Your notes

GCSE Psychology: revision notes

Sensation, perception and visual illusions

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Sensation and perception

- **Sensation** is detecting stimuli with the senses, such as light reaching the eyes.
- **Perception** is processing and interpreting that information to make sense of it, such as recognising a face.

Depth cues

- **Monocular depth cues** work with one eye: height in the visual field (further objects appear higher up), relative size (smaller objects seem further away), **occlusion** (nearer objects cover further ones), and linear perspective (parallel lines seem to meet in the distance).
- **Binocular depth cues** need both eyes: **retinal disparity** (each eye sees a slightly different image) and convergence (the eyes turn inwards more for close objects).

Visual illusions

- Ambiguity: an image can be seen in two ways, such as the Necker cube or Rubin's vase (a vase or two faces).
- Misinterpreted depth cues: the Ponzo illusion and the Müller-Lyer illusion make lines of equal length look different.
- Fiction: the brain sees something that isn't there, such as the Kanizsa triangle.
- **Size constancy**: we know objects stay the same size even as they get further away, which illusions like the Ames room can trick.

Key terms

Sensation	Detecting stimuli with the senses.
Perception	Processing and interpreting sensory information.

Monocular depth cue	A depth cue that works with one eye.
Binocular depth cue	A depth cue that needs both eyes.
Occlusion	A nearer object covering part of a further one.
Retinal disparity	Each eye seeing a slightly different image.
Visual illusion	An image that tricks the brain into perceiving something wrongly.
Size constancy	Knowing an object's size stays the same as its distance changes.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is the difference between sensation and perception?
2. Which is a binocular depth cue?
3. What is occlusion?
4. What is linear perspective?
5. Which illusion can be seen as a vase or two faces?
6. Which illusion involves seeing a triangle that isn't there?
7. Which type of illusion is the Müller-Lyer illusion?
8. What is convergence?

Answers

1. Sensation detects stimuli; perception interprets them
2. Retinal disparity
3. A nearer object covering part of a further one
4. Parallel lines seeming to meet in the distance
5. Rubin's vase
6. The Kanizsa triangle
7. Misinterpreted depth cues
8. The eyes turning inwards more for close objects

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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