

Experimental methods

Individual Differences

You are learning how to...	In the context of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply your knowledge and understanding of experimental methods in psychology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abnormal behaviour

Question 1

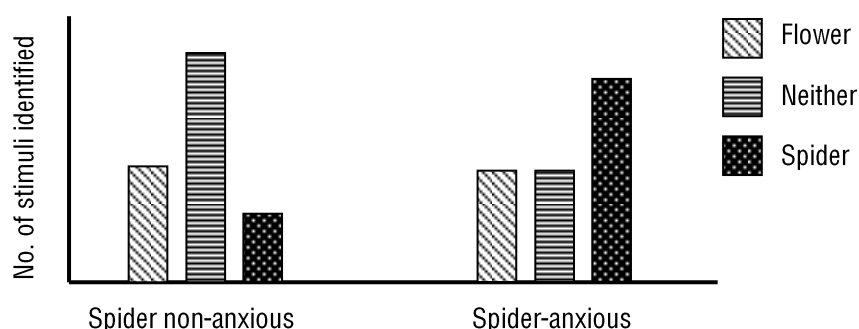
A researcher wanted to find out if people with phobias perceive their environment differently from those without phobias. She recruited a sample of students from her university, ensuring that she screened out any psychology students. All the participants completed a questionnaire designed to assess how anxious they were about spiders. The results of the questionnaire were used to divide them into two groups, which she designated 'spider-anxious' and 'spider-non-anxious'. Participants were presented with a series of ambiguous stimuli on a screen. The order in which the stimuli were presented was randomised.

Examples of the ambiguous stimuli used



The participants were asked to press a button to indicate whether each stimulus resembled a spider, a flower or neither. The number of each type of response was recorded.

Stimuli identified as flower, spider or neither by spider-anxious and spider-non-anxious participants



- Suggest a suitable hypothesis for this study.
- Explain why this research study would not be considered a true experiment.
- Suggest why 'the order in which the stimuli were presented was randomised'.
- What was the dependent variable in this study?
- Describe the results found by the researchers.
- Suggest what the researcher might have concluded from the results of the study.

Question 2

A researcher wished to establish whether psychodynamic therapy was effective for mild cases of anxiety. Twenty patients with mild anxiety symptoms were randomly assigned to receive either a six-session course of brief psychodynamic therapy or to meet with another anxiety patient six times to discuss their experiences. Patients completed an anxiety questionnaire before and after the programme. The 'after' score was subtracted from the 'before' score to give an improvement score for each participant.

- Explain why the participants not receiving psychodynamic therapy met 'with another anxiety patient six times to discuss their experiences'.
- Why were the participants randomly assigned to the two treatment groups?
- How was the DV operationalised in this study?
- State a suitable directional hypothesis for this study?