

Introduction to Psychology
“*Connecting Mental Set and Perception*”
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Objectives:

1. Students will describe the influence on perception of environmental variables, motivation, past experiences, culture, and expectations.
2. Students will identify advantages and disadvantages associated with mental set.

Source: National Standards for the Teaching of Psychology, American Psychological Association. Biopsychological Domain, Sensation and Perception, Interaction of the person and the environment in determining perception. (IIB-2)

Learning Activities:

1. Instructor will introduce the concept of mental set by asking students to identify images in a photograph which allows for varied interpretations. Suggested image: Punakiki Rocks, New Zealand.
2. Instructor will briefly lecture to class on the nature of mental set and provide various examples to illustrate different influences on perception. (See attached Power Point presentation)
3. Students will participate in a series of online interactive experiments which allow students to personally experience the impact of factors such as experience and expectation on perception.
4. Students will conduct short online research in which an individual’s expectation or experience led the individual to an incorrect conclusion.
5. Students will participate in a class discussion in which they share the results of their research and describe the advantages and disadvantages of mental set.

Culminating Learning Activity:

1. Students will write a 1-page journal entry in which they describe their own experiences with mental set, giving examples of both beneficial and detrimental consequences.

Samples of Materials:

1. Power Point presentation. Click <http://www.uhigh.ilstu.edu/laptops/promisingpractices/mentalsetandperception.ppt> for link.
2. Web activity: Jumping to Conclusions http://www.exploratorium.edu/brain_explorer/jumping.html
3. Web activity: The Stroop Test http://www.sandlotscience.com/Guided_Tours/Tour3/Tour3_5.htm
4. Web activity: Five Interactive Illusions <http://www.exploratorium.edu/exhibits/changingill/>
5. Web activity: Face Rotation (Margaret Thatcher Illusion)

http://www.michaelbach.de/ot/fcs_thompson-thatcher/index.html

Laptop Implications:

1. In this one-day lesson, each student is able to experience the influences on mental set both in a group environment and individually. By experience a variety of illusions first-hand, students are able to apply the concept of the lesson to their own experience, making a valuable connection between psychological theory and practice. The laptops enable students to experience psychological concepts in a real-world atmosphere, as opposed to an artificial experience of reading about them in a textbook.

Role of the Instructor:

Preparation: It is the instructor's responsibility to ensure that the web links used in the activity are active and up-to-date. The Power Point presentation must also be modified as needed.

During the Lesson: The instructor will introduce the topic of mental set by displaying a photo and soliciting students' visual impressions. The instructor will lead the class in a lesson the definition of mental set and lead a discussion in which students suggest factors which influence one's perception. During the laptop portion of the lesson, the instructor will circulate to assist with any technological problems, to answer questions, help students reflect on their individual experiences and guide students' research efforts. After the online portion of the class has been completed, the instructor will encourage students to share their research results and lead a discussion on the positive and negative consequences of mental set. Finally, the instructor will explain the culminating activity and answer any student questions.

Student Reaction:

Students appreciate the chance to engage in online experiments and activities. Students frequently comment that activities such as these enhance their understanding and enjoyment of the content. Activities such as these provide an important means by which to accommodate diverse learning modalities, thus improving the level of student achievement.