AP Psychology Glossary

Absolute refractory period
- The period during which a neuron lies dormant after an action potential has been completed.

Absolute threshold
- The minimum amount of stimulation needed for a person to detect the stimulus 50 percent of the time.

Accommodation
- The process by which the shape of an eye's lens adjusts to focus light from objects nearby or far away. Also: the modification of a schema as new information is incorporated.

Acetylcholine
- A neurotransmitter involved in muscle movement, attention, arousal, memory, and emotion.

Achievement motive
- An impulse to master challenges and reach a high standard of excellence.

Achievement tests
- An assessment that measures skills and knowledge that people have already learned.

Acronym
- A word made out of the first letters of several words.

Acrostic
- A sentence or phrase in which each word begins with a letter that acts as a memory cue.

Action potential
- A short-lived change in electric charge inside a neuron.

Activation-synthesis theory
- A theory proposing that neurons in the brain activate randomly during REM sleep.

Active listening
- A feature of client-centered therapy that involves empathetic listening, by which the therapist echoes, restates, and clarifies what the client says.

Adaptation
- An inherited characteristic that increases in a population because it provides a survival or reproductive advantage.

Adaptive behaviors
- Behaviors that increase reproductive success.

**Additive strategy**
- The process of listing the attributes of each element of a decision, weighing them according to importance, adding them up, and determining which one is more appealing based on the result.

**Adoption studies**
- Studies in which researchers examine trait similarities between adopted children and their biological and adoptive parents to figure out whether that trait might be inherited.

**Adrenal cortex**
- The outer part of the adrenal glands, which secretes corticosteroids.

**Adrenal medulla**
- The inner part of the adrenal glands, which secretes catecholamines.

**Adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH)**
- A hormone released by the pituitary gland that stimulates release of corticosteroids from the adrenal cortex.

**Afferent nerves**
- Bundles of axons that carry information from muscles and sense organs to the central nervous system.

**Afterimage**
- A color we perceive after another color is removed.

**Age of viability**
- The point at which a fetus has some chance of surviving outside the mother if born prematurely.

**Agonists**
- Chemicals that mimic the action of a particular neurotransmitter.

**Agoraphobia**
- A disorder involving anxiety about situations from which escape would be difficult or embarrassing or places where there might be no help if a panic attack occurred.

**Algorithm**
- A step-by-step procedure that is guaranteed to solve a problem.

**All-or-none law**
- States that neurons fire to generate an action potential only if stimulation reaches a minimum threshold.
Alpha waves
- Type of brain waves present when a person is very relaxed or meditating.

Alternate-forms reliability
- The ability of a test to produce the same results when two different versions of it are given to the same group of people.

Ambiguous language
- Language that can be understood in several ways.

Amplitude
- The height of a wave.

Amygdala
- A part of the limbic system of the brain that is involved in regulating aggression and emotions, particularly fear.

Animism
- The belief that inanimate objects are alive.

Anorexia nervosa
- A disorder characterized by refusal to maintain a body weight in the normal range, intense fear about gaining weight, and highly distorted body image.

Antagonists
- Chemicals that block the action of a particular neurotransmitter.

Anterograde amnesia
- An inability to remember events that occurred after a brain injury or traumatic event.

Antisocial personality disorder
- A disorder characterized by a lack of conscience and lack of respect for other people’s rights, feelings, and needs, beginning by age fifteen.

Appraisal
- The process of evaluating an environmental challenge to determine whether resources are available for dealing with it.

Approach-approach conflict
- A conflict between two desirable alternatives.

Approach-avoidance conflict
- A conflict that arises when a situation has both positive and negative features.

**Aptitude tests**
- An assessment that predicts people’s future ability to acquire skills or knowledge.

**Archetypes**
- Images or thoughts that have the same meaning for all human beings.

**Assimilation**
- The broadening of an existing schema to include new information.

**Atherosclerosis**
- Hardening of arteries because of cholesterol deposits.

**Attachment**
- The close bond between babies and their caregivers.

**Attachment styles**
- Types of attachment, which include secure attachment, anxious-ambivalent attachment, and avoidant attachment.

**Attitudes**
- Evaluations people make about objects, ideas, events, or other people.

**Attributions**
- Inferences people make about the causes of events and behavior.

**Atypical antipsychotic drugs**
- A new class of antipsychotic drugs that are effective for treating negative and positive symptoms of schizophrenia. They target the neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine.

**Auditory nerve**
- A nerve that sends impulses from the ear to the brain.

**Automatic thoughts**
- Self-defeating judgments people make about themselves.

**Autonomic nervous system**
- The part of the peripheral nervous system connected to the heart, blood vessels, glands, and smooth muscles.

**Availability heuristic**
- A rule-of-thumb strategy in which people estimate probability based on how quickly they remember relevant instances of an event.

Avoidance-avoidance conflict
- A conflict that arises when a choice must be made between two undesirable alternatives.

Avoidant personality disorder
- A disorder involving social withdrawal, low self-esteem, and extreme sensitivity to being evaluated negatively.

Aversion therapy
- A therapy in which a stimulus that evokes an unpleasant response is paired with a stimulus that evokes a maladaptive behavior.

Axon
- A fiber that extends from a neuron and sends signals to other neurons.

Babbling
- A production of sounds that resemble many different languages.

Basal metabolic rate
- The rate at which energy is used when a person is at complete rest.

Basilar membrane
- A membrane in the inner ear that runs along the length of the cochlea.

Behavior genetics
- The study of behavior and personality differences among people.

Behavior therapies
- Treatments involving complex conversations between therapists and clients that are aimed at directly influencing maladaptive behaviors through the use of learning principles.

Belief perseverance
- The process of rejecting evidence that refutes one’s beliefs.

Benzodiazepines
- A class of antianxiety drugs. They are also called tranquilizers.

Beta waves
- The type of brain waves present when a person is awake and alert.
Bias
- The distortion of results by a variable that is not part of the hypothesis.

Big Five
- Five basic personality traits from which other traits are derived. They include neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

Binocular cues
- Depth perception cues that require both eyes.

Biological rhythms
- Periodic physiological changes.

Biomedical therapies
- Treatments that involve efforts to directly alter biological functioning through medication, electric shocks, or surgery.

Biopsychosocial model of illness
- The idea that physical illness is the result of a complicated interaction among biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors.

Bipolar disorders
- Disorders in which people alternate between periods of depression and mania.

Blood-brain barrier
- A membrane that lets some substances from the blood into the brain but keeps out others.

Borderline personality disorder
- A disorder characterized by impulsive behavior and unstable relationships, emotions, and self-image.

Brain
- The main organ in the nervous system.

Brain waves
- Tracings that show the electrical activity of the brain.

Broca’s area
- A part of the brain, in the left frontal lobe, that is involved in speech production.

Bulimia nervosa
- A disorder involving binge eating followed by compensatory behaviors such as vomiting, fasting, excessive exercise, or use of laxatives, diuretics, and other medications to control body weight.

**Bystander effect**
- The tendency of people to be less likely to offer help to someone who needs it if other people are also present.

**Cannon-Bard theory**
- The idea that the experience of emotion happens at the same time that physiological arousal happens.

**Case study**
- A research method in which an individual subject is studied in depth.

**Castration anxiety**
- The fear a male child has that his father will cut off his penis for desiring his mother.

**Catatonic type**
- A subtype of schizophrenia characterized by unnatural movement patterns such as rigid, unmoving posture or continual, purposeless movements, or by unnatural speech patterns such as absence of speech or parroting of other people’s speech.

**Catecholamines**
- Hormones released by the adrenal medulla in response to stress.

**Catharsis**
- The release of tension that results when repressed thoughts or memories move into a patient's conscious mind.

**Central nervous system**
- The part of the nervous system that includes the brain and the spinal cord.

**Centration**
- The tendency to focus on one aspect of a problem and ignore other key aspects.

**Cerebellum**
- A part of the hindbrain that controls balance and coordination of movement.

**Cerebrospinal fluid**
- The fluid that cushions and nourishes the brain.

**Cerebrum**
- The largest part of the brain, involved in abstract thought and learning.
Chromosomes
- Thin strands of DNA that contain genes.

Chunking
- The process of combining small bits of information into bigger, familiar pieces.

Cilia
- Hair cells that are embedded in the basilar membrane of the ear.

Cingulotomy
- A surgical procedure that involves destruction of part of the frontal lobes. It is sometimes done to treat severe disorders that do not respond to other treatments.

Circadian rhythms
- Biological cycles that occur about every twenty-four hours.

Classical conditioning
- A type of learning in which a subject comes to respond to a neutral stimulus as he would to another stimulus by learning to associate the two stimuli. It can also be called respondent conditioning or Pavlovian conditioning.

Client-centered therapy
- A humanistic therapy, developed by Carl Rogers, that aims to help clients increase self-acceptance and personal growth by providing a supportive emotional environment.

Closure
- The tendency to interpret familiar, incomplete forms as complete by filling in gaps.

Cochlea
- A coiled tunnel in the inner ear that is filled with fluid.

Cognition
- Thinking. It involves mental activities such as understanding, problem solving, decision making, and creativity.

Cognitive appraisal
- The idea that people's experience of emotion depends on the way they appraise or evaluate the events around them.

Cognitive development
- The development of thinking capacity.

Cognitive dissonance
- An unpleasant state of tension that arises when a person has related cognitions that conflict with one another.

Cognitive schema
- A mental model of some aspect of the world.

Cognitive therapies
- Therapies aimed at identifying and changing maladaptive thinking patterns that can result in negative emotions and dysfunctional behavior.

Collective unconscious
- The part of our minds, according to Carl Jung, that contains universal memories of our common human past.

Color blindness
- A hereditary condition that makes people unable to distinguish between colors.

Commitment
- The intent to continue a romantic relationship even in the face of difficulties.

Community mental health movement
- A movement that advocates treating people with psychological problems in their own communities, providing outpatient treatment, and preventing psychological disorders.

Compassionate love
- Warmth, trust, and tolerance of a person with whom one is romantically involved.

Compensation
- According to Alfred Adler, the process of striving to get rid of normal feelings of inferiority.

Complexity
- The range of wavelengths in light.

Componential intelligence
- The ability assessed by intelligence tests.

Compulsions
- Repetitive behaviors that help to prevent or relieve anxiety.

Computerized tomography (CT)
- A method for studying the brain that involves taking x-rays of the brain from different angles.

Concept
- A mental category that groups similar objects, events, qualities, or actions.

**Concordance rate**
- The percentage of both people in a pair having a certain trait or disorder.

**Conditioned response**
- In classical and operant conditioning, a response that resembles an unconditioned response, achieved by pairing a conditioned stimulus with an unconditioned stimulus.

**Conditioned stimulus**
- In classical conditioning, a neutral stimulus that comes to evoke a response similar to an unconditioned response through pairing with an unconditioned stimulus.

**Cones**
- Photoreceptor cells in the retina that allow people to see in color.

**Confabulation**
- A phenomenon in which a person thinks he or she remembers something that did not really happen.

**Confirmation bias**
- The tendency to look for and accept evidence that supports what one wants to believe and to ignore or reject evidence that refutes those beliefs.

**Conflict**
- The experience of having two or more incompatible desires or motives.

**Conformity**
- The process of giving in to real or imagined pressure from a group.

**Congruence**
- According to Carl Rogers, the accurate match between self-concept and reality.

**Conscious**
- The part of the mind that contains all the information that a person is paying attention to at a particular time.

**Consciousness**
- The awareness people have of themselves and the environment around them.

**Conservation**
- The ability to recognize that measurable physical characteristics of objects can be the same even when objects look different.
Consolidation
- Transfer of information into long-term memory.

Contact comfort
- Comfort derived from physical closeness with a caregiver.

Contact hypothesis
- A hypothesis stating that prejudice declines when people in an ingroup become more familiar with the customs, norms, food, music, and attitudes of people in an outgroup.

Content validity
- A test's ability to measure all the important aspects of the characteristic being measured.

Contextual intelligence
- The ability to function effectively in daily situations.

Continuity
- The tendency to perceive interrupted lines and patterns as being continuous by filling in gaps.

Continuous reinforcement
- A reinforcement schedule in which reinforcement happens every time a particular response occurs.

Control group
- A group of subjects in an experiment that receives the same treatment and is treated exactly like the experimental group, except with respect to the independent variable.

Convergence
- The turning inward of eyes when an object is viewed close up.

Convergent thinking
- A style of thinking in which a person narrows down a list of possibilities to arrive at a single right answer.

Conversion disorder
- A disorder characterized by medically unexplained symptoms that affect voluntary motor functioning or sensory functioning.

Coping
- Efforts to manage stress.

Cornea
The transparent outer membrane of the eye.

**Corpus callosum**
- A band of fibers that divides the cerebrum into two halves.

**Correlation coefficient**
- A measurement that indicates the strength of the relationship between two variables. In a positive correlation, one variable increases as the other increases. In a negative correlation, one variable decreases as the other increases.

**Correlational research method**
- A research method that provides information about the relationship between variables. It is also called a descriptive research method.

**Corticosteroids**
- Hormones released by the adrenal cortex in response to stress.

**Couples therapy**
- A type of therapy in which a therapist helps couples identify and resolve conflicts.

**Creativity**
- The ability to generate novel, useful ideas.

**Criterion validity**
- A test's ability to predict another criterion of the characteristic being measured.

**Crystallized intelligence**
- Intelligence based on the knowledge and skills accumulated over the life span.

**Culture-bound disorders**
- Psychological disorders that are limited to specific cultural contexts.

**Dark adaptation**
- The process by which receptor cells become more sensitive to light.

**Decay theory**
- A theory stating that memory traces fade with time.

**Decentration**
- The ability to focus simultaneously on several aspects of a problem.
Decision-making
- The process of weighing alternatives and choosing among them.

Declarative memory
- The remembering of factual information. Declarative memory is usually considered explicit.

Deductive reasoning
- The process by which a particular conclusion is drawn from a set of general premises or statements.

Defense mechanisms
- Behaviors that protect people from anxiety.

Deindividuation
- The tendency of people in a large, arousing, anonymous group to lose inhibitions, sense of responsibility, and self-consciousness.

Deinstitutionalization
- The trend toward providing treatment through community-based outpatient clinics rather than inpatient hospitals.

Delta waves
- The type of brain waves present when a person is deeply asleep.

Delusions
- False beliefs that are held strongly despite contradictory evidence.

Dementia
- A condition characterized by several significant psychological deficits.

Dendrite
- A fiber that extends from a neuron. It received signals from other neurons and sends them toward the cell body.

Dendritic trees
- Highly branched fibers extending from neurons.

Denial
- A defense mechanism that involves refusing to acknowledge something that is obvious to others.

Dependent variable
- The variable that is observed in an experiment and that may be affected by manipulations of the independent variable.
Descriptive statistics
- Numbers that researchers use to describe their data so it can be organized and summarized.

Development
- The series of age-related changes that occurs over the course of a person's life span.

Developmental norms
- The median ages at which children develop specific behaviors and abilities.

Diabetes
- A condition caused by a deficiency of insulin.

Diagnosis
- The process of distinguishing among disorders.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)
- A reference book used by psychologists and psychiatrists to diagnose psychological disorders.

Dialectical reasoning
- A process of going back and forth between opposing points of view in order to come up with a satisfactory solution to a problem.

Dichromat
- A person who is sensitive to only two of the three wavelengths of light.

Difference threshold
- The smallest difference in stimulation that is detectable 50 percent of the time. This threshold is also called the just noticeable difference, or jnd.

Diffusion of responsibility
- The tendency for an individual to feel less responsible in the presence of others because responsibility is distributed among all the people present.

Discriminative stimulus
- In operant conditioning, a cue that indicates the kind of consequence that's likely to occur after a response.

Disease model of addiction
- The idea that addiction is a disease that has to be medically treated.

Disorganized type
- A subtype of schizophrenia characterized by disorganized behavior, disorganized speech, and emotional flatness or inappropriateness.

Displacement
- A defense mechanism that involves transferring feelings about a person or event to someone or something else.

Display rules
- Norms that tell people whether, which, how, and when emotions should be displayed.

Dissociative amnesia
- A disorder characterized by an inability to remember extensive, important personal information, usually about something traumatic or painful.

Dissociative disorders
- Disorders characterized by disturbances in consciousness, memory, identity, and perception.

Dissociative fugue
- A disorder in which a person suddenly and unexpectedly leaves home, fails to remember the past, and becomes confused about his or her identity.

Dissociative identity disorder
- A disorder in which a person fails to remember important personal information and has two or more identities or personality states that control behavior. It is also called multiple personality disorder.

Dissonance theory
- A theory that proposes that people change their attitudes when they have attitudes that are inconsistent with one another.

Distributed practice
- The practice of learning material in short sessions over a long period. It is also called the spacing effect.

Divergent thinking
- A style of thinking in which people’s thoughts go off in different directions as they try to generate many different solutions to a problem.

Dopamine
- A neurotransmitter involved in voluntary movement, learning, memory, and emotion.

Double-blind
- A procedure in which neither the subjects nor the experimenter knows which subjects belong to the experimental and control groups.
Drive reduction theories of motivation
- Ideas that suggest people act in order to reduce needs and maintain a constant physiological state.

Drug therapy
- Treatment that involves the use of medications. It is also called pharmacotherapy.

Dysthymic disorder
- A disorder involving depressed mood on a majority of days for at least two years.

Eating disorders
- Disorders characterized by problematic eating patterns, extreme concerns about body weight, and inappropriate behaviors aimed at controlling body weight.

Echoic memory
- Auditory sensory memory.

Efferent nerves
- Bundles of axons that carry information from the central nervous system to muscles and sense organs.

Ego
- The component of the personality that manages the conflict among the id, the superego, and the constraints of the real world.

Egocentrism
- The inability to take someone else’s point of view.

Elaboration
- A type of deep processing in which information being learned is associated with other meaningful material.

Elaboration likelihood model
- The idea that changes to attitudes tend to be longer lasting when people think about the content of persuasive messages they receive.

Electric stimulation of the brain
- An invasive method of studying the brain, in which an implanted electrode activates a particular brain structure.

Electrocardiograph (EKG)
- An instrument that records the activity of the heart.

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)
- A biomedical treatment that uses electrical shocks to treat severe depression.
**Electroencephalograph (EEG)**
- A device that records the overall electrical activity of the brain, via electrodes placed on the scalp.

**Electromyograph (EMG)**
- An instrument that records muscle activity.

**Electrooculograph (EOG)**
- An instrument that records eye movements.

**Elimination by aspects**
- The process of eliminating alternatives in a decision based on whether they do or do not possess aspects or attributes the decision maker has deemed necessary or desirable.

**Embryo**
- A ball of cells that develops during the embryonic stage.

**Embryonic stage**
- The period that begins two weeks after conception and ends two months after conception.

**Emotion**
- A complex, subjective experience that is accompanied by biological and behavioral changes.

**Emotion work**
- The process of acting out of an emotion that is not really felt.

**Emotional intelligence**
- An ability that helps people perceive, express, understand, and regulate emotions.

**Empirically validated treatments**
- Treatments that are shown by research to be more effective for a particular problem than a placebo or no treatment.

**Empty nest**
- The time in parents' lives when their children have grown up and moved away from home.

**Encoding**
- The process of putting information into memory.

**Endocrine system**
- A network of tissues that allows the body to communicate via hormones.

**Endogenous biological rhythms**
- Biological cycles that originate from inside the body rather than depend on cues from the environment.

**Endorphins**
- A group of neurotransmitters involved in pain relief, pleasure, and modulating the action of other neurotransmitters.

**Episodic memory**
- The remembering of personal facts.

**Ethics**
- A system of moral values.

**Etiology**
- The cause or origin of a disorder.

**Evolution**
- A change in the frequency of genes in a population.

**Excitatory postsynaptic potential**
- A positive change in voltage that occurs when a neurotransmitter binds to an excitatory receptor site.

**Existential therapies**
- Therapies aimed at helping clients find meaning in their lives.

**Expected value**
- The process of adding the value of a win times the probability of a win to the value of a loss times the probability of a loss in order to make a decision.

**Experiential intelligence**
- The ability to adapt to new situations and produce new ideas.

**Experiment**
- A research method that provides information about causal relationships between variables.

**Experimental group**
- A group of subjects in an experiment for whom the independent variable is manipulated.

**Experimenter bias**
- A source of error that arises when researchers’ preferences or expectations influence the outcome of research.

Explicit attitudes
- Conscious beliefs that can guide decisions and behavior.

Explicit memory
- Conscious, intentional remembering of information.

Exposure therapies
- Therapies that aim to eliminate anxiety responses by having clients face real or imagined versions of feared stimuli.

Expressive language
- The ability to use language to communicate.

External attribution
- An inference that a person’s behavior is due to situational factors. It is also called situational attribution.

External locus of control
- The tendency to believe that circumstances are not within one’s control but rather are due to luck, fate, or other people.

Extinction
- In classical conditioning, the gradual weakening and disappearance of a conditioned response when a conditioned stimulus is not followed by an unconditioned stimulus. In operant conditioning, it’s the gradual disappearance of a response after it stops being reinforced.

Extraneous variable
- A variable other than the independent variable that could affect the dependent variable. It is not part of the hypothesis.

Extrinsic motivation
- The motivation to act for external rewards.

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR)
- A type of exposure therapy in which clients move their eyes back and forth while recalling memories that are to be desensitized.

Facial-feedback hypothesis
- The idea that the brain uses feedback from facial muscles to recognize emotions that are being experienced.

Factor analysis
A statistical procedure that clusters variables into dimensions depending on similarities among the variables.

**Falsifiability**
- The ability of a theory or hypothesis to be rejected.

**Family studies**
- Studies in which researchers examine trait similarities among members of a family to figure out whether that trait might be inherited.

**Family therapy**
- A type of therapy in which a therapist sees two or more members of a family at the same time.

**Feature detectors**
- Specialized neurons that are activated by specific features of the environment.

**Fee for service**
- An arrangement for health care in which people pay providers for health care services.

**Feigned scarcity**
- Implying that a product is in scarce supply, even when it is not, in order to increase demand for it.

**Fetal alcohol syndrome**
- A collection of symptoms that may be present in babies of alcoholic mothers who drank heavily in pregnancy.

**Fetal stage**
- The last stage of prenatal development, lasting from two months after conception until birth.

**Figure**
- What stands out when people organize visual information.

**Fixation**
- An inability to progress normally from one psychosexual stage of development into another.

**Fixed-interval schedule**
- A reinforcement schedule in which reinforcement happens after a set amount of time.

**Fixed-ratio schedule**
- A reinforcement schedule in which reinforcement happens after a set number of responses.

**Flashbulb memories**
- Vivid, detailed memories of important events.

Flooding
- A type of exposure therapy in which the client is exposed to a feared stimulus suddenly rather than gradually.

Flynn effect
- Phenomenon showing that people's performance on IQ tests has improved over time in industrialized countries.

Foot-in-the-door phenomenon
- The tendency to agree to a difficult request if one has first agreed to an easy request.

Forebrain
- The biggest and most complex part of the brain, which includes structures such as the thalamus, the hypothalamus, the limbic system, and the cerebrum.

Forgetting curve
- A graph that shows how quickly learned information is forgotten over time.

Fovea
- The center of the retina, where vision is sharpest.

Free association
- A psychoanalytic technique that involves having the client verbalize all thoughts that come to mind.

Frequency
- The number of times per second a sound wave cycles from the highest to the lowest point.

Frequency theory
- A theory explaining how people discriminate low-pitched sounds that have a frequency below 1000 Hz.

Frustration
- The experience of being thwarted in the process of achieving a goal.

Frustration-aggression hypothesis
- A hypothesis stating that aggression is always caused by frustration.

Functional fixedness
- The tendency to think only of an object's most common use in solving a problem.

Fundamental attribution error
- The tendency to attribute other people’s behavior to internal factors such as personality traits, abilities, and feelings. It is also called correspondence bias.

**GABA**

- The main inhibitory neurotransmitter in the brain.

**Galvanic skin response**

- An increase in the skin’s rate of electrical conductivity. It is also known as an electrodermal response.

**Gambler’s fallacy**

- The false belief that a chance event is more likely if it hasn’t happened recently.

**Gate-control theory**

- States that pain signals traveling from the body to the brain must go through a gate in the spinal cord.

**Gender**

- A learned distinction between masculinity and femininity.

**Gender stereotypes**

- Societal beliefs about the characteristics of males and females.

**General adaptation syndrome**

- The stress response of an organism, described by Hans Selye. The response has three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion.

**General intelligence factor (g)**

- An ability that underlies all intelligent behavior, proposed by Charles Spearman.

**Generalized anxiety disorder**

- A disorder involving persistent and excessive anxiety or worry that lasts at least six months.

**Generative**

- The characteristic symbols of a language that can be combined to produce an infinite number of messages.

**Genes**

- Segments of DNA that function as hereditary units.

**Germinal stage**

- The two-week period after conception.

**Gestalt psychology**
- A German school of thought that studies how people organize visual information into patterns and forms.

**Glial cells**
- Cells that give structural support to neurons and nourish and insulate them.

**Glucose**
- A simple sugar that acts as an energy source for cells.

**Glutamate**
- The main excitatory neurotransmitter in the brain.

**Grandiose delusion**
- A belief centered around the idea that one is very important or famous.

**Ground**
- The background in which a figure stands when people organize visual information.

**Group**
- A social unit composed of two or more people who interact and depend on one another in some way.

**Group cohesiveness**
- The strength of the liking and commitment group members have toward one another and to the group.

**Group polarization**
- The tendency for a dominant point of view in a group to be strengthened to a more extreme position after a group discussion.

**Groupthink**
- The tendency of a close-knit group to emphasize consensus at the expense of critical thinking and rational decision making.

**Hallucinations**
- Sensory or perceptual experiences that happen without any external stimulus.

**Hallucinogens**
- Drugs that cause sensory and perceptual distortions.

**Health psychology**
- A branch of psychology that focuses on the relationship between psychosocial factors and the emergence, progression, and treatment of illness.
Heritability
- A mathematical estimate that indicates how much of a trait's variation in a population can be attributed to genetic factors.

Heuristic
- A general rule of thumb that may lead to, but doesn’t guarantee, a correct solution to a problem.

Hierarchical classification
- The ability to classify according to more than one level.

Hierarchy of needs theory
- The idea, proposed by Abraham Maslow, that people are motivated by needs on four levels. Maslow believed people pay attention to higher needs only when lower needs are satisfied.

Higher-order conditioning
- In classical conditioning, the process by which a neutral stimulus comes to act as a conditioned stimulus by being paired with another stimulus that already evokes a conditioned response.

Hindbrain
- Portion of the brain consisting of the medulla, the pons, and the cerebellum.

Hindsight bias
- The tendency to interpret the past in a way that fits the present.

Hippocampus
- A part of the limbic system involved in memory.

Histogram or bar graph
- A plot that shows how data are distributed.

Histrionic personality
- A personality type characterized by a desire to be the center of attention and the tendency to be self-focused, excitable, highly open to suggestion, very emotional, and dramatic.

Histrionic personality disorder
- A disorder characterized by attention-seeking behavior and shallow emotions.

Homeostasis
- Maintenance of a state of physiological equilibrium in the body.

Hormones
- Chemicals that are produced in glands and released into the bloodstream, involved in regulating body functions.

Humanism
- A school of thought that encourages seeing people’s lives as those people would see them.

Humanistic therapies
- Therapies aimed at helping people accept themselves and free themselves from unnecessary limitations.

Hypnosis
- A procedure in which suggestions are made to a person.

Hypochondriasis
- A disorder in which a person has constant fears of having a serious disease.

Hypothalamus
- A part of the forebrain that helps to control the pituitary gland, the autonomic nervous system, body temperature, and biological drives.

Hypothesis
- A testable prediction of what is going to happen given a certain set of conditions.

Iconic memory
- Visual sensory memory.

Id
- The component of the personality that contains instinctual energy.

Identity achievement
- A state in which a person commits to an identity after considering alternative possibilities.

Identity diffusion
- A state of confusion when a person lacks a clear sense of identity and hasn’t yet begun exploring issues related to identity development.

Identity foreclosure
- A state in which a person has prematurely committed to values or roles prescribed by others.

Identity moratorium
- A state in which commitment to an identity is delayed while a person experiments with various roles and values.

Illusion
- A misinterpretation of a sensory stimulus.

Immune system
- The body’s defense against harmful agents such as bacteria, viruses, and other foreign substances.

Implantation
- The process by which the embryo becomes embedded in the wall of the uterus.

Implicit attitudes
- Beliefs that are unconscious but that can still influence decisions and behavior.

Implicit memory
- Unconscious retention of information that affects thoughts and behavior.

Incentive
- An environmental stimulus that pulls people to act in a particular way.

Inclusive fitness
- The reproductive fitness of an individual organism plus any effect that the organism has on increasing reproductive fitness in related organisms.

Incongruence
- According to Carl Rogers and other humanistic therapists, a disparity between the self-concept and reality.

Independent variable
- The variable that is manipulated in an experiment.

Individual psychology
- Alfred Adler’s school of thought, which maintains that the main motivations for human behavior are not sexual or aggressive urges but strivings for superiority.

Inductive reasoning
- The drawing of a general conclusion from certain premises or statements.

Inferential statistics
- Statistics used to determine the likelihood that a result is just due to chance.

Inferiority complex
- An exaggerated sense of inferiority.
Informational social influence
- An individual's tendency to conform because a group provides one with information.

Informed consent
- A subject's voluntary agreement to participate in a research study, given after he or she has learned enough about the study to make a knowledgeable decision to participate.

Infradian rhythms
- Biological cycles that take longer than twenty-four hours.

Ingroup
- A group to which one belongs.

Inhibitory postsynaptic potential
- A negative change in voltage that occurs when a neurotransmitter binds to an inhibitory receptor.

Innate abilities
- Abilities that are present from birth.

Insanity
- A legal term that refers to the mental inability to take responsibility for one's actions.

Insight therapies
- Treatments involving complex conversations between therapists and clients. The treatments aim to help clients understand the nature of their problems and the meaning of their behavior, thoughts, and feelings.

Insomnia
- A chronic problem with falling or staying asleep.

Instinctive drift
- The tendency for conditioning to be hindered by natural instincts.

Insulin
- A hormone secreted by the pancreas.

Integrative approach
- Therapy approaches that combine the ideas and techniques of several different schools of psychology.

Intelligence
- The capacity to acquire and apply knowledge. It includes the ability to benefit from past experience, act purposefully, solve problems, and adapt to new situations.
Intelligence quotient (IQ)
- A person's mental age divided by his or her chronological age and multiplied by 100.

Interference theory
- States that people forget information because of interference from other learned information.

Intermittent reinforcement
- A reinforcement schedule in which reinforcement happens only on some of the occasions a particular response occurs. It is also called *partial reinforcement*.

Internal attribution
- An inference that an event or a person's behavior is due to personal factors such as traits, abilities, or feelings. It is also called *dispositional attribution*.

Internal locus of control
- The tendency to believe that one has control over one's circumstances.

Interpersonal attraction
- Positive feelings about another person.

Interpretation
- A psychoanalytic technique that involves suggesting the hidden meanings of free associations, dreams, feelings, memories, and behavior to the client.

Interval schedule
- The schedule in which reinforcement happens after a particular time interval.

Intimacy
- The warm, close, caring aspect of a romantic relationship.

Intrinsic motivation
- The motivation to act for the sake of the activity alone.

Ions
- Positively and negatively charged atoms and molecules.

Iris
- A ring of muscle that surrounds the pupil in the eye.

Irreversibility
- The inability to mentally reverse an operation.

James-Lange theory
- The idea that people experience emotion because they perceive their bodies’ physiological responses to external events.

Justification of effort
- The idea that if one works hard to reach a goal, one is likely to value that goal.

Just world hypothesis
- The tendency to believe that the world is fair and that people get what they deserve.

Kinesthesis
- The sense of the position and movement of body parts.

Laboratory observation
- An observational research method in which information about subjects is collected in a laboratory setting.

Language
- A system of symbols and rules used for meaningful communication.

Latent content
- The hidden meaning of a dream.

Lateralization
- The difference in specialization between the two hemispheres of the brain.

Law of effect
- A law proposed by Edward Thorndike stating that any behavior that has good consequences will tend to be repeated, and any behavior that has bad consequences will tend to be avoided.

Learned helplessness
- A tendency to give up passively in the face of unavoidable stressors.

Learning
- A change in behavior or knowledge that results from experience.

Learning model
- The idea that psychological disorders result from the reinforcement of abnormal behavior.
Learning model of addiction
- The idea that addiction is a way of coping with stress.

Lens
- Part of the eye behind the pupil and iris. It can adjust its shape to focus light from objects that are near or far away.

Leptin
- A hormone secreted by fat cells.

Lesioning studies
- An invasive method of studying the brain in which a specific, small area of the brain is destroyed.

Lie scales
- Statistics used to provide information about the likelihood that a subject is lying in a test.

Light
- A kind of electromagnetic radiation emitted by the sun, stars, fire, and lightbulbs.

Light adaptation
- The process by which receptor cells become less sensitive to light.

Light intensity
- The amount of light emitted or reflected by an object.

Limbic system
- A part of the forebrain involved in emotional experience and memory.

Linguistic relativity hypothesis
- A theory proposed by Benjamin Lee Whorf that claims that language determines the way people think.

Link method
- The process of associating items with one another in order to remember them.

Lithium
- A drug prescribed for treating bipolar disorders.

Lobotomy
- A surgical procedure that severs nerve tracts in the frontal lobe, formerly used to treat certain psychological disorders but now rarely performed.
Locus of control
- People's perception of whether or not they have control over circumstances in their lives.

Long-term memory
- A memory system that stores an unlimited amount of information permanently.