

Perception – Knowledge Organiser

Questions to ask yourself:

- How do we make sense of the world around us?
- Do we all perceive the same world?
- Why do our brains get ‘tricked’ by visual illusions?
- How can what we feel change what we see?

Key Theories	Summary	Strength	Weakness
Gibson’s Direct Theory	Perception is innate and doesn’t draw on past experience. Sensation and perception are the same	Real world meaning Supported by the ‘Visual Cliff Experiment’	Struggles to explain perceptual errors (e.g. visual illusions)
Gregory’s Constructivist Theory.	Perception is constructed using inference, visual cues and past experience.	Support from research in different cultures (e.g. Hudson 1960)	Visual illusions are unusual examples of perception. Fantz (1961)

Key Studies	Summary	Strength	Weakness
Gilchrist and Nesberg – Perception and Motivation	To see if food deprivation affects how we perceive things.	Similar studies have found similar results (e.g. Sanford, 1936)	Ethical issues Lacks ecological validity
Bruner and Minturn – Perception and Expectation	To see if expectation affects how we perceive an ambiguous figure.	Real world application.	Artificial task (lacks ecological validity) Independent groups design

	Key Term	Definition
1	Perception	The interpretation of sensory information to understand the world around us.
2	Sensation	The physical stimulation of sense receptors by the environment.
3	Binocular depth cues	Cues that are only detected when both eyes are used.
4	Monocular depth cues	Perceptual cues that can be detected with one eye.
5	Convergence	How hard the eye muscles have to work to view objects.
6	Retinal disparity	The way the left and right eye view slightly different images.
7	Height in plane	Objects higher up in the visual field appear further away.
8	Occlusion	Describes the fact that objects that obscure appear closer to us.
9	Relative size	Refers to the fact that smaller objects in the visual field appear further away.
10	Linear perspective	When parallel lines converge in a way that suggests distance.
11	Visual constancies	Our ability to see an object as the same even if the image received has changed.
12	Visual cues	Visual information from the environment about movement, distance and so on.
13	Ambiguity	The way in which some stimuli can be perceived in more than one way.
14	Fiction	When a figure is perceived even though it is not part of the image or stimulus.
15	Size constancy	The brain’s ability to perceive familiar objects as the same size, despite changes in the size of the image on the retina.
16	Motion Parallax	Objects that are far away appear to move more slowly than objects that are close to us (monocular depth cue)
17	Direct theory	The argument that the rich visual array is all the brain needs to perceive the world around it. Perception = sensation.
18	Constructivist theory	The argument that we make sense of the world around us by building our perceptions based on incoming data and using prior knowledge.
19	Perceptual set	A tendency to notice certain aspects of the sensory environment whilst ignoring others. Set is affected by culture, emotion, motivation, and expectation.

