

# Psychology

## Brief Overview of the Course

(for further details, please see our Sixth Form Prospectus  
<https://strschool.co.uk/sixthform/prospectus>)

**Exam Board:** OCR

**Specification web link:** <https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/psychology-h167-h567-from-2015/>

Please download the specification for the A Level, not the AS Level

### Topics Covered: Year 12

#### Research Methods

- Experimental research methods: Laboratory, field and quasi experiments
- Non-Experimental research methods: observation, correlation and self-report
- Planning and conducting research (including your own small scale projects)
- Data recording, analysis and presentation (this includes inferential statistical analyses)
- Report writing
- Scientific method
- Ethics

#### Psychological themes through core studies

- Social psychology: responses to authority and responses to those in need
- Cognitive psychology: memory and attention
- Developmental psychology: external influences on children's behaviour and moral development
- Biological psychology: regions of the brain and neuroplasticity

### Topics Covered: Year 13

#### Issues in mental health

- Historical context of mental health
- Medical model of mental health
- Alternative explanations to the medical model: behaviourist, cognitive and psychodynamic explanations

#### Criminal Psychology

- What makes a criminal
- The collection and processing of forensic evidence
- Collection of evidence
- Psychology and the courtroom
- Crime prevention
- Effects of imprisonment

#### Environmental psychology

- Stressors in the environment
- Biological rhythms
- Recycling and other conservation behaviours
- Ergonomics
- Psychological effects of the built environment
- Territory and personal space

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual differences: understanding disorders and measuring differences</li> </ul> <p>Each key theme includes the study of two core studies; in total you will learn <b>20 core studies</b> in Year 12 alone</p> <p><b>Psychological perspectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviourism</li> <li>• Psychodynamic</li> </ul> <p>Through the areas and perspectives you will also learn about the various issues and debates in psychology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free will and determinism</li> <li>• Nature and nurture</li> <li>• Reductionism and holism</li> <li>• Individual and situational explanations</li> <li>• Social sensitivity</li> <li>• Psychology as a science</li> <li>• Usefulness</li> </ul>	
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Please follow the instructions in the boxes below. The aim of these activities is to introduce you to the study of this subject at Advanced Level by:

- reinforcing your core knowledge and understanding of your chosen subject;
- encouraging you to think more deeply about your subject;
- supporting you to develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for your subject as an academic discipline.

## Core Knowledge and Understanding Task

Whether you have studied this subject before or not, there are elements of core knowledge and understanding that you must have prior to starting the A Level course.

Please provide a written answer to each of the following questions. There are links below to help you discover the answers.

### 1. What is Psychology?

Watch this Ted talk (10 minutes) to find out what Psychology is *not*. Did you hold any of these misconceptions? Why not ask a family member or friend what they think Psychology is and perhaps you can debunk their misconceptions:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/ben\\_ambridge\\_10\\_myths\\_about\\_psychology\\_debunked](https://www.ted.com/talks/ben_ambridge_10_myths_about_psychology_debunked)

### 2. What is Psychology (really)?

Watch this short video to start you off: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Os1C000qxY>  
Your first task is to help you garner an understanding of what Psychology is really all about. Use the internet (use Google, plus the links provided below) to research and understand what the following key terms mean and create a short definition for each *in your own words*.

The most important thing in an A level is *your understanding* – so it's not about having the "word-perfect" definition, it's about you *understanding* what a concept means

Term	Explanation
Altruism	
Armchair psychology	
Bias	
Corpus callosum	
Correlation	
Diffusion of responsibility	
Ethical issues	

Experiment	
Morality	
Memory	
Obedience	
Observation	
Reliability	
Self-report	
Social learning theory	
Validity	
Nature-Nurture debate	
Neuroplasticity	
Free Will – Determinism debate	

**Links to support:**

[www.simplypsychology.org](http://www.simplypsychology.org)

[www.tutor2u.net](http://www.tutor2u.net)

## The Bigger Picture Task

As well as reinforcing your core knowledge and understanding, our A Level curriculum will expose you to what are called the 'established orthodoxies' within each subject, which can include key research, important people who have contributed to the field, as well as broader methods and theories that exist within the subject.

Prior to starting the A Level course, it is important that you are aware of the following themes and topics so that you can develop an understanding of how they contribute to some of the established orthodoxies within the study of Psychology.

Psychology is so broad that it can be somewhat divided into areas or perspectives, each with their own set of assumptions, or agreed upon ways of explaining behaviour. Our unit 'psychological themes through core studies' explores five key areas of psychology, and two major perspectives.

### 1. A history of Psychology

Psychology as a discipline is fairly young compared with the other sciences; however, researchers have been interested in the mind, body and brain for centuries. Below is a list of prominent philosophers (Psychology is rooted in philosophy) and areas of Psychology. Research each and try to recreate a timeline of Psychology.

John B Watson and Behaviourism	Cognitive psychology	Renes Descartes and Cartesian duality
Albert Bandura and social learning theory	Stanley Milgram and social psychology	John Locke
Sigmund Freud and psychodynamic psychology	Charles Darwin and evolutionary theory	Wilhelm Wundt

### 2. Areas and perspectives in Psychology

Now you have an understanding of how Psychology has developed over time; now it's time to look deeper into the areas and perspectives that we will cover.

Match up the areas/perspectives with their key ideas. You may need to do a little research to help with this.

#### **Area/Perspective**

Social area

Developmental area

#### **Key ideas**

All our behaviour/thinking has a root cause in: genes, hormones, neurotransmitters, brain structures

We are all unique and therefore we should find out what makes us different rather than

Biological area	making conclusions about the average person Behaviour is a product of our environment. Those around us - actual or perceived presence – guides our behaviour
Cognitive area	We should investigate how people develop over time. Behaviour can develop in stages or with biological maturation
Individual differences	Our behaviour, thoughts and feelings are a product of unconscious conflict that must be resolved. Childhood experiences shape adult personality
Behaviourist perspective	Behaviour can be explained in terms of information processing. Our mind works much like a computer
Psychodynamic perspective	<b>All</b> behaviour is <b>learned</b> from the environment. We are born a 'blank slate'

### **3. Core studies in Psychology**

We will cover 20 core studies in Year 12! It seems a lot doesn't it! For each study, we need to know its:

- ✓ Background (why is the researcher investigating this in the first place?)
- ✓ Aim
- ✓ Method: design, sample, materials, procedure
- ✓ Results
- ✓ Conclusion
- ✓ Strengths and weaknesses

Let's take a look at the first core study you will learn in Year 12, and answer the questions that follow:

#### **Milgram 1963 - Obedience**

Background: Since the second World War, researchers have been interested in why soldiers committed atrocities when they knew full well that they were often killing innocent people and often knew that it was morally wrong to do so.

Aim: to investigate if American citizens would be obedient even if it meant harming others, or if Germans in World War II were just 'evil'.

Method: a laboratory experiment, using observation to gather data

Sample: 40 American males between 20 and 50 years of age from the New Haven area.

Procedure: Participants were told they were taking part in a learning and memory experiment. There were two actors in the experiment: a man in a white lab coat played the 'experimenter' who told the participant (called the 'teacher') what to do, and a second actor who was playing the part of a second participant (called the 'learner'). The learner had to match up word pairs – the teacher read out one word, and a list of four options, and the learner had to choose which was the correct word that matched. If the learner was incorrect, the teacher had to administer a shock to the learner. With each incorrect answer, the learner was shocked by 15 Volts. Volts ranged from 15V to 450V (this would kill you). There were no shocks – the learner was not hurt – the responses were pre-recorded by the actor. The experimenter urged the teacher to continue when they questioned what they were doing, or indicated they wanted to stop the experiment.

Findings: 65% of Americans delivered 450V shocks (a lethal shock) to another citizen simply because they were told to do so whenever the actor pretended to get an answer wrong. 100% of the Americans delivered at least 300V shocks (also lethal) to another citizen.

Conclusions: Americans are no less 'evil' than Germans and in fact humans simply are compelled to obey authority, even if it may cause harm to other humans.

Questions:

- (i) Do you think this is a good study? Are the findings useful? Why/why not?
- (ii) Are the findings valid?
- (iii) Is the sample sufficient for the study or is it small/biased?
- (iv) Is this study ethical? Why/Why not?

**Links to support:**

[www.simplypsychology.org](http://www.simplypsychology.org)

[www.tutor2u.net](http://www.tutor2u.net)

<https://www.verywellmind.com/a-brief-history-of-psychology-through-the-years-2795245>

<https://allpsych.com/timeline/>

## Recommended Reading List and the Department's 'Top Pick' Title

**As an A Level student, we want you to value academic endeavour (scholarship) and develop a thirst for learning in your chosen subject. Our curriculum will help you to understand that scholarship is not just about learning facts, it is about nurturing powerful knowledge.**

**We will help you with this by directing you to resources that will not only deepen your knowledge and strengthen your understanding of the A Level content, but also broaden it beyond that of the exam board specification.**

Please find the full subject reading list alongside our prospectus on the Sixth Form section of the STRS website here: <https://strschool.co.uk/sixthform/prospectus>. We would encourage you to explore as many of these titles as you can.

From the published reading list, the most highly recommended book(s)/article(s) to read before September are:

I'm Eve – Chris Sizemore. This is a fascinating book which explores the life of a woman with, what is now known as, Dissociative Identity Disorder (or split/multiple personality disorder as it was known then). *Perhaps you can explain her disorder using the areas or perspectives that you have researched.*

Once you have read the recommended book/chapter/article, consider the following:

- What did you learn from the reading?
- Have you identified any patterns or made any connections?
- What unanswered questions has the reading left you with?
- Did you agree entirely with what you have read? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Are there any themes or topics that you would like to explore further?

## Other Recommended Activities

**Please find below a selection of suggested additional activities that the department feel it would be useful for you to explore prior to starting the A Level course in September.**

### **Netflix recommendations:**

100 Humans

Three Identical Strangers

The Mind, Explained

Babies

### **Ted Talks:**

A map of the Brain

[https://www.ted.com/talks/allan\\_jones\\_a\\_map\\_of\\_the\\_brain/up-next](https://www.ted.com/talks/allan_jones_a_map_of_the_brain/up-next)

Pavlov: Operant and Classical conditioning

[https://www.ted.com/talks/peggy\\_andover\\_the\\_difference\\_between\\_classical\\_and\\_operant\\_conditioning/up-next?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/peggy_andover_the_difference_between_classical_and_operant_conditioning/up-next?language=en)

Media and psychology:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry\\_turkle\\_connected\\_but\\_alone](https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_connected_but_alone)

Is all our behaviour determined?

[https://www.ted.com/talks/veerle\\_provoost\\_do\\_kids\\_think\\_of\\_sperm\\_donors\\_as\\_family](https://www.ted.com/talks/veerle_provoost_do_kids_think_of_sperm_donors_as_family)