

Describing the Contrast between Sensation and Perception

Use the information on this handout to write a carefully worded explanation of the differences between sensation and perception.

Employ these starter expressions, which will allow you to focus on **contrasting** two concepts:

- While the sensation process involves....., the perception process is influenced by...
- Whereas sensation refers to ... , perception is a process in which...
- A crucial distinction between sensation and perception is that...
- One contrast between the two processes is that sensation is ... , while perception requires/ is influenced by / involves / ...
- In contrast to sensation, which refers to..., perception involves...

Sensation

Physiological process involving the **sensory receptors** in the eye, nose, ear, skin and tongue, which are all **sensory organs**



Includes the **reception** of specific physical energies, their **transduction** into electrochemical energy and its **transmission** to the brain

Fundamentally similar for all people whose **sensory organs** are functioning properly

The same **external stimuli** will lead to the **same sensations** in different people, assuming their **sensory organs** are intact.

Context and **expectation** do not influence the sensory process,... →

Involves **bottom-up processing** (a little like piecing a jigsaw together)

The **sensory data** that we initially receive are **meaningless** in that form... →

The **sensation process** involves **passively receiving data or detecting** them.

Not influenced by culture or training

Perception

Involves physiological but also **mental** and **psychological** processes that take place in the brain



Includes the **organization** of the electrochemical energy that has been transmitted to the brain, along with its **interpretation**

Varies according to **individual psychological factors** such as background, experience, knowledge, expectations, emotional state

Since **psychological processes** such as memory, learning and motivation vary from person to person, the same sensory information may be **interpreted** by individual brains in different ways.

...but they play an important role in shaping our perceptions.

Is evident in top-down processing, where the context and expectation of the perceiver leads to rapid **perceptual hypotheses** about what is being perceived.

...until we convert them through the perceptual process into **meaningful** information.

Perception is an **active process** of organising, interpreting and so attributing meaning to the sensory information that has been received.

Affected by **cultural background** and **training**