



Psychology A Level:

Bridging the Gap



STUDENT NAME:

Welcome to psychology! This is your 'Bridging the Gap' booklet to help get you ready for your A Level psychology course starting in September. This pack is designed to give you a flavour of what A Level psychology is all about. The pack will introduce you to key areas in psychology. The work in this pack is important, and therefore detailed, which can take a while to complete. Hence, start activities early and break it up into chunks. You need to read the relevant pages in the online textbook (link below), watch the videos (links below) and then complete the activities in this booklet. **You are required to bring your completed 'Bridging the Gap' booklet with you to your first psychology lesson. If you need any assistance please email me: JMachin@westonroad.staffs.sch.uk**

Use this textbook to support the completion of this booklet:

<http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/oxed/secondary/psychology/complete-companions-approaches-psychology.pdf> (Pages 124-125, Origins of psychology, are no longer needed for your exam = ignore!)

Further support material can be found following the link below to the course online textbook. This online book can also be used to support your A level work. You need a username and password to access it. Here is the link: <https://illuminate.digital/aqapsych2edy1/>
 USERNAME: SWESTACADEMY7
 Password: GREEN7

Want your own copy of a textbook? Search online for 'The complete companion student textbook psychology' (Cardwell and McLaughlin, 2025). There is an 'abstract' cat on the front.

Some of the activities may require you to use the internet for further understanding. Below is a list of useful YouTube lessons to support you. If any web links for the tasks do not work google relevant key words for information/search YouTube clips to complete all tasks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZqd0bHbr1A> – Psychodynamic approach

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoEugxTZnt0> – Behaviourist approach

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oW8AhCRVLbo&list=PLUQ8QDGvbAwh4L0A8cZtx0yL74-1FO6dz&index=7> – Humanistic approach

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6SWcMtP8T4&list=PLUQ8QDGvbAwh4L0A8cZtx0yL74-1FO6dz&index=4> – Cognitive approach

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLhPDVAlosk&list=PLUQ8QDGvbAwh4L0A8cZtx0yL74-1FO6dz&index=3> – Social learning theory

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bp7_mkCsUW8&list=PLUQ8QDGvbAwh4L0A8cZtx0yL74-1FO6dz&index=5 – Biological approach

For all activities you can access additional videos here:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLtE4p7J_M8VD0I654vdGxmA9JHGAYRgLT

This table shows the topics we shall be covering over the next 2 years. Feel free to research any topics below. They can all be found in the online course textbook that you have details for above.

A Level course online		
Year 12: Introductory topics in Psychology	Year 12-13: Psychology in Context	Year 13: Issues and Options in Psychology
Social influence (on behaviour)	Approaches in psychology	Issues and debates in psychology
Memory	Research methods	Relationships
Attachment (in childhood)	Biopsychology	Schizophrenia
Clinical psychology and mental health		Forensic psychology

This transition booklet will cover some information for approaches in psychology, research methods, maths in psychology, issues and debates and career options.

Introduction to psychology

Task 1: Watch the following clip and define psychology.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0W49PQCTUGs>

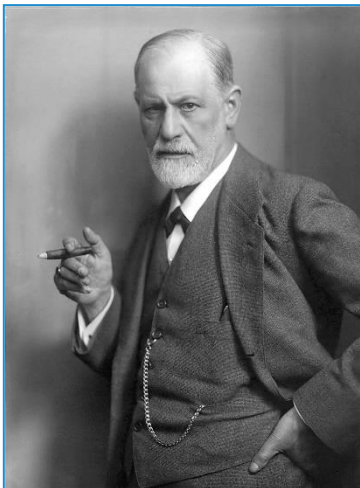
Psychology is _____

Task 2: What causes you to behave the way you do?

Pre-task information: In psychology there are different points of view to why we behave the way we do. Psychologists often agree with only one point of view (an approach) and use research to support their view. The activities that follow introduce you to the main approaches to explaining behaviour in psychology - helping you to discover the complexities of your own behaviour and the behaviour of people around you!

Stretch and challenge: *At the bottom of each approach add evaluation (strengths and weaknesses).*

2a: Does your unconscious mind influence your behaviour?



The Psychodynamic approach is most associated with Sigmund Freud (though several post-Freudians were influenced by and expanded upon many of Freud's ideas). Freud emphasised the influence of the unconscious mind (part of the mind you are unaware of) on behaviour, alongside development of his person-centred therapy called psychoanalysis. He argued that physical problems could be explained in terms of conflict with the mind.

Part 1: The structure of personality (summarise in a sentence...)

ID: _____

EGO: _____

SUPEREGO: _____

Apply it:

You need to get your psychology homework done tonight but your friends have just invited you to a party. What would ID, EGO and SUPEREGO suggest you do in the following situation?

ID: _____

EGO: _____

SUPEREGO: _____

Defence Mechanisms: How we balance the conflict between the id and superego.

Repression	Forcing a distressing memory out of the conscious mind.
Denial	Refusing to acknowledge some aspect of reality.
Displacement	Transferring feelings from the true sources of distressing emotion onto a substitute target.

Apply it: Match each example below to a defence mechanism listed in the table.

- a) Continuing to turn up to work even though you have been sacked.
- b) An individual forgetting the trauma of their favourite pet dying.
- c) Slamming the door after a row with your parents.

Part 2: Psychosexual stages:

Summarise the Psychosexual stages:

Stage	Description of Stage

Apply it: Briefly summarise the study of Little Hans

(https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/freud-1909?srsId=AfmBOoo_tRKdC2Vl6M+2wW-rLE_EyeB1NhQE8FiEszv2VZw-RBsbNLlz)

How is this linked to the Oedipus complex?

2b: Is your behaviour learned?

The behaviourist approach emerged at the beginning of the 20th century and became the dominant approach in psychology for half of that century. It is also credited as being the driving force in the development of psychology as a scientific discipline.

Part 1: Classical conditioning (acquiring a behaviour). Summarise in a sentence what this is...

Apply it: A traveller often feels nauseous due to the motion of a ferry. Shortly after eating breakfast with coffee, a traveller is seasick during a ferry crossing. Following this, the smell and taste of coffee induce nausea. Use your knowledge of classical conditioning to explain why this happens.

Before conditioning: _____ + _____
Unconditioned stimulus + Unconditioned response
_____ is the neutral stimulus that produces no response

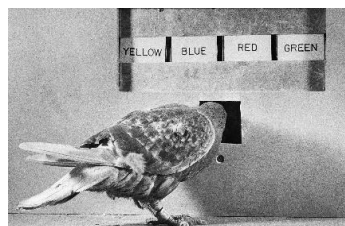
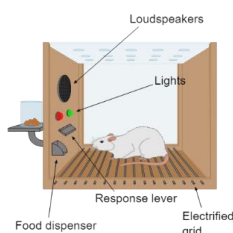
During conditioning: _____ + _____ → _____
Unconditioned stimulus + neutral stimulus → unconditioned response

After conditioning: _____ → _____
Conditioned stimulus → Conditioned response

Part 2: Operant conditioning (maintenance of a behaviour)

Explain the similarity and difference between positive and negative reinforcement.

The Skinner Box: P1 Skinner conducted experiments with rats and sometimes pigeons, in specifically designed cages called Skinner boxes. Every time the rat activated a lever within the box, it was rewarded with a food pellet. After many repetitions, the animal would continue to perform the behaviour. **P2** Skinner also showed how rats and pigeons could be conditioned to perform the same behaviour to avoid an unpleasant stimulus, for example an electric shock.



Apply it:

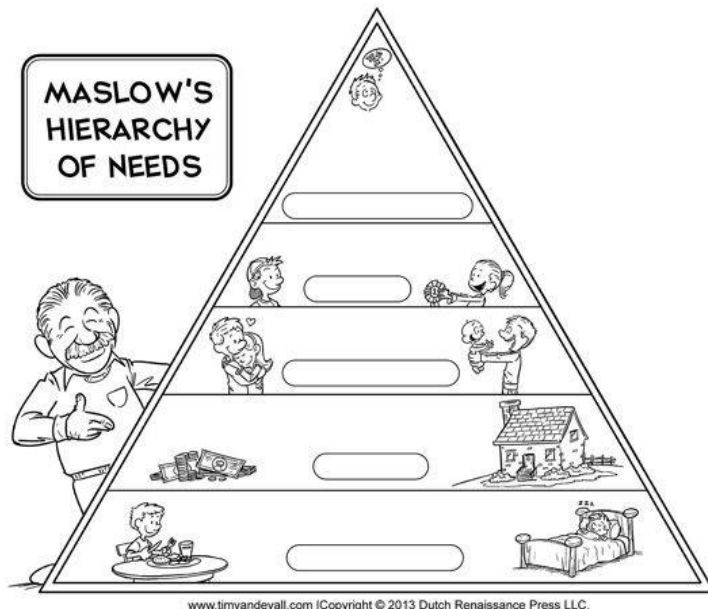
Which aspect of operant conditioning does paragraph 1 (P1) illustrate? _____

Which aspect of operant conditioning does paragraph 2 (P2) illustrate? _____

2c: Is your behaviour caused by unique factors?

Humanistic psychologists start from the assumption that every person has their own unique way of perceiving and understanding the world. Humanistic psychologists explicitly endorse the idea that people have free will and can choose their own actions (although they may not always realise this). They also take the view that all people have a tendency towards growth and the fulfilment of their potential.

Complete the diagram below by labelling the rows.



Abraham Maslow's view of human needs was more complex than Rogers. Whilst Rogers believed that people needed **unconditional positive regard**, Maslow acknowledged that people have a **variety of needs** that differ in immediacy, and which need satisfying at different times.

Unconditional Positive Self

To have effective therapy it is important to have a combination of unconditional positive regard from both the client and therapist.		Therapist	
		Unconditional positive regard (U)	Conditional positive regard (C)
Client	Unconditional positive regard (U)	1. U-U relationship	2. U-C relationship
	Conditional positive regard (C)	3. C-U relationship	4. C-C relationship

Carl Rogers (1980) based the humanistic approach on the principle that the therapist must always show the client unconditional positive regard. This means that the therapist must not impose any conditions of worth (e.g. I will like you if you tell me everything about...) and must be genuine. The purpose is to achieve personal growth in the client and reduce the degree of incongruence.

What is the difference between conditional and unconditional positive regard?

Apply it:

This technique is used in counselling. How would someone NOT demonstrate unconditional positive regard in counselling?

2d: Do your thoughts influence the way you think?

The cognitive revolution came with the introduction of the digital computers. It was developed in the 1960's as a response to the 'behaviourists' failure to acknowledge mental processes. The digital computer gave psychologists a metaphor for the operations of the human mind.

Define the terms:

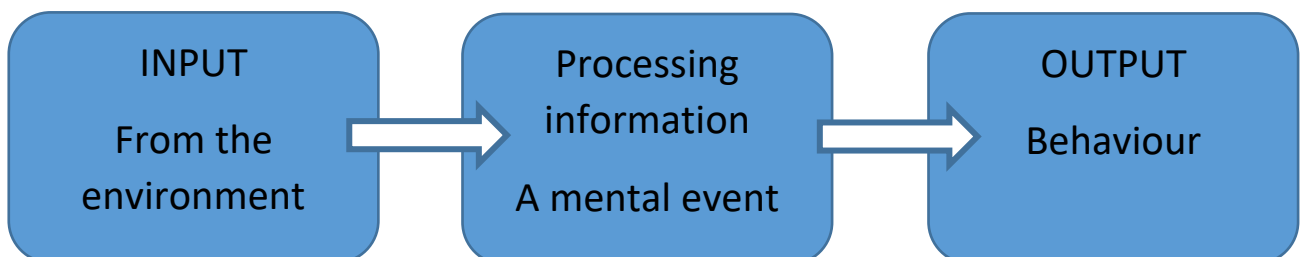
Inference: _____

Schema: _____

Read the following passage:

Evrey gnereation gtes the mosnter it deserevs as the reprsenetaiton of its depeest faers. Tdoay's zombeis, who are usulaly infetced in their thuosanads, repersent our mdoren faer of contgauivos disesaes, uncnontroled medcial tehconolgoy and scoial colalpse. Zombeis are lniked, in our cutlure, with daeth and we probalby evovled to aviod daed and disesaed bodeis to aviod infcetoin, acrodng to Lynn Alden, a profsesor at the Univrestiy of Brtsiih Colmobia. "But it's one thing to aviod a cosrpe taht ins't movnig and qiute antoehr when they strat chasnig you!"

Apply it: Explain the role of schemas in helping you make sense of the information above.



2e: Do you learn your behaviour from others?

Albert Bandura proposes the Social Learning Theory as a development of the behaviourist approach. He argues that classical and operant conditioning could not account for all human learning - there are important mental processes that bridge between stimulus and response.

Define the key terms

Vicarious Reinforcement	
Identification	
Imitation	
Modelling	From the role model point of view: From the observer point of view:

Apply it: Mrs Foster is a school teacher. She notices that some of the students in her class constantly call out answers without raising their hands, which ruins the learning for other students. How might Mrs Foster use vicarious reinforcement to change student behaviour?



Apply it: Bandura's Bobo doll experiments have implications for the media - are children, and indeed adults, influenced by the violence and aggression they see on television, in movies and video games? There have been many incidences of copycat killing where perpetrators have said they were inspired by violent TV and films.

Using Social Learning principles, explain why media may potentially have a negative impact on children's behaviour.

2f: Are you born the way you are?

In the 1980's, the biological approach begins to establish itself as the dominant scientific perspective in psychology. This is due to advances in the technology that have led to increased understanding of the brain and biological processes.

Part 1: Genetics

Define:

Genotype	
Phenotype	
Monozygotic twins	
Dizygotic twins	

Apply it:

Sam and Dan are identical twins who were separated at birth. When they met each other at the age of 18, they are surprised by their slight differences in looks and huge differences in personality. Sam is much more outgoing than Dan who has always been rather shy. Using your knowledge of genotype and phenotype, explain the differences in their personality. (Ensure you use relevant information from the scenario in your answer).

Part 2: Evolution

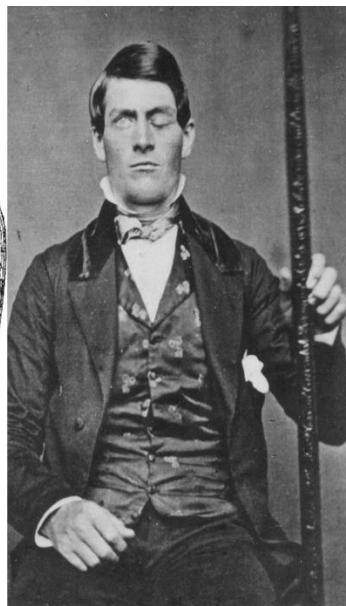
Define evolution: _____

Choose one of the following human traits and write a brief explanation for why this trait might have been advantageous for our ancestors. Traits: Fear of snakes, fear of social rejection, disgust of rotten food, preference for sweet foods.

Part 3: Biological structures

Summarise the role of each lobe of the brain in our behaviour.

Temporal lobe	
Parietal lobes	
Occipital lobe	
Frontal lobe	



Apply it: Phineas Gage, a polite, thoughtful, and well-respected rail worker became the first person to provide evidence that damage to the brain could affect our behaviour. Gage survived a freak accident (1848) when the iron rod he was using to compress dynamite into rock blew back. The rod entered just under his left eye, continuing through his frontal lobe, and then landing over 10 metres behind him. Gage made a miraculous recovery from the accident with very little effect on his mental and physical health. His behaviour changed dramatically.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nu3fFB9rxKE>

Explain the behaviour changes that we may have seen in Phineas Gage? Link to the brain.

Part 4: Neurochemistry

Describe the difference between excitatory and inhibitory neurotransmitters.

Task 3: Why is psychology classed as a science?

Watch the following clip and complete each key 'science word' (one has been done for you). We use Professor Seth to remember the features of a science. Add detail about each one.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJNk3hEMjUI>

P

R

O

F

Shift (as in paradigm shift)

E

T

H

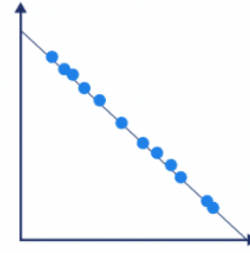
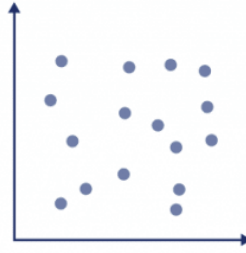
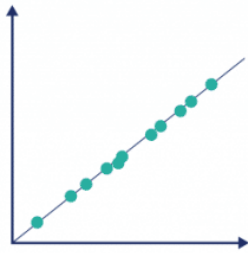
Task 4: Who doesn't love a bit of maths!

Once psychologists have collected data through experiments, observations, questionnaires etc, the data has to be analysed. One way to do this is to calculate the mean. For the data below work out the mean (GCSE maths) number of words correctly recalled in each condition below:

Condition 1: Learned words in a noisy room.	Condition 2: Learned words in a silent room.
5	19
8	16
11	8
6	7
5	13
8	17
7	11
7	10
5	16
9	18
MEAN =	MEAN =

Who doesn't love a bit MORE maths!

Write what you know about the following correlations shown on the scattergrams below?



A pilot study is a small-scale, preliminary trial study (before the actual study, using smaller sample sizes etc). Why do you think it would be important to conduct a pilot study before the real study?

Find out about sampling methods (ways to collect participants to take part in studies) using the video link and then decide which sampling method is being used in each scenario below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvQIuLI3tRk>

A list of all names is made and every 5th person on the list is chosen. _____

A psychologist uses a poster to advertise for participants. _____

A researcher approaches people in a town at 4pm on a Saturday. _____

A list of all names is made and a random number generator is used. _____

The participants represented the same proportion of ages in the population. _____

Questionnaires can be used to collect people's thoughts and feelings through the use of written questions. What do you think a psychologist would need to consider when constructing a questionnaire?

What is the difference between qualitative and quantitative data (types of data)?

Stretch and challenge: Which type of data aligns with an idiographic approach and which with a nomothetic approach to investigating behaviour?

Idiographic = _____ Nomothetic = _____

The next activity will help with this!

TASK 5: To be an 'expert psychologist' complete the activities that follow...

Stretch and challenge: Pre-task information: Psychologists research many areas of behaviour, such as why people obey authority figures, why eyewitness testimony may not be 100% accurate, reasons for why we might attach to a parent/caregiver, the causes of mental illness etc. Whilst researching these areas psychologists may make conclusions from their data that are gender and culture biased (issues in psychology). Psychologists also make assumptions about the causes of behaviour and may accept the role of either determinism or free-will, nature or nurture, holism, or reductionism (debates in psychology). Psychologists may take a certain approach to investigating behaviour (idiographic or nomothetic approach) and must always consider ethics when studying humans to protect research participants.

Define the key words below. You can use these links and the links below to help:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gss-M6m6zaQ>

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/a-level-debates.html#5>

KEY WORDS FOR GENDER BIAS TO DEFINE:

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/issues-debates-gender-bias>

Gender bias _____

Androcentrism _____

Alpha Bias _____

Beta Bias _____

KEY WORDS FOR CULTURE BIAS TO DEFINE:

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/issues-debates-culture-bias> (See video)

Culture Bias _____

Ethnocentrism _____

Cultural Relativism _____

Imposed etic _____

KEY WORDS FOR FREE-WILL VS DETERMINISM TO DEFINE:

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/issues-debates-free-will-determinism>

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/issues-debates-types-of-determinism>

Free Will _____

Determinism _____

Hard Determinism _____

Soft Determinism_____

Biological Determinism_____

Environmental Determinism_____

Psychic Determinism_____

KEY WORDS FOR NATURE VS NURTURE TO DEFINE:

<https://www.tutor2u.net/hsc/reference/the-nature-nurture-debate#:~:text=The%20nature%2Fnurture%20debate%20focuses,the%20product%20of%20biological%20factors.>

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/issues-debates-evaluating-the-nature-nurture-debate-interactionist-approach>

Nature_____

Nurture_____

Interactionist approach_____

KEY WORDS FOR HOLISM VS REDUCTIONISM TO DEFINE:

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/issues-debates-holism>

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/issues-debates-reductionism-levels-of-explanation>

Holism_____

Reductionism_____

KEY WORDS FOR APPROACHES AND ETHICS TO DEFINE:

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/issues-debates-the-nomothetic-approach>

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/issues-debates-the-idiographic-approach>

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/issues-debates-socially-sensitive-research>

Nomothetic approach_____

Idiographic approach_____

What are the four main ethical concerns (Sieber and Stanley, 1988) when conducting socially sensitive research? _____

EXTENSION: Use the <https://www.bps.org.uk/> website to complete the table below.

Type in the following link to get you to specific careers that use psychology:

<https://www.bps.org.uk/career-options-in-psychology>, click on each area of psychology to discover where psychology could lead you on a career path! Fill in the table below to show what you have found. For instance, what daily tasks would a Forensic Psychologist do in their daily work? Places of work? How to train to become a psychologist? etc.

Area of psychology	Summary of where this area of psychology could lead you career wise!
Forensic	
Counselling	
Clinical	
Educational	
Area of your choice:	