

Psychology A Level: An overview

What will I study?

Psychology is the study of the mind and behaviour. It is not learning how to mind read like many people think, instead we study **why** a person behaves the way they do, **how** we process information around us and **what** factors might change our actions.

Throughout the course you will study the following topics:

Approaches – An overview of the different and varying perspectives in psychology, these are the fundamental basis of the subject and they all aim to explain why we behave in the way we do.

Psychopathology – Here we have a brief look at explanations and treatments for phobias, OCD and depression and also look at what defines abnormal behaviour.

Research Methods – An in-depth unit focusing on **how** psychological research is designed and conducted and the issues with the different techniques that might be chosen. This also contains statistical analysis of results and the interpretation of results gained.

Memory – Focus is on how the brain stores information, what factors might affect this storage and why people forget. We also look at eyewitness testimony and try to understand why it isn't as full proof as we might think.

Attachment – This is a critical analysis of the first attachment, and why this is important as well as the implications if it is not formed by the end of the critical period. We also look at variations in attachment between cultures.

Social Psychology – This unit considers many of the unethical studies within psychology including Milgram's research. It also covers conformity, obedience and resistance to social influence.

Biopsychology – An in-depth study of localisation and lateralisation of the brain, the nervous system including the structure of the neuron and the endocrine system as well as a focus on biological rhythms.

Aggression – A comprehensive analysis of this behaviour focusing on biological and social factors, including the media and institutional aggression.

Eating Behaviour – What drives our eating behaviour? What part of the brain tells us we are hungry? In this unit we focus on parental influences and evolutionary drives on our food preferences as well as looking at eating disorders such as anorexia and obesity.

Gender: This unit covers information on gender identity as well as theories of gender development looking at biological and social factors.

Issues and Debates: This is a synoptic unit which will focus on the current issues within psychology, looking at factors such as reductionism, and psychology as a science to name just two.

We study AQA Psychology and the specification can be found using the following link:

[Psychology AS and A-level 7181, 7182 Specification](#)

How will I study?

You need to be prepared to work outside of your lessons, reading around the topics covered, making extra notes and condensing the information and articles given to you. You will also be required to carry out activities within study groups, such as breaking down psychological research or creating a presentation on a new topic.

Home Learning:

All home learning will be geared towards developing examination skills and knowledge. The majority of your home learning will require you to apply knowledge to examination questions. Please be aware that psychology is predominantly a **written** subject and so you will be asked to write essays on a frequent basis.

How is Psychology assessed?

There will be three examinations that you will sit in the summer of 2028. Each of these will last for two hours and each is worth one third of your overall A Level grade.

Be aware: You will have to complete mathematical calculations in the exam, the subject does expect extended writing and there is significant biological content.

Psychology: Transition Home Learning Task

When you return in September we will be making a start on the Approaches unit. This will give you a detailed understanding of the main viewpoints within the subject of Psychology and throughout the A Level course we will refer to these on a frequent basis.

Before we start our A Level work on the approaches you need to have a basic understanding of them. Using this web address: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/perspective.html> you need to do the following:

- 1) Research the basic principles to each of the following approaches including definitions for key terms noted next to each:
 - Behaviourism – operant and classical conditioning
 - Psychodynamic – ID, Ego, Superego, Psychosexual stages, unconscious
 - Cognitive –schemas, thought processes, computer models
 - Humanism – self actualisation, person centred approach, free will
 - Evolutionary – adaptive behaviours, natural selection
 - Biological – genetics, neuroanatomy, biochemistry
 - Social Learning Theory – imitation, role models, vicarious reinforcement

- 2) You should also ensure that you research two strengths and two weaknesses for each theory.

It may be that you need to use alternative sources to the one above, however this should be used as a basis to your research.