

**AP<sup>®</sup> PSYCHOLOGY**  
**2006 SCORING GUIDELINES**

**Question 2**

Zoey wants to buy a new car but is having difficulty deciding what kind to buy. She is feeling anxious and wants to make a decision soon. Zoey visits several local car dealers and asks for the advice of some of her friends. Explain how each of the following could influence her decision. Be sure to discuss each concept in the context of Zoey's decision.

- Approach-avoidance conflict
- Central route to persuasion
- Heuristics
- Individualism
- Rationalization
- Self-efficacy
- The autonomic nervous system
- The foot-in-the-door phenomenon

**General Issues**

1. Each point must be an application of the construct.
2. Definitions alone do not score but may be used to support or enhance an answer.
3. The student cannot merely parrot the terms in the question in definitions or explanations (except that "to make a decision" can count as a legitimate outcome).
4. The application of the concepts must relate to the car-buying context.

NOTE: In general, applying the concepts to another person (car salesperson, parent, etc.) is acceptable as long as the application relates to Zoey's decision.

**POINT 1: Approach-avoidance Conflict**

A conflict involved in Zoey's decision-making process in which at least one goal object or process (e.g., one car, one dealership, or the car-buying process) has both attractive and unattractive aspects. Specific attributes must be named. For example, "Zoey wants a blue car but it is too expensive" would score, but "Zoey wants a car but it is too expensive" would not score. Attributes like color or type of car are being counted as attractive aspects.

NOTE: Do not score if the attractive aspects are characteristic of one object, and the unattractive aspects are characteristic of another (for example, the sports car was cool and the sedan was ugly).

TRAP: In the example "I want a new car" the word "new" does not indicate an attractive aspect unless it is used in combination with "old" or "used" car. Thus, in the example "I want a new car, not a used car" the word "new" does count as an attractive aspect.

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**Question 2 (continued)**

**POINT 2: Central Route to Persuasion**

The answer must include **one** of the following:

- a. Via Content: Zoey must consider or be presented with *factual* information about the car (or something else related to the car-buying process, like the dealership, etc.) intended to affect Zoey's decision rather than examples of peripheral route.
- Examples of factual information (quality of car, car ratings, safety).
  - Examples of peripheral route (emotional appeals, attractiveness/expertness of the source, color, coolness).

NOTE: The answer does not have to include any reference to the peripheral route.

OR

- b. Via Process: Zoey considers information deeply vs. superficially (score this as long as it is in the context of the car-buying decision).

NOTE: Do not score general persuasion (the car salesperson tries to persuade Zoey).

**POINT 3: Heuristics**

The answer must include **both** of the following:

- a. A description of a “rule of thumb” or “mental shortcut” or preference.
- b. How the heuristic affects the decision-making process (for example, it narrows the choices, enhances the likelihood of getting what she wants).

Examples:

“Zoey likes/wants a red car, so Zoey only looks at red cars.” This scores.

“Zoey likes/wants a red car, so Zoey buys a red car.” This does not score.

“Zoey likes/wants a red car.” This does not score.

**POINT 4: Individualism**

The answer must include **both** of the following:

- a. Reflection of an individual goal or independent self construal (defining one's identity in terms of personal attributes rather than group memberships).
- b. Identification that a group (for example, family, friends, The Others, everyone else) has contrasting desires, needs, opinions, goals, or cars.

NOTE: Conformity examples score only if they:

1. State this as the inverse of individualism, **and**
2. Reflect the tension between the individual and the group.

Examples:

“Zoey's friends want her to get a Toyota, so she does.” This does not score.

“Zoey is not exhibiting individualism. Zoey wants a Cooper Mini, but her friends want her to get a Toyota. She decides to ignore her own feelings and gets a Toyota.” This scores.

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**Question 2 (continued)**

**Point 5: Rationalization**

A decision must be justified with some excuse to oneself that is described as a defense mechanism, or that exhibits some level of self-protection or self-deception.

NOTE: "...justifies to herself..." or "...convinces herself..." is enough to indicate self-deception.

NOTE: Do not score being rational, using logic to make a decision.

**Point 6: Self-efficacy**

Answer must include **all** of the following:

- a. Belief about own ability (or inability).
- b. In a specific task related to the context.
- c. How this affects Zoey's decision making.

NOTE: Do not score anything about Zoey's wants/desires; Zoey being "efficient"; self-esteem; internal locus of control, general confidence.

**Point 7: Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)**

Answer must include **both** of the following:

- a. Connection must be made between ANS (or the sympathetic or parasympathetic nervous system) and anxiety, or calmness, changing levels of arousal, or "fight or flight."
- b. Must indicate how this affects the decision she makes.

NOTE: The ANS must affect the decision; the decision cannot affect the ANS.

**Point 8: Foot-in-the-door Phenomenon**

Answer must include **all** of the following:

- a. A request is made of an individual.
- b. That individual complies with or agrees to that request.
- c. A larger request is made to the same individual.
- d. Must relate to Zoey's decision.

NOTE: Do not score giving in to persuasion, simply making multiple requests, door-in-the-face, perceptual contrast, mere exposure, desensitization, "that's not all," one step followed by another step.

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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the examination.

An approach-avoidance conflict means that there is both an upside and a downside to a decision and each must be weighed to establish what choice to make. Zoey might encounter this conflict when debating whether to buy a car with a CD player. On the "approach" side of things, she loves music and would enjoy having one, but on the "avoidance" side of things, she might not want to pay the extra money. In the end Zoey may establish that the cost is worth it, when she considers how often she'll use the CD player.

A central route to persuasion might affect Zoey when she is dealing with all the different car dealers, who want her to buy their car. They might tell Zoey that everyone is buying a specific car because of the special airbags that it has, which at this time and age is the biggest worry of car buyers.

Heuristics might affect Zoey's decision in buying a car because perhaps <sup>according</sup> ~~to~~ her availability heuristic, everyone is ~~also~~ buying cars with ~~the~~ leather seats. This may ~~be~~ not necessarily

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be true but maybe all of Zoey's friends have leather seats and they are the only ones Zoey has talked to about her seat choices, and she therefore thinks everyone does.

Individualism may affect Zoey's decision when she is deciding to buy a blue car, or a bright yellow one. Zoey may think the yellow car expresses her personality best, and separates her from others.

Rationalization may be used by Zoey when she is becoming concerned about the cost of her new car. She may rationalize the costs by telling herself that she will use the car every single day. This helps her from becoming overwhelmed by the thoughts of guilt for splurging.

Self-efficacy might affect Zoey's decision when she is deciding whether to get extra-loud speakers, or not. Perhaps one of Zoey's friends got in a car crash recently because they distracted them, but Zoey decides that's just because her friends are irresponsible. Zoey believes she would be able to ~~handle~~ handle having the loud speakers and decides to get them because she doesn't think they would ever cause her to crash.

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The autonomic nervous system may influence Zoey's decision when she is deciding to splurge for the fast car, or opt for the car with a slower engine. Perhaps when Zoey gets into the faster car her autonomic nervous system's sympathetic nervous system goes into effect and <sup>her heart</sup> ~~she~~ begins to beat faster and she becomes excited. She may enjoy this feeling, and therefore decide on the faster car.

The foot-in-the-door phenomenon might affect Zoey's decision when she is dealing with the car dealers. They might start off by suggesting that Zoey get the car with the extra comfortable seats, to which Zoey caves. Then they might go on to say that the upgraded interior goes better with ~~those~~ <sup>certain</sup> seats, to which Zoey agrees. Then they persuade her to get a completely upgraded car, because it comes with a package. Then, they might convince her to get a nicer car because they're practically the same price, when the upgrades are taken into consideration. Slowly, the car dealers are persuading Zoey in a totally different direction, beginning with a simple upgrade.

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2B

All of the following concepts could influence Zoey's decision in buying a car. Heuristics <sup>are</sup> ~~are~~ a person's way of thinking, their set of ideas that affect how they think and what they expect of a situation. Zoey might be affected by the availability heuristic in that if she has just heard that someone she knows who has a Volvo got in an accident, she could assume that Volvos are unsafe, because that incident is readily available in her memory, and buy a different type of car. The foot-in-the-door phenomenon, which states that if one is close to doing something, taking the next step towards doing something big is easier, could influence Zoey. She could take a test drive in a car, and because she's already taken the time to drive it, and taken that next step, she would find it easier to buy than a car

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she hasn't driven. Zoey may be influenced by Individualism, the ~~feeling~~<sup>need</sup> of people to assert their own personal self and not be influenced by others. This could happen if Zoey's mother were to suggest a Volvo, if Zoey experiences individualism, she may be drawn to another car to assert her independence and show that her mother does not influence her decisions. Rationalization, the adjustment of our ~~thoughts~~<sup>beliefs</sup> to fit what we want to think, or are thinking could ~~has~~ influence her. Zoey could really like Hondas, hear her friend say they don't run well, and still buy one, by rationalizing that her friend is jealous of Zoey getting a car, or really doesn't know what she's talking about. Zoey could be influenced by self-efficacy, the feeling of being an efficient person and being able to do things well as a person. Self-efficacy may cause her to ignore the advice



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of friends and assume she is competent enough to pick a car on her own, without any one's help. She may be influenced by the autonomic nervous system, the part of the nervous system that regulates body functions such as breathing and is affected by stress. If Zoey is feeling anxious to choose a car, ~~to~~ the increased stress this puts on her autonomic nervous system may cause her to make a decision prematurely, in an effort to relieve the stress, which could result in a poor choice. Zoey may be influenced by approach-avoidance conflict, which is when one goes back and forth approaching a conflict, then avoiding it. In Zoey's case, if this happens, she could try to decide on a car, then be conflicted in her decision and avoid trying to decide for a while. This could prolong ~~to~~ the car buying process.

2

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Zoey could be influenced by central route to persuasion, the manipulation of someone to convince them of doing a certain thing. A salesperson could use central route of persuasion to convince Zoey, by giving her a good deal on a certain type of car and saying things like, "it looks like the type of car an adventurous person like you would drive", that flatter, could convince her that she should buy that type of car.

Zoey has several ways in attempting to find a resolution to her problem of wanting to buy a new car. However Zoey is currently experiencing approach-avoidance conflict she's approached the idea of purchasing a new car but hasn't get done so because she's been avoiding making the final decision of what kind of car she wants. Zoey could just buy a car in which everyone has is reliable which would be taking the central route in solving her problem. She could also be persuaded into settling just for what's "average". Heuristics could also play a factor in her decision, that others can make her chose a certain type of car. Zoey's individualism may help her in finding the right car to fit her personal needs & preferences. She could also use rationalization in deciding how much money to spend and what things are necessary to have in & out of the car. Self-efficacy is important because Zoey has

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her personal inputs about what is incorporated with the car she wants to purchase. She also needs to ~~make sure~~ ensure the safety of her new purchase so she can live through an accident or another problem that could easily occur while on the road. Zoey is almost there in making a decision but needs to go through with it, therefore she's experiencing the foot-in-the-door phenomenon. Placing these factors together, along with others that can occur hopefully Zoey can decide what route she needs to follow in making her final decision.

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## 2006 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 2

#### Overview

This question was designed to tap broad knowledge across the different subsections of psychology. From various chapters in an introductory text, the AP Psychology Development Committee selected eight concepts applicable to buying a car. The concepts represented varying degrees of difficulty. The question emphasized students' ability to generate examples rather than definitions in an attempt to measure higher level function.

#### Sample: 2A

**Score: 8**

This is a well-organized, well-written response. Point 1 was earned. There is one goal (car) with both attractive (CD player) and unattractive (extra cost) aspects. Point 2 was earned. Zoey is exposed to factual information ("special airbags"). Point 3 was earned because there is accurate application of the availability heuristic. Point 4 was earned. There is independent self-construal ("expresses her personality") and a contrasting group ("others"). Point 5 was awarded. Zoey justifies her decision with a rationale ("telling herself that she will use the car every single day"). Point 6 was awarded. Zoey has a belief about her ability regarding a specific task ("believes she would be able to handle having the loud speakers"). There is an indication of how this belief might affect her decision ("decides to get them because she doesn't think they would ever cause her to crash"). Point 7 was earned because the autonomic nervous system is connected with arousal ("her heart begins to beat faster"), and the arousal affects the decision ("she may enjoy this feeling, and therefore decide on the faster car"). Point 8 was earned. There is compliance with a smaller request ("suggesting that Zoey get the car with the extra comfortable seats, to which Zoey caves") followed by a larger request ("a completely upgraded car").

#### Sample: 2B

**Score: 4**

This essay did not earn point 1 because there is no indication of any particular goal object that has both attractive and unattractive aspects. Point 2 was not earned. The essay demonstrates confusion between the concept in the question and the idea of persuasion by others through use of flattery. The essay earned point 3 because it provides a clear description of a heuristic and a clear indication of how that particular heuristic would influence the decision of buying a car. Point 4 did not earn credit because the response does not address all parts specified in the scoring guidelines. While the essay describes a need for independence, it lacks identification of a group with opposing ideas. The essay earned point 5 with the example illustrating the use of a self-deceptive defense ("her friend is jealous") for the decision made. Point 6 earned credit. A belief about Zoey's ability in a particular task ("assume she is competent enough to pick a car") is clearly linked to how the decision will be made on her own. Point 7 also earned credit. The essay connects the autonomic nervous system with stress, thus affecting the decision made ("could result in a poor choice"). Point 8 was not earned. The essay does not demonstrate that an initial request was met with compliance leading to a larger request that ultimately affects the decision.

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**Question 2 (continued)**

**Sample: 2C**

**Score: 1**

Point 1 did not earn credit. The student confuses approaching and avoiding the car-buying process with approach–avoidance conflict (attractive and unattractive aspects of a goal). Point 2 was awarded. There is evidence that Zoey is looking at factual information (“reliable”) to make her decision. Point 3 was not earned. The student does not demonstrate knowledge of heuristics. Point 4 was not awarded. There is no mention of a contrasting group. Point 5 was not earned because there is no evidence that Zoey is making excuses for a decision for the purposes of self-protection. Point 6 was not earned. There is no evidence that the student understands the concept of self-efficacy. Point 7 is not attempted and therefore did not earn credit. Point 8 was not awarded because there is no evidence that the student understands the foot-in-the-door phenomenon.