

# Progression - Psychology

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# 1. Thinking of studying A Level Psychology at Worcester Sixth Form College?

We teach the **AQA** specification.

Here is a brief summary of the topics we cover over the two-year course. If you want to find out more about each of these topics, you can find the full specification on the AQA website:

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/news/as-and-a-level-psychology-updates-first-teach-2025>

- **Social Influence** – conformity, obedience to authority and minority influence.
- **Memory** – the structure of memory, forgetting and eyewitness testimony.
- **Attachment** – early attachments and the effects of disrupting an attachment.
- **Clinical Psychology & Mental Health** – definitions of abnormal behaviour, causes and treatment of mental disorders.
- **Approaches** – the assumptions of Learning approaches, the Cognitive approach, the Biological approach, the Psychodynamic approach and the Humanistic approach.
- **Biopsychology** – the nervous and endocrine systems, fight or flight response, ways of studying the brain and some of the biological rhythms.
- **Research Methods** – data gathering and analysis techniques.
- **Issues and Debates** – free will and determinism, the nature-nurture debate, and holism and reductionism.
- ***Cognition and Development*** – *development of mental processes, especially thinking, reasoning and our understanding of the world.*
- ***Stress*** – *causes of stress, the impact of stress on the body and coping with stress.*
- ***Aggression*** – *biological and psychological explanations for aggression, aggression in prisons and media influences on aggression.*



***Topics in italics are our chosen optional units. These will vary across centres.***

## 2. Tasks to complete before September

In order to prepare for the course, you need to complete the tasks on p4-9.

Before you begin, find a folder to store this Booklet and all the notes that you make on the tasks. **You need to bring in this folder at the start of the course.** Make sure that your notes are neat and well-organised!

Some of the content in these tasks is not directly assessed in the A level Psychology exam, but it will help you understand how psychologists undertake research.



## 2. Tasks to complete before September

### (Task a) Key Research Studies in Psychology

Use the links below to read about some classic psychological studies, most of which you will be learning about in your course.

Then, use the following headings to summarise each of the **SIX** research studies in no more than 250 words (for each study):

- Background and Aim(s)
- Method (procedure and details of the sample)
- Results
- Conclusion(s)

- 1) <https://simplypsychology.org/milgram.html> - Milgram
- 2) <https://www.simplypsychology.org/zimbardo.html> - Zimbardo
- 3) <https://www.simplypsychology.org/loftus-palmer.html> - Loftus and Palmer
- 4) <https://www.simplypsychology.org/mary-ainsworth.html> - Ainsworth
- 5) <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bobo-doll.html> - Bandura
- 6) <https://www.simplypsychology.org/little-albert.html> - Watson and Raynor



## Key Studies in Psychology

Key Study	Aim	Method	Results	Conclusion
<b>Milgram</b>				
<b>Zimbardo</b>				
<b>Loftus &amp; Palmer</b>				
<b>Ainsworth</b>				
<b>Bandura</b>				
<b>Watson &amp; Raynor.</b>				

*Be ready to answer some quiz questions on these studies in your first lessons.*

## Task (b) Key Issues in Research

As you have now seen, much of psychology involves looking at research, such as the studies in the previous task. However, Psychology will also involve learning about *how* we do our research. Some of this you have encountered at GCSE. Using your knowledge from GCSE studies, answer the following questions.

1. What is an independent variable?
2. What is a dependent variable?
3. Identify the Independent and Dependent Variables in the studies below.

*A psychologist investigates whether younger or older people have better memories. They test 18 year olds and 70 year olds and give them 50 words to recall.*

**IV**

**DV**

*A psychologist investigates whether playing team sports increases feelings of happiness. They ask one group of participants to take part in a game of rounders together, and another group of participants to run on a treadmill alone. They then test their happiness by asking them to rate out of 50 how happy they feel.*

**IV**

**DV**

*A psychologist investigates whether watching horror films affects the number of nightmares we have. They ask a group of participants to watch a horror film every night before bed for 7 days and then write down the number of nightmares they can recall in the morning. Another group of participants are asked to watch romantic comedies before bed, and write down the number of nightmares they had in the morning.*

**IV**

**DV**

4. What is a hypothesis?

### Task b continued: Key Issues in Research

In our research we also need to understand data. Sometimes we use averages and measures of spread. Check your understanding of these by answering the questions below:

5. *A Psychologist was interested in studying learning in chickens (yes, we do this!) She put a chicken in a large cage and trained it to ring a bell. Each time the chicken pecked the bell, the bell rang, and the chicken was given some seeds. At first the chicken ignored the bell, but gradually, the time between the pecks at the bell decreased.*

Attempt number	Time taken for the chicken to ring the bell (seconds)
1	120
2	65
3	45
4	33
5	28
6	22
7	15
8	9
9	5

- (a) Calculate the mean, median and mode for this set of data. Show your workings.

Mean =

Median=

Mode=

- (b) What is the range of this set of data?

## Task (c) Ethical Guidelines in Psychological Research

*One of the most important things to consider when psychologists do their research are the rights given to their participants. We call these rights 'Ethical Guidelines'. Use the link to watch the video and answer the following questions.*

Watch this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSD4ta9gaGU>

1. In the US and UK, who writes the guidelines?
2. Are the guidelines law?
3. After listening to our ethical guidelines, complete the table below:

Ethical Guideline	Explanation of this guideline
Informed consent	
Right to withdraw	
Protection From Harm	
Confidentiality	
Debriefing	



4. How did Milgram breach ethical guidelines?
5. Taking what you have learned above, how do you think Zimbardo breached the ethical guidelines?
6. During this presentation, demand characteristics are referred to- what does this mean?
7. What is prior general, retrospective/ retroactive and presumptive consent?
8. What is a cost-benefit analysis?
9. What is an ethics committee?

*You have now had a taster of what A Level Psychology will be like to study. You will need your answers to these tasks in your first lessons. If you are interested in undertaking more research into Psychology, then feel free to complete the optional tasks on the next pages. We look forward to discussing the issues raised in the questions in our lessons!*

*The Psychology Team*

## Optional Activities

### Ted Talks

You may have come across TED Talks at school. There are some good ones on psychological topics.

Go to the TED Talks homepage (<https://www.ted.com/talks>) and then select *psychology* from the drop down 'topics' box.

Pick **some** talks that look interesting or use the 'search talks' box to find TED Talks on a topic linked to the A Level Psychology specification.

Here are some examples that you might like:

- [https://www.ted.com/talks/petter\\_johansson\\_do\\_you\\_really\\_know\\_why\\_you\\_do\\_what\\_you\\_do](https://www.ted.com/talks/petter_johansson_do_you_really_know_why_you_do_what_you_do)
- [https://www.ted.com/talks/laurel\\_braitman\\_depressed\\_dogs\\_cats\\_with ocd what animal madness means for us humans](https://www.ted.com/talks/laurel_braitman_depressed_dogs_cats_with OCD_what_animal_madness_means_for_us_humans)
- [https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth\\_loftus\\_the\\_fiction\\_of\\_memory](https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_loftus_the_fiction_of_memory)
- [https://www.ted.com/talks/scott\\_fraser\\_the\\_problem\\_with\\_eyewitness\\_testimony](https://www.ted.com/talks/scott_fraser_the_problem_with_eyewitness_testimony)
- [https://www.ted.com/talks/steven\\_pinker\\_chalks\\_it\\_up\\_to\\_the\\_blank\\_slate](https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_chalks_it_up_to_the_blank_slate)
- [https://www.ted.com/talks/philip\\_zimbardo\\_on\\_the\\_psychology\\_of\\_evil](https://www.ted.com/talks/philip_zimbardo_on_the_psychology_of_evil)
- [https://www.ted.com/talks/ben\\_ambridge\\_10\\_myths\\_about\\_psychology\\_debunked](https://www.ted.com/talks/ben_ambridge_10_myths_about_psychology_debunked)



## **Complete a (free) short course about Psychology**

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue>

<https://www.futurelearn.com/subjects/psychology-and-mental-health-courses>

These courses are organised by external providers NOT Worcester Sixth Form College! Some are more appropriate for individuals new to studying Psychology – it is recommended that you choose an ‘introductory’ level course. Most, but not all, are free courses.

Why not try these OpenLearn courses?

- Starting with psychology
- Psychological research, obedience and ethics
- Introduction to child psychology
- Forensic psychology

## **Watch some Psychology-themed documentaries**

- NETFLIX: Babies (related to the specification topic of Attachment)
- NETFLIX: 100 Humans (covers topics within general psychology)
- NETFLIX: The Mind Explained (short episodes, many of which link to different topics on the specification)
- The brain: a secret history (3 parts which cover different topics on the specification)
  - <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6cfd2>
  - <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6cfd6>
  - <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xugnzu>

After watching each documentary, try to summarise it in no more than 100 words. Alternatively, if you are watching the documentary with someone else, you could both write a summary and compare them. Although you have watched the same content, your interpretations may be different (we look at this phenomenon in A level Psychology!).

## Read some psychology-themed books or articles

The following books relate closely to the study of Psychology. Using the internet, your local library and school or college library read a selection of books/articles listed below.

Summarise your findings in 50-100 words and suggest ways in which your chosen books/articles relate to the field of Psychology.

### Books:

- *Friend Request*, 2018 by Laura Marshall
- *Born Evil*, 2018 by Julia Derek
- *Lies*, 2017 by T.M. Logan
- *Reaching Down the Rabbit Hole*, 2016 by Allan Ropper and Brian David Burrell
- *Good Me Bad Me*, 2017 by Ali Land
- *Selfie: How the West Became Self-Obsessed*, 2018 by Will Storr
- *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil*, 2008 by Philip Zimbardo
- *How to Survive the End of the World*, 2018 by Aaron Gillies

### Articles:

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/finding-new-home/201806/why-do-some-songs-become-popular>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/finding-new-home/201805/narcissistic-eyebrows>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/talking-apes/201805/are-you-morning-lark-or-night-owl>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/modern-mentality/201806/sadness-does-not-discriminate-reflecting-kate-spade>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/when-your-adult-child-breaks-your-heart/201805/are-children-overprescribed-psychiatric>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/finding-new-home/201805/new-research-does-watching-tv-make-us-unhappy>

