

### *Perception Research Report*

*General Instructions.* The books and articles we read in psychology usually discuss experimental findings and conceptual themes. Similarly, your assignment here is to review a single experiment and to explain its relation to the conceptual topics we are discussing this semester. This means you should find out about an experiment that interests you and become familiar with its techniques, its results, its theoretical motivation and interpretation, and its potential for further research. You may care to offer your own evaluation of the experiment, too.

After you have selected an experiment to study and have learned about it thoroughly, you should answer some questions for yourself, before you compose your report:

- ☞ What were the objectives of the experiment?
- ☞ Were there any precedents for the research?
- ☞ How was the experiment conducted?
- ☞ Who were the subjects?
- ☞ What task were the subjects asked to perform?
- ☞ Was specialized equipment used?
- ☞ What were the results of the investigation?
- ☞ Were the results expected or surprising?
- ☞ How did the experimenters explain the outcomes?
- ☞ What did we learn about perception from the experiment?
- ☞ Is there an obvious experiment to perform next?

Once you have answered the questions for yourself, you are ready to write your report. Use ordinary, non-technical language to explain the experiment. The right style here is something appropriate for an article in the *Columbia Spectator* or the *New York Times*. Your report should include the answers to each of the questions that you posed to yourself, and should be brief. Do not exceed three typed, double-spaced pages, with one inch margins top, bottom, left and right. Remember to double-space: Do not use a typeface smaller than 12 point.

*How to find out about an experiment.* Psychologists generally publish reports of their research, each report containing two or three experiments related by a common objective. Reports of this type appear in scientific journals, for example: *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*; *Perception & Psychophysics*; *Perception*, etc. The article that you write about should have appeared in a professional journal. You may not report on an article from a popular journal.

To find an experiment, on one hand, you might venture directly into the professional literature if you want to browse for a topic. Do not be discouraged if some of the titles seem forbidding. If you have a topic in mind already, you might use a subject index to guide you to an appropriate research report. *PSYCINFO*, which is available on-line through *CLIO Plus*, offers an index of this kind. On the other hand, you might find out first about a suitable topic by

reading about it in a popular journal, like *Psychology Today*, *Scientific American*, *Science News* or even the *New York Times* (*Science Tuesday*). Then, of course, you should track down the original report in the technical journal that published it first. A reference librarian will be delighted to assist you in your quest, though you should do your part by asking well-informed, well-defined questions.

*How to determine whether the experiment is appropriate.* When you have selected an experiment to use for this project, you should perform this little test to determine the suitability of your choice. Ask yourself if the experiment addresses the fundamental question for us: How does perception work? If the title of a study includes the words “motivation,” “learning,” or “memory,” this is a good indication that it might not be appropriate for this assignment. If the study you select used unusual test subjects (e.g., schizophrenics, retardates, children raised by wolves, infants, *E. coli.*, etc.), beware: It probably is concerned with a different question, for example: When does perception first occur chronologically? or, Is perception intact when other systems are deteriorated, immature or incomplete? Even studies of normal human adults may ask a question that is beside the point, so you will need to apply this test carefully. If you suspect that your choice of article is marginal, please confirm its appropriateness with me before beginning.

*Due date.* Your report is due to be submitted on November 24.

Please do not submit the report late.

Please do not exceed the page limit.

Please do not submit your first draft.