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Psychology: Summer Transition Booklet



What is Psychology?



Having a good grasp of what psychology is all about is essential for studying this exciting subject in greater depth. Now this may sound like a really obvious thing to state, but psychology is a term that is often misunderstood and used without any real consideration as to its actual meaning. A classic case in point being the usual response you get from people when you tell them that you study psychology; namely, "I better be careful what I say", or "so do you know what I'm thinking then?"

To help understand the ambiguity surrounding psychology, let's start by taking a look at a couple of definitions:

Psychology is the scientific study of people, the mind and behaviour. It is both a thriving academic discipline and a vital professional practice (The British Psychological Society).

The scientific study of the behaviour of individuals and their mental processes (American Psychological Association).

The constant theme across these definitions is that psychology is fundamentally concerned with understanding behavior.

The mind is something intangible that exists within our brain. An unseen process of enzymes, chemicals, and electric current moving within the structure of our neural networks, dictating why we feel, think and behave the way we do.

Psychology looks at questions such as these and looks to provide answers. It is a science with cutting edge research that has real world applications to everyday life, the sort of issues you as a student deal with all the time.

Psychologists observe and measure behaviour, and devise therapies and theories based on scientific studies.

In short, psychology is the answer to everything that happens around you!

The Psychology A-level Specification:

<u>Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology</u>	<u>Paper 2: Psychology in Context</u>	<u>Paper 3: Issues in Psychology</u>
Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Social Influence✓ Memory✓ Attachment✓ Psychopathology	Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Approaches in Psychology✓ Biopsychology✓ Research methods	Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Issues and debates in Psychology✓ Cognition and Development✓ Schizophrenia✓ Aggression
Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 2 hour written exam✓ 96 marks✓ 33.3% of A-level	Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 2 hour written exam✓ 96 marks✓ 33.3% of A-level	Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 2 hour written exam✓ 96 marks✓ 33.3% of A-level
Mathematical Skills: <p>Overall, at least 10% of the marks in assessments for psychology will require the use of mathematical skills. These skills will be applied in the context of A-level Psychology and will be at least the standard of higher GCSE mathematics.</p>		

Want to know more about what you will learn in each unit? Go to the AQA website and look at the course specification:

[aqa.org.uk/psychology](https://www.aqa.org.uk/psychology)

You will follow the A-level (two year programme).



Summer Task:



Task 1:

You will study 'approaches in psychology' as part of the A-level course. The idea of an 'approach' is that psychologists tend to have a general view on what causes behaviour. Some of them think that the way we behave is largely inherited, others believe it is largely learned through your life experience. You will learn 5 key approaches in Psychology:

- ✓ Biological approach
- ✓ Behaviourist approach
- ✓ Psychodynamic approach
- ✓ Humanistic approach
- ✓ Cognitive approach

There are key differences across the approaches.

Your task is to select one of the five approaches and research its **contribution to Psychology.** Aim to write a long paragraph, identifying any key assumptions and their main contributions.

Task 2:

A level Psychology involves learning a lot of research studies! You need to know how studies are conducted, what the studies support/refute and be able to evaluate the research studies you learn about.

The following website: <http://bps-research-digest.blogspot.com> is an excellent resource for Psychology students. This brilliant blog is updated fortnightly and features featuring cutting edge psychology research. Your task is to:

- 1) Go to the website and find an interesting piece of research – this can be on anything (as it is all psychology). You should read at least 3 different pieces.
- 2) On one A4 sheet of paper (this could be on the computer or handwritten) summarise the research that interested you the most. Include
 - The research area
 - How the research was conducted
 - What was found
 - Why this interested you
 - Anything else that you feel is relevant

You can present your work however you like (e.g. poster, mind map, notes).

Please do not just 'cut and paste': you need to present your research on 1 piece of A4 paper (this can be typed or by hand) you need to engage with your chosen piece of research.

Task 3:

Is Psychology a science? A question that has been debated for years! Your task is to address the question in an essay style response. You should aim to cover 2 arguments that support it is a science and 2 arguments suggesting that psychology is not a science. You should then write an overall conclusion based on your research findings. In order to complete this task you will need to research the question (e.g. internet research).

Again, you need to engage with this debate, please do not simply 'cut and paste'.