on a task (“An experiment revealed in Source 1 shows that when an audience is present, performance time increases, even if the audience is not necessarily paying attention to the participants.”). The evidence presented shows that performance time increases (gets slower) in the presence of an audience, which is contradictory to the claim about people performing better in the presence of an audience.

Part C(ii) Explanation and Application (Reasoning) (0–2 points): 0

The response did not earn the first point because the explanation discusses how the presence of an audience is “not beneficial,” which is refuting the original claim of improved performance in the presence of an audience. The response did not earn the second point because the psychological concept (“Anxiety”) is not used in the explanation to support the claim. The response shifted in this part from supporting the claim to refuting the claim.