

AP® PSYCHOLOGY
2006 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 1

Overview

This question was designed to test students' in-depth knowledge of research strategies, regarded by most psychologists as the heart of critical thinking training in this course. Students had to describe three different research methods to study the effects of vitamin "J" on memory: experimentation, correlational study, and case study. Students had to explain the distinguishing features of the basic approach and offer an advantage and disadvantage of each method.

Sample: 1A

Score: 9

The student earned point 1 in the first paragraph by describing a case study as being an observation of a person over an extended period of time. Point 2 was awarded because the student says that the results may not be generalizable to the population at large. The essay earned point 3 in the second paragraph when the student argues that a correlation allows us to show a relationship between two variables. Point 4 was awarded because the student says that this is also a disadvantage because it does not allow us to demonstrate a cause-and-effect relationship. Point 5 was awarded because the student describes the notion of experimental control and manipulation of variables. The student earned point 6 by describing lack of external validity when he or she states that the experiment may not always show up in the natural environment. Point 7 was earned when the student describes the case study in the context of vitamin J, and point 8 was awarded when the student describes the idea of looking for a relationship between memory and vitamin J. Finally, point 9 was awarded when the student describes using an appropriate experimental device (two groups, etc.) and places this in the context of vitamin J and memory.

Sample: 1B

Score: 5

This is a good example of an essay not written in the order that the question was written. Point 1 was not awarded because the student does not provide a unique characteristic of a case study. Point 2 was earned because although the student does not adequately explain a case study in the first point, the student does convey that a case study does not allow us to generalize our results. Point 3 was not awarded because the description of a correlation does not adequately differentiate correlation from other forms of experimental procedures. Point 4 was not earned because the explanation does not describe the relationship between two variables. Point 5 was earned because the student argues that experiments can allow researchers to draw cause-and-effect conclusions. Point 6 was awarded because the student describes the notion of experimenter bias as a potential disadvantage of running an experiment. Point 7 was earned because the student describes a case study and appropriate data collection of the information from that study. Point 8 was not earned because the student does not distinguish adequately between a correlational study and an experiment. Point 9 was earned because the student describes appropriate experimental procedure within the context of vitamin J and memory.

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Question 1 (continued)

Sample: 1C

Score: 1

Point 1 was not awarded because the student does not describe a key characteristic of a case study as observing an individual or a group, or explain that observations need to take place over a period of time. Point 2 was not awarded because the disadvantage that the student describes is not appropriate for a case study. Point 3 was not earned because the student does not use appropriate language for a correlational design. Point 4 was not earned because calculating a correlational coefficient is not a key disadvantage of a correlational study. Point 5 was not earned because although the student describes the use of random sampling to control the outcome of an experiment, the explanation is not sufficient according to the scoring guidelines. Point 6 was not awarded because not being plausible is not a key disadvantage of an experiment. Point 7 was not awarded because the student does not indicate that the observations take place over a long period of time. Point 8 was not awarded because the student describes an experiment, not a correlational study. Finally, point 9 was awarded because the student describes an appropriate experimental procedure in the context of vitamin J and memory.