

Perception

(perception → Latin per+cipio *I feel, I understand, I learn, I master* →

perceptio fruit gathering → (figurative) understanding, imagining)

Psychological ability or the corresponding actual experience – action – process: Unifying the short and diffuse pieces of experience, received simultaneously through external **senses**, into a whole; transformation of this kind of experience into differentiated, clear experience; its organizing and differentiation. Differentiating the figure from the ground. For instance, unorganized experience of flat spots with different color and contour is obtained through visual sensation, whereas perception transforms these spots into red apples with green leaves as their ground (i.e. prominent three - dimensional images). Comparison: When being in the museum we are looking at an impressionist picture from a short distance. We only see color spots. We need to step farther from the picture to form a perceptual image and see different images in it.

Differently from sensations, perception is an entirely psychological process. It takes place under the influence of perceptual sets. Some of these sets have instinctual ‘germs’ [see **inherent Gestalt images**], and some are developed and fixed through experience. For example, a young chicken who has just hatched out perceives grain, the silhouette of a bird of prey and other images important for survival without any preliminary experience. However, the child requires long experience to perceive letters and words [see also **Set**]

Several external senses simultaneously participate in perception and influence each other. The leading sense for the human being is vision (like smell in dogs), but visual images in humans are often influenced by impressions received through touch and hearing. For example, one and the same vague spot can be perceived as water (if accompanied by trickling sound) or a car part (if accompanied by banging sounds). This becomes more important in babies. The formation of stable (ready) visual images in babies (and, consequently, further development of thinking) is directly dependent on object manipulations (touching, grasping, hitting, testing objects) and **sensorimotor** activity [see **intermodal connections**].

Perception is passive by nature and only reflects environment, but if we link it to active attention, then it becomes active and goal directed. Examples of purposeful perception: **observation, watching, listening, tasting, aesthetic touch**. Differently from ordinary perception, these have their own needs and, therefore, represent different **forms of behavior**.

Perceived image is always whole. This means that it is not obtained through the integration of its parts. Parts exist only on the level of sensations, whereas after the perceptual processing of the elements of sensations whole images (rather than their parts) are immediately formed. The whole determines its parts, but not vice versa. Perceptual images are always whole (even in primitive animals) [see **Gestaltization**]. In addition to Gestaltization, the main characteristics of perception are **constancy** and **categorization**.

Perception is the first step in cognition. The next step is thinking.