Research With Care

How APA ethics standards shape studies with people and animals

SS24.P.2c "Describe the role of the American Psychological Association in setting ethical guidelines regarding the use of human and animal subjects in psychological research.*"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two protections APA standards call for in studies with people and two in studies with animals, then circle the names of the groups that review research plans.

Before the Study Begins

1. A psychology lab wants to learn whether background music changes how well people remember a story. Before anyone joins, researchers must plan for more than accurate results. The American Psychological Association (APA) publishes an Ethics Code that guides psychologists' research with people and animals. Its standards explain how to protect participants and treat research animals humanely. The APA sets professional expectations; it does not personally approve each study. At many institutions, an institutional review board (IRB) reviews research plans involving people under applicable rules. That board decides whether a proposed study meets its requirements before recruitment begins.

2. In the music study, APA standards call for informed consent: participants learn what they will do, relevant risks, and their right to stop without penalty. Researchers must also protect private information, such as names linked to memory scores. Sometimes revealing a study's full purpose first would change people's responses. APA standards allow deception only under strict conditions, including scientific justification and no reasonable nondeceptive alternative; researchers must explain it afterward, usually as soon as possible. A clever experiment is not an excuse to hide serious risks. These rules help people decide whether to take part and limit harm.

3. Another lab studies whether mice learn a route faster when they hear a sound cue. Mice cannot give consent, but APA standards still require researchers to justify using animals and to treat them humanely. Psychologists should obtain, care for, use, and dispose of animals in compliance with laws and professional standards. Qualified people must oversee their care, and researchers must make reasonable efforts to minimize discomfort, infection, illness, and pain. A facility's animal care and use committee may review the plan; the APA itself does not approve it. Together, these protections connect useful research to responsibility for living subjects.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What role does the APA play in setting research ethics, and how is that different from the IRB's role?

2. How do APA standards protect people deciding whether to join the music study and people who choose to leave it?

3. How do APA standards limit a researcher's use of deception in a study with people?

4. How do APA standards guide the treatment of mice, and who may review the lab's animal research plan?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a study involving either people or animals that is different from both studies in the passage. In four sentences, describe the study, explain two ethical safeguards called for by APA standards, and identify who would review its plan rather than the APA.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.P.2c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two protections APA standards call for in studies with people and two in studies with animals, then circle the names of the groups that review research plans. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What role does the APA play in setting research ethics, and how is that different from the IRB's role?	**The APA publishes professional ethics standards for psychologists. An IRB reviews plans for research involving people at an institution under applicable rules; the APA does not approve each study.**
2	How do APA standards protect people deciding whether to join the music study and people who choose to leave it?	**The standards call for informed consent about the tasks and relevant risks, and participants must be able to stop without penalty.**
3	How do APA standards limit a researcher's use of deception in a study with people?	**Deception needs scientific justification and no reasonable nondeceptive alternative. Researchers must explain the deception afterward, usually as soon as possible.**
4	How do APA standards guide the treatment of mice, and who may review the lab's animal research plan?	**The standards require justification for animal use, humane care, qualified oversight, and reasonable efforts to minimize harm. A facility's animal care and use committee may review the plan.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would ask adult volunteers to compare two ways of solving a logic puzzle. Following APA standards, I would explain the tasks and relevant risks before asking for informed consent. I would keep names separate from puzzle scores and allow volunteers to leave without penalty. An institutional review board, not the APA, would review the plan.

For Part 3, accept an original human or animal study with two appropriate safeguards and a matching review group: an IRB for research with people or an animal care and use committee for research with animals. Students should distinguish that review group's role from the APA's role in setting professional standards.