

2026



AP[®] Psychology

Scoring Guidelines

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FRQ 1: Article Analysis Question (AAQ)

7 points

General Scoring Notes

- 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.
- A student can earn points only if the student is clearly addressing the topic of the source material in their response.
- 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.
- Examples provided in the Scoring Guidelines for each of the points are not to be considered exhaustive.
- 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 Research Method (0–1 points)	0 points Does not accurately identify the research method used in the study	1 point Accurately identifies the research method used in the study
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: • The response does not accurately identify the research method used in the study. • The response includes no identification of the research method used in the study. • The response includes multiple research methods or research design elements that are not used in the study.	Responses that earn this point: • The response accurately identifies the research method used in the study as an experiment.
	Examples that do not earn this point: • “The research method is a correlation.” • “The research method is a questionnaire.” • “The researchers used an experimental correlation.”	Examples that earn this point: • “The research method is an experiment.” • “Researchers used the experimental method for this study.”
	Additional Note: • Responses must identify the research method specified in the scoring guideline. Research methods for Part A are limited to case study, correlational study, experiment, meta-analysis, and naturalistic observation. Additional references to surveys, longitudinal studies, cross-sectional studies, or other design features may be included, provided the approved research method is correctly identified.	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Part B Research Variable (0–1 points)	0 points Does not state a measurable or quantifiable definition of the identified variable used in the study	1 point States a measurable or quantifiable definition of the identified variable as used in the study
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: - The response states a definition of the identified variable in the study that is not measurable or quantifiable. - The response does not state a measurable or quantifiable definition of the identified variable as used in the study.	Responses that earn this point: The response states that the operational definition of anxiety is the score on the anxiety scale.
	Examples that do not earn this point: <i>“Operational definition of anxiety is how tense or fearful people felt during the study.”</i> [Identified variable is not measurable or quantifiable.] <i>“A Likert scale was used to measure anxiety.”</i> [Insufficient operational definition.]	Examples that earn this point: <i>“Operational definition of anxiety is the score on the 20-item anxiety scale.”</i> <i>“Anxiety was operationally defined as the score between 1 and 4 on this survey.”</i>
Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Part C Statistic Interpretation (0–1 points)	0 points Does not accurately describe what the identified statistic indicates in relation to the study	1 point Accurately describes what the identified statistic indicates in relation to the study
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: - The response restates the identified statistic without directly relating it to the study. - The response does not accurately describe what is meant by the identified statistic in relation to the study. - The response provides a definition of the identified statistic but does not accurately describe its meaning in relation to the study.	Responses that earn this point: The response accurately describes what the statistically significant difference in the mean anxiety scores indicates for the Phone Absent group as compared to the Phone Present group.
	Examples that do not earn this point: <i>“Participants without phones reported significantly more anxiety ($M=41.39$) than those with phones ($M=31.00$).”</i> [Identifies the statistic without directly relating it to the study.] <i>“The difference in means shows that the phone absent group had more anxiety than the phone present group.”</i> [Did not describe what is meant by the identified statistic.] <i>“Statistical significance means the results are not due to chance.”</i> [Defines statistical significance without directly relating to the study.] <i>“In this study the IV did have an effect on the DV.”</i> [Provides only the definition of statistical significance.]	Examples that earn this point: <i>“Those in the phone absent group had more anxiety than those in the phone present group, and the difference was statistically significant. This indicates the difference was unlikely due to chance.”</i> <i>“Participants without phones reported significantly more anxiety ($M=41.39$) than those with phones ($M=31.00$). The difference was not due to chance.”</i> <i>“The phone access did actually have an effect on anxiety.”</i>

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Part D Ethical Guidelines (0–1 points)	0 points Does not accurately identify one ethical guideline described in the study AND/OR Does not correctly describe one way the researchers in the study applied this ethical guideline	1 point Accurately identifies one ethical guideline described in the study AND Accurately describes one way the researchers in the study applied this ethical guideline
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: • The response does not identify an ethical guideline described in the study. • The response identifies an ethical guideline but does not accurately describe one way the researchers applied the ethical guideline. • The response identifies and describes an ethical guideline that researchers should have applied but was not mentioned in the study. • The response identifies and describes an ethical guideline not applied by the researchers in the study. • The response identifies other features of the study that are not ethical guidelines.	Responses that earn this point: • The response identifies that the study underwent institutional review and describes how a committee evaluated the research protocol prior to the start of the study to ensure that participants’ rights and safety were protected. OR • The response identifies informed consent and describes how researchers obtained it by informing participants about the purpose and procedures of the study AND either explaining that participants agreed to take part OR informing participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. OR • The response identifies debriefing and describes how, at the end of the study, the researchers explained the true purpose of the research or the rationale for using deception.
	Examples that do not earn this point: • <i>“It’s important for researchers to treat their participants ethically.”</i> [No ethical guideline identified or described.] • <i>“The researchers debriefed their participants after the study.”</i> [Identifies an ethical guideline but does not describe how the ethical guideline was applied in the study.] • <i>“The researchers should have considered whether causing anxiety results in harm.”</i> [Identifies and describes an ethical guideline not described in the study.] • <i>“Researchers obtained informed consent by explaining the study and informing participants of their right to withdraw at any time. In addition, they maintained the confidentiality of their participants.”</i> [Provides contradictory information by identifying an ethical guideline not explicitly applied in the study.] • <i>“Researchers used random assignment to equalize the groups.”</i> [Identifies and describes a feature of the study that is not an ethical guideline.]	Examples that earn this point: • <i>“The researchers got IRB approval after an outside committee looked over the research plan to make sure the participants’ rights were protected.”</i> • <i>“The researchers got informed consent by telling the participants what the study was about and making sure they knew they could leave the study at any time before agreeing to join.”</i> • <i>“At the end of the study, the researchers debriefed the participants by telling them that no one really judged the paragraph.”</i> • <i>“Before the participants left the lab, the researchers debriefed the participants by explaining why they had used deception.”</i>

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Part E Generalizability (0–1 points)	0 points Does not propose a claim regarding the generalizability of the study to a population (general or specific) OR Does not use specific and relevant evidence that references participant variables that would impact the generalizability of the study	1 point Explains the extent to which the study is generalizable using specific and relevant evidence referencing participant variables from the study
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: • The response proposes no claim regarding the generalizability of the conclusion of the study. • The response proposes a claim regarding the generalizability of the conclusion of the study but makes no reference to a population (general or specific). • The response uses evidence that does not apply to the generalizability of the conclusion of the study (e.g., reliability, validity, sample size).	Responses that earn this point: • The response proposes a claim about generalizability that references a population (the “broader population” or a population relevant to the study’s participants) to explain the extent of the generalizability of the study. • The response proposes that the study is or is not generalizable to the population relevant to the study because of specific and relevant evidence derived from the participant information from the study.
	Examples that do not earn this point: • <i>“It is important for a study to be generalizable.”</i> [No claim.] • <i>“The study is generalizable to the larger population.”</i> [No reference to a population (general or specific).] • <i>“The study used both men and women.”</i> [Uses evidence that does not apply to the generalizability of the conclusion of the study.]	Examples that earn this point: • <i>“The study is generalizable to college students because all the participants were of that age.”</i> • <i>“The study is not generalizable to the larger population because 52.3% of the participants were White and 72.7% of the sample were women.”</i> • <i>“The findings may not generalize to all adults because the participants were students in a psychology course at one private university.”</i>
	Additional Note: • If the response asserts that the study is “partly” generalizable or asserts that the study is both generalizable and not generalizable, its evidence must support its assertion by showing ways the study is generalizable and is not generalizable to earn one point.	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Part F Argumentation (0–2 points)	0 points Does not accurately explain how the results of the study support or refute the psychological concept or hypothesis presented in the question	1 point Uses the results of the study but does not explain how the psychological concept or hypothesis is supported or refuted OR Explains that the psychological concept or hypothesis is supported or refuted but does not use any results from the study	2 points Uses a specific result from the study to explain how the results support or refute the psychological concept or hypothesis presented in the question. The results are accurately interpreted.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that earn 0 points: - The response does not explain how at least one of the research findings supports or refutes the idea that the “fear of missing out” (FOMO) causes anxiety. - The response does not accurately explain how at least one of the research findings supports or refutes the idea that the “fear of missing out” (FOMO) causes anxiety.	Responses that earn 1 point: - The response proposes that the evidence alone is sufficient to demonstrate the idea that the “fear of missing out” (FOMO) causes anxiety without additional explanation. - The response uses at least one of the research findings to explain the idea that the “fear of missing out” (FOMO) causes anxiety. However, the interpretation of the results of the study includes inaccuracies. - The response explains how the “fear of missing out” (FOMO) causes anxiety without providing any results from the study.	Responses that earn 2 points: The response uses at least one of the research findings to accurately explain the idea that the “fear of missing out” (FOMO) causes anxiety. The results of the study are accurately interpreted.
	Examples that earn 0 points: <i>“Fear of missing out or FOMO causes anxiety.” [No explanation of support or refutation.]</i> <i>“Participants with their phones present had higher anxiety than those who had their phones taken away.” [Does not accurately explain support or refutation.]</i>	Examples that earn 1 point: <i>“The research found that those people who miss a phone call felt more anxiety.” [Result from the study without further explanation]</i> <i>“The research shows that FOMO causes anxiety because the cell phone present group had the same amount of anxiety no matter whether they missed a call or not.” [Evidence includes an inaccurate interpretation.]</i> <i>“FOMO may cause people to feel more anxiety if they don’t answer their phones.” [Explanation without using results]</i>	Examples that earn 2 points: <i>“This supports the idea that FOMO causes anxiety because participants who could not access their phones reported significantly higher anxiety.”</i> <i>“Participants in the Phone Absent group had higher anxiety (41.39) than those in the Phone Present group (31.00). This suggests the anxiety came from being unable to access their phones, not from FOMO. Because both groups heard the phone ring, the increased anxiety likely reflects an attachment to the phone rather than FOMO.”</i>
	Additional Note: If the response asserts that the study both supports and refutes the hypothesis or idea, then the response must provide argumentation that shows how the study is both supported and refuted to earn the points.		

FRQ 2: Evidence-Based Question (EBQ)

7 points

General Scoring Notes

- 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.
- A student can earn points only if the student is clearly addressing the topic of the source material in their response.
- 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.
- Examples provided in the Scoring Guidelines for each of the points are not to be considered exhaustive.
- 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.
- Responses must have internal consistency. Evidence cited in Part B(i) and C(i) must be related to the claim.
- In the absence of a claim that earns the point in Part A, responses can establish an intended claim in Part B through the evidence and reasoning provided. The response will not earn the Part A point; however, the reader can score Part B(i) and B(ii). The reader can also score Parts C(i) and C(ii) if the evidence and application are internally consistent with Part B.

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: • 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: • 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. • The response proposes specific effects on the question.
	Examples that do not earn this point: • “What strengthens a person’s ability to retrieve recently learned information?” [Response does not provide a claim.] • “In order to succeed in medical school, it is important to study hard, eat well and make friends.” [Claim unrelated to question.] • “It is important to study hard.” [Oversimplified conclusion.]	Examples that earn this point: • “When learning sessions are spaced over time, retrieval of information is strengthened.” • “Students should break up their learning into fewer sessions.” • “Spacing learning across time strengthens retention of both procedural and declarative memory.”
	Additional Notes: • A claim that meets the criteria can be awarded the points 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: • The response identifies no evidence. • The evidence is not cited. • The evidence is incorrectly cited. • The evidence is nonspecific. • The response provides evidence not relevant to the claim.	Responses that earn this point: • The evidence is correctly cited and provides specific and accurate evidence relevant to the claim.
	Examples that do not earn this point: • “Distributed practice is when you break up your learning into a number of short sessions over time (Source 1).” [No evidence.] • “Group 2’s mean score on the suture test was 31.6 which was higher than Group 1’s 27.63.” [No citation.] • “According to Source 2, the medical students who completed the suturing task over four two-hour periods scored higher than the group that did 1 8-hour course.” [Incorrect citation.] • “It shows that the students did worse (Source 1).” [Nonspecific evidence.] • “Participants were medical students working in hospitals, but they didn’t have prior experience with doing sutures (Source 1).” [Evidence not relevant to the claim.]	Examples that earn this point: • “Researchers in Source 1 found that the group who completed shorter sessions over multiple weeks earned higher mean scores one month after training than the group who completed all learning in one session (Source 1).” • “Researchers found that students who completed a one-hour condensed learning session performed as well on a national test as students who had 23 hours of traditional instruction (Source 3).” • “Participants who practiced surgical suturing over four weekly sessions performed better one month later than those who practiced for one long session (Source 1).”
	Additional Notes: • Responses that use a citation style other than those prescribed by the prompt can still earn this point, provided the source is clear and accurate. • “Accurate evidence” refers to the accuracy of the general pattern of the evidence cited. Because citing specific numbers is not required to score the point, responses with slight errors in reporting specific data can still earn the point, provided the direction or nature of the difference between groups or relationship between variables 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: - 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: 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: The response correctly interprets the evidence and applies a psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding correctly.
	Examples that earn 0 points: <i>“Students who received 23 hours of instruction outperformed those who got 1 hour of instruction, which shows that the spacing effect makes a difference in learning.”</i> [Inaccurate interpretation of evidence.] <i>“Both groups got nearly the same scores on the biology test.”</i> [Identifies evidence without explanation of how it relates to the claim.] <i>“I believe students should use effective strategies for processing, storing and retrieving new class material.”</i> [Opinion with no reference to sources.] <i>“The spacing effect is when you distribute your practice over time.”</i> [Definitions alone do not score.]	Examples that earn 1 point: <i>“The evidence shows that test scores are higher when students study faster and in small bits with breaks in between.”</i>	Examples that earn 2 points: <i>“This supports the claim because spacing practice over time strengthens long-term retrieval through the spacing effect, which improves encoding and consolidation of memories.”</i> <i>“This supports the claim because short, focused learning periods can strengthen encoding and help with memory consolidation, making retrieval more efficient even without long study sessions.”</i> <i>“This supports the claim because spacing practice enhances long-term retention through repeated activation and retrieval of memory traces, strengthening both skill-based (procedural) and fact-based (declarative) memories.”</i>
Additional Notes: - 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 nonspecific evidence. - The use of a psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding explicitly identified in the <i>AP Psychology Course and Exam Description</i> (2025) is preferred but not required. The application of a psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding that is not explicitly included in the <i>AP Psychology Course and Exam Description</i> (2025) must demonstrate psychological knowledge and not popular understanding. - Concepts used in the sources that are not eligible to be used for the application point are “distractor,” “mean,” “random assignment,” “rehearsal,” “retrieval,” “standard deviation,” and “statistical significance.”			

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 earn 0 points: • The response identifies no evidence. • The evidence is not cited. • The evidence is incorrectly cited. • The evidence is nonspecific. • The response provides evidence not relevant to the claim. • The evidence is from the same source as the one used in Part B.	Responses that earn 1 point: • The evidence is correctly cited and provides specific and accurate evidence relevant to the claim.
	Examples that earn 0 points: • “Distributed practice is when you break up your learning into short sessions over time (Source 1).” [No evidence.] • “Group 2’s mean score on the suture test was 31.6 which was higher than Group 1’s which was 27.63.” [No citation.] • “According to Source 2, the medical students who completed the suturing task over four two-hour periods scored higher than the group that completed one 8-hour course.” [Incorrect citation.] • “It shows that the students did worse (Source 1).” [Nonspecific evidence.] • “Participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups (Source 1).” [Evidence not relevant to the claim.]	Examples that earn 1 point: • “Group 2 participants who completed shorter but intense sessions performed similarly on the national test compared to those who received 23 hours of instruction (Source 3).” • “Group 1 participants, who read all four articles in one session, did better on the tests than the Group 2 participants, who read the articles in two sessions (Source 2).” • “Source 2 showed that students who studied science texts over multiple sessions showed stable test scores after a week, indicating stronger memory retention.”
	Additional Notes: • Responses that use a citation style other than those prescribed by the prompt can still earn this point, provided the source is clear and accurate. • “Accurate evidence” refers to the accuracy of the general pattern of the evidence cited. Because citing specific numbers is not required to score the point, responses with slight errors in reporting specific data can still earn the point, provided the direction or nature of the difference between groups or relationship between variables 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: - The explanation 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: - The explanation 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: 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: <i>“Group 2 who read all four articles at once did better on the tests than Group 1 which shows that the spacing effect improves recall.”</i> [Inaccurate interpretation of evidence.] <i>“Group 1 participants who read all four articles at the same time did better on the biology and physics tests than participants in Group 2 who read the articles over two sessions.”</i> [Evidence without explanation of how it relates to the claim.] <i>“I think it is important not to cram information when studying for a test.”</i> [Opinion without reference to the provided sources.] <i>“The spacing effect is when you distribute your practice over time.”</i> [Definitions alone do not score.]	Examples that earn 1 point: <i>“Students who didn’t cram and learned the material over a number of weeks did better which shows that this is a more effective way to learn.”</i>	Examples that earn 2 points: <i>“This supports the claim because shorter, focused sessions with breaks may reduce interference from other information. When there is less interference, it is easier to retrieve what was learned.”</i> <i>“This supports the claim because of the recency effect. Group 1 could more easily recall the information in the articles than Group 2 because Group 1 had just finished reading the articles and the information was still in their working memory.”</i> <i>“This supports the claim because spacing information allows time for memory consolidation, which strengthens the retrieval of learned material across both skill and content domains.”</i>
	Additional Notes: - 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 nonspecific 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 use of a different psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding explicitly identified in the <i>AP Psychology Course and Exam Description</i> (2025) is preferred but not required. The application of a different psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding that is not explicitly included in the <i>AP Psychology Course and Exam Description</i> (2025) must demonstrate psychological knowledge and not a reflection of popular understanding.		

	• Concepts used in the sources that are not eligible to be used for the application point are “distractor,” “mean,” “random assignment,” “rehearsal,” “retrieval,” “standard deviation,” and “statistical significance.”
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