



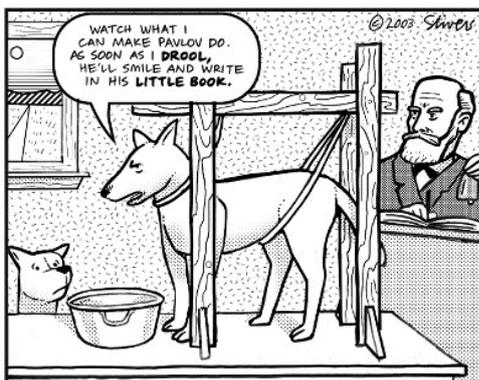
Welcome to the Psychology Taster Session

Defining psychology

You are considering studying psychology and the first thing must be to get a general feel for the area of study so you can make an informed choice. But before you start, though, pause and consider how you would explain to someone what psychology *is*. Suppose a friend asks you what you are thinking of studying. You say "psychology" and your friend says "that sounds like fun, but what **is** it?"

Most people would have trouble explaining what psychology is all about. While we have some idea what we mean by psychology, it's quite difficult to explain this. The word 'psychology' actually comes from two words: **psyche** and **logos**. The word *psyche* (pronounced 'sigh-key') is Greek and means 'breath of life', soul or spirit. This translates very loosely as mind. The word *logos* means knowledge or study. Hence, psychology was **originally** defined as: **the study of the mind**. However, quite a few psychologists don't like this definition because it's impossible to study the mind **directly**. Indeed, just trying to say what the mind **is** gives us immense problems. Such psychologists have in fact avoided this problem completely and study only behaviour, concentrating on what is seen to be happening. Nevertheless, the mind is very much part of the unique experiences of each individual and therefore is still generally considered to be central to psychology. The pursuit of the mind and the study of behaviour is a large part of the work of psychologists in their many different fields today.

A commonly accepted definition of psychology is: Psychology is the scientific study of the **mind** and **behaviour** of humans and animals.



Psychology as a science

Psychologists have developed their own rigorous methods for studying humans. Many psychologists use methods that are known to be **scientific**: controlled experiments, careful measurements and clear procedures for example. They also may use animals in their research because they believe that what they learn about animals can be applied to humans.

Psychology is a young science compared to other sciences such as chemistry and physics. It began properly as a science in 1878 when Wilhelm Wundt founded the first psychological laboratory in Germany. Wundt wanted to make the study of mental processes more systematic. Instead of just developing his own ideas, he devised experiments to try to find evidence to **support** his theories. In this way he made psychology more **scientific**.

In the same way John B Watson, the father of Behaviourism, wanted psychology to adopt the experimental methods that had proved so successful within the physical sciences. For Watson, however, the primary subject matter (or data) from psychology must be items of **behaviour**. He saw psychology as the science of behaviour, and placed particular emphasis on measurement and objectivity as ways of achieving this.

Partly because psychology is such a new science, and partly because the subject matter it studies is people, research progress is slower than with the natural sciences. We can't go around carrying out experiments on people without carefully considering any possible harm this might cause them!

One thing psychology can't do therefore is give us completely **correct** answers to **all** the questions we have about behaviour and about mental processes. What psychology can do, however, is tell us what is definitely **not** the right answer and suggest a number of very useful ideas about what the right answer might be. We then must use our own judgement to consider the evidence and decide which one of several possible theories is closest to the truth.



Conducting an Experiment

So how can we use the scientific method to find out anything? Often the best way to learn about something is by doing so lets conduct an experiment right here and now - if you agree to participate! I promise it won't cause you any harm....

Taster Lesson: Psychology

The experiment we are going to conduct explores the capacity of the STM. Cognitive psychologists are interested in internal mental processes of which memory is one. Many theorists consider that our memory consists of two things – Short Term memory (STM) and Long Term memory (LTM), in this experiment we aim to discover how many items the STM can hold. It's based on the work of a researcher called Miller (1956) and his contention that the STM can hold 7 items (plus or minus 2), and we are going to test that theory today.

Activity: On your own: Build a number pyramid using the numbers 1-9, on the first row put one number, on the second 2 and so on until you have a row of 10 numbers, like in this example – DON'T let anybody else see it.

Example

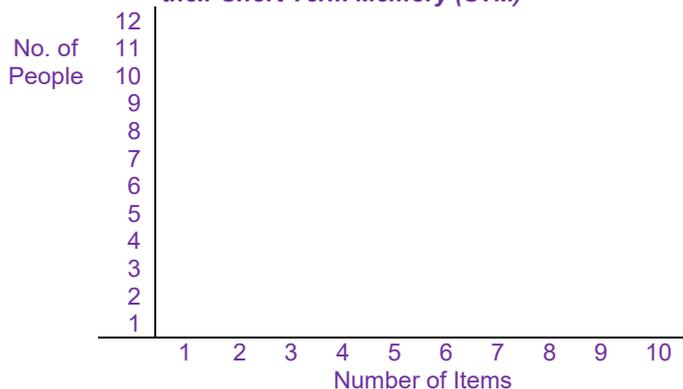
Line	Number Line	Correct / Incorrect
1	3	
2	2,1	
3	6,2,9	
4	8,3,6,9	
5	5,6,2,6,2	
6	8,9,3,3,4,3	
7	7,5,6,5,1,3,2	
8	8,2,3,1,4,9,7,1	
9	5,7,8,2,1,1,3,6,5	
10	6,7,3,2,4,1,9,2,8,2	

Your Work

Line	Number Line	Correct / Incorrect
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Then work in a pair. The first person (the experimenter) should read out the number line to their partner (the participant), and then ask them to repeat it back. If they get it correct (right numbers, in the right order) then put a tick in the box next to that line. If they get it wrong (wrong numbers and/or wrong order) then put a cross in the box next to that line and STOP – don't go on to the next line. Then swap roles and let the other person become the experimenter and the other the participant. We will then compare the results of the whole group to see if Miller (1956) is right – that is we can hold 7 items (plus or minus 2) in our STM. We will create a line graph below:

Graph to show the number of items a person can hold in their Short Term Memory (STM)

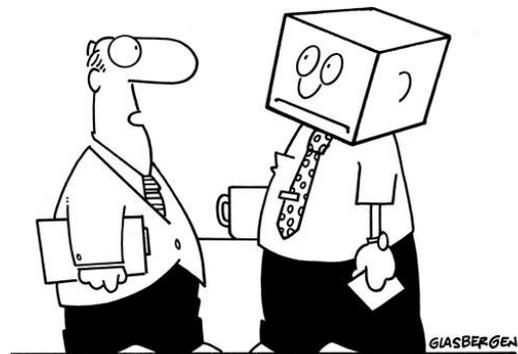


Different approaches to one behaviour

It is important to grasp the idea that the same behaviour can be explained in a variety of ways by psychologists who adopt different approaches to psychology. Any action a person takes can be explained from several different points of view. Consider, for example, running to catch a bus. This act can be explained in terms of its purpose or goal for you, i.e. catching the bus will allow you to get to school or work on time. It can also be explained in a biological way. Nerves activate the muscles which make the legs move quickly. Running to catch a bus can also be explained in terms of the bus being a stimulus which causes you to react by running towards it.

Perhaps you have begun to realise that there are different ways of explaining even the simplest of our actions. In the same way, there are also different **approaches** to explaining behaviour in psychology.

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"Thinking outside of the box is difficult for some people. Keep trying."

The important divisions within psychology that you need to understand are those between the different approaches. The emergence of these different approaches is best viewed historically. While there is little sense in learning about the history of psychology for its own sake, the different approaches within psychology make perfect sense when placed in their correct historical context.

As was pointed out, the emergence of psychology is usually dated from 1878 when Wundt established the first experimental psychology laboratory. Wundt deliberately set out to make psychology into a scientific discipline. Wundt and his associates focused their investigations on conscious mental experiences. Unfortunately it was extremely difficult to do this in an objective and scientific way. The main method used, introspection (individual self reports about sensations, feelings and mental experiences), soon became unpopular. This was because introspection as a method was not successful. It became clear that this was a highly subjective way of collecting information about someone's mental processes. In addition, disagreements between different observers could not be resolved. However, modern psychology has begun again to examine mental processes, but using methods which are very different from introspection. The **cognitive approach** today examines mental processes such as memory and perception using methods which were not available in Wundt's time, i.e. computer simulations and other technological advances which allow us to observe mental processing more directly and therefore objectively.

Taster Lesson: Psychology

As a direct consequence of the failure of introspection to reveal the secrets of the mind, psychology turned sharply to the study of behaviour. According to Watson, the main focus for psychology should be objectively observable behaviour rather than any internal process which you cannot see or measure. Thus the **Learning approach** in psychology was born. The learning approach is sometimes also referred to as stimulus/response (S.R) psychology or behaviourism since they focused on the immediate stimuli which trigger a particular behaviour or response. This approach enjoyed considerable influence throughout the twentieth century and is still used extensively today.

The influence of biology on early psychology was also considerable. By the time Wundt had established his laboratory, great advances had been made in understanding the nervous system, in linking language ability to different areas of the brain and in measuring the speed of nervous conduction. Furthermore, Darwin's evolutionary theory suggested a degree of continuity between man and other animals that had not been acknowledged before. This marked the emergence of the **biological approach**. An approach that studies how the functions of the bodies physical systems, e.g. nervous system, endocrine system, are related to and influence both behaviour and mental processes.

At the same time as behaviourism was being developed, Sigmund Freud introduced a very different type of approach in order to explain human behaviour. Freud's **psychoanalytic approach** was based on the case studies of individual patients he was attempting to treat for a variety of difficulties. The psychoanalytic approach is based on the assumption that human behaviour is determined by our unconscious mind. Our unconscious mind is 'hidden' from us, yet it has much more influence over our behaviour than does our conscious mind of which we are always aware, according to Freud.

In the 1950s a 'third force' gained popularity. The **humanistic approach** assumes that every person has their own unique way of perceiving and understanding the world and that the things they do only make sense in this light. Therefore this approach is very different to the other approaches as the aim of this approach is to understand people's subjectivity.

We study all of these approaches during the next two years.

So – now you have had a taste of Psychology.

It will very helpful for you to have a lever arch  for ALL your psychology notes, and file dividers for each area of Psychology that you will cover. For every lesson you

will need a , a  and a  !

Summer Task

Over the summer, we would like you to complete a preparation task. Have a look at the last page of the handout and you will find details of the task. It needs to be completed ready for your first lesson in Psychology.

AQA Psychology A-level (7182)

Compulsory content

1 Social influence	2 Memory
3 Attachment	4 Psychopathology
5 Approaches in Psychology	6 Biopsychology
7 Research methods	8 Issues and debates in Psychology

Optional content

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
9 Relationships	12 Schizophrenia	15 Aggression
10 Gender	13 Eating behaviour	16 Forensic Psychology
11 Cognition and development	14 Stress	17 Addiction

Examinations

Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology

What's assessed: Compulsory content 1–4 above
Written exam: 2 hours / 96 marks in total / 33.3% of A-level

Questions

Section A / B / C / D: all multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks each section

Paper 2: Psychology in Context

What's assessed: Compulsory content 5–7 above

Written exam: 2 hours / 96 marks in total / 33.3% of A-level

Questions

Section A / B : multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks

Section C: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 48 marks

Paper 3: Issues and Options in Psychology

What's assessed: Compulsory content 8 above and optional content, one from option 1, 9–11, one from option 2, 12–14, one from option 3, 15–17 above

Written exam: 2 hours / 96 marks in total / 33.3% of A-level

Questions

Section A: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks

Section B: one topic from option 1, 9–11 above. Section C: one topic from option 2, 12–14 above. Section D: one topic from option 3, 15–17 above

Each is multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks

Psychology: Pre - Year One Summer Task

You'll need access to the Internet for this task. If you don't have a computer or smart phone that allows you to access the Internet I suggest you visit your local library. Most public libraries have computers that you can use for free.

Your task is to answer the following questions, write down or type up your answers, and bring them to your first lesson in Psychology in September.

The goal of this task is to develop both your research skills and the ability to identify and record relevant information. In addition to this, the answers to these questions will give you an insight into the history of Psychology and information about the examinations you'll be taking at the end of the course. Your work will be graded A-U.

Go to <http://www.bps.org.uk/>

This will be your source of information for this task - you have a number of questions to answer using this site so let's begin...

1. What does BPS stand for and what does the organization do?
2. According to the BPS what is Psychology?
3. Find the code of Ethics (Hint – in the section for Psychologists) – briefly describe the four ethical principles, (clue – structure of the code)

Go to <http://origins.bps.org.uk/#>

4. Who founded Psychology (clue: 1875) and what disciplines was Psychology originally based upon?
5. Who founded Psychoanalysis (clue: 1896)?
6. Where was the BPS founded (clue: 1901)?
7. Who said 'children do not think in the same way as adults' (clue: 1926)?
8. From which approach does classical conditioning come? (No more clues - you should have the idea by now!)
9. What are schema and who coined the term?
10. Who studied peer pressure and whose work did these studies influence?
11. Who severed the '*corpus callosum*'?
12. How long did the Stanford Prison experiment last?
13. Who suggested that eyewitness testimony is fallible and what might be the cause of this fallibility?
14. When was the 'Code of Ethics' introduced? (Download copies of the Code of Ethics and save them - don't print them out.)
15. How did Psychologists contribute to the new coins that were introduced into British currency?
16. What was significant in our understanding of functional and regional specificity in the brain?

Go to: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/psychology/as-and-a-level/psychology-7181-7182>

17. Find the specification and save it (you don't need to print it out). Using the specification - what are the names and codes of the three examinations you'll take at the end of your A level?
18. Go to the open University Website, follow this link:
<http://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/psychology/starting-psychology/content-section-0>
Complete the Starting With Psychology unit and print out your statement of participation to put in your Psychology folder.
19. Psychology has lots of key terms, and one of the things you will need to do is develop your Psychology vocabulary. The next three pages have a list of key terms in psychological research methods. Please research and write a definition / explanation for each one.



Key Terms: Research Methods

Term	Definition / Explanation
Experimental method	
Laboratory experiment	
Field experiments	
Natural experiment	
Quasi experiments	
Naturalistic observation	
Controlled observation;	
Covert observation	
Overt observation	
Participant observation	
Non-participant observation	
Questionnaires	
Structured interviews	
Unstructured interviews	
Positive Correlations	
Negative Correlation	
Content analysis	
Case study	
Hypotheses	
Population	
Sample	
Random sample	

Systematic sample	
Stratified sample	
Opportunity sample	
Volunteer sample	
Pilot studies	
Experimental designs	
Repeated measures	
Independent groups	
Matched pairs	
Observation: Event sampling	
Observation: Time sampling	
Questionnaire	
Open question	
Closed questions	
Interviews.	
Independent variable	
Dependent variable	
Extraneous variables	
Confounding variables	
Peer review	
Reliability	
Test-retest test of reliability	
Inter-observer reliability	

Validity	
Face validity	
Concurrent validity	
Ecological validity	
Temporal validity	
Objectivity	
Quantitative data	
Qualitative data	
Primary data	
Secondary data.	
Mean	
Median	
Mode	
Scattergrams	
Bar charts	
Histograms.	
Normal distribution	
Nominal data	
Ordinal data	
Interval data	
Content analysis	
Thematic analysis	

Congratulations on completing this task
Put these pages in your Psychology Folder