
Preparation for Psychology A-Level

Purpose of these tasks:

- To **introduce** the fundamentals of psychology – explaining behaviour in different ways, some of the research methods used and debates raised
- To **assess** your independent study and written communication skills

Submission format: Your work **must be hand-written** and not typed, unless it is the way you complete your exams.

Each task should use a minimum of one side of A4 paper and a maximum of two.

Suggested resources: You should use a textbook or a website such as: www.simplypsychology.org

Do be cautious in your choice of sources for reliability and quality. Google is not your friend.

Task 1:

Most of Psychology is based on controlled experiments of human behaviour. This task will help you understand the basic premise of what makes something a science and how to begin constructing a scientific experiment in psychology. We want you to reflect on the value of this way of working, which you will learn a lot about over the next two years.

- a) Research and **summarise** the key features of science. Write at least two sentences to explain each concept. You can choose how you wish to present it.
- The Empirical method
 - Theory construction
 - Hypothesis testing
 - Control of variables
 - Objectivity
 - Replicability
 - Falsifiability
 - Peer Review

- b) Read the following research scenario and use it to answer the questions that follow.
You will need to look up terms that are unfamiliar to you.

Memory and Distraction: A Short Experiment

Salame and Baddeley (1989) conducted an experiment involving 20 college students to explore how different environments might influence memory. Each student listened to a list of 15 common words (such as “apple,” “chair,” and “pencil”), read aloud at a steady pace of one word per second.

On one occasion, the students completed the task in a quiet room. On another occasion, they completed the same task while a popular song played in the background. After each list, they were asked to write down as many words as they could remember.

The results showed that, on average, students remembered more words in one condition than in the other.

Questions

1. **Identify** the IV (independent variable) and DV (dependent variable) in this study.
Operationalise the variables clearly. (4 marks)
2. Write a hypothesis for this study using the following framework. (3 marks)
Participants will significantly when
..... than when
3. **Identify** the experimental design of this study from the following options:
Repeated measures, independent measure or matched pairs
Explain your answer clearly, referring to the study directly. (3 marks)
4. **Identify** one extraneous variable that would need to be controlled in this experiment **and explain** why you would need to control it. (3 marks)
5. What may be lost by working in this way? **Outline an alternative** way of studying this area **and** its potential benefits. (4 marks)

Task 2:

Create your own version of the proforma provided below, filling at least one side of A4 paper.

Research and **outline** the six approaches to explaining behaviour listed below.

	Biological approach	Behaviourist approach	Social learning theory	Cognitive approach	Psychodynamic approach	Humanist approach
How do they explain behaviour? What are their key theories and ideas?						
Where do they sit on the nature nurture debate ?						
Read about studies that use this approach. How scientific is the approach? Justify your judgement						

Task 3:

Watch the video clips below, which feature cases of unusual behaviour.

1. [Clive Wearing](#) (first 12 minutes)
2. [Mariam](#)
3. [Charles Whitman](#)

a) **For each case**, use at least two of the approaches you have studied to explain the behaviour shown in the clips above. What would they think was the cause? **Justify** your suggestions with reference to the clips.

b) **Explain the implications** of your different approaches. Why does it matter if we take one approach rather than another?

For example,

- How do they change our view of the person or their behaviour?
- How do they affect how preventable or treatable the behaviour is?
- Does it affect how we understand other people's behaviour?

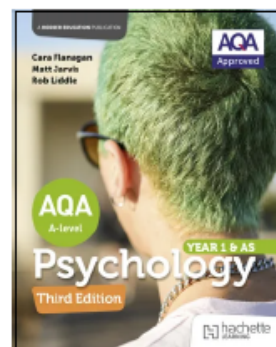
Reminder: You should again use around 1 A4 page for this task.

Discounted Course Textbook

Once you are sure you are on the A-level Psychology course, order your textbook direct from the publisher to benefit from a **30% discount**.

1. Click on the picture to go to the Hachette Learning website
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AQA Psychology for A Level : Year 1 and AS Third edition
Author(s): Cara Flanagan, Matt Jarvis and Rob Liddle



You may have some time on your hands this summer...

There are lots of ways to get into Psychology before you start with us.

Search [BBC IPlayer](#) & [Channel 4](#) for quality **documentaries**.

Here are some ideas of the best **movies** from [All About Psychology.com](#) and [St Leo University](#)

Or if **Podcasts** are more your thing, the [British Psychological Society](#) provides a great list. They are also worth subscribing to for regular emails of interesting current research.

Finally, **book** recommendations from [Goodreads](#) and the [Psychologists interviewed by the BPS](#).

OPTIONAL Extension Tasks:

You could extend your course-specific understanding by completing an additional activity outlined below:

Intermediate: Explore other aspects of how research is done

1. How do we choose people to study in our research?

Why does it matter how researchers choose their participants?

What different methods do psychologists use to choose participants?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different methods we use?

Relevant terms: target population, sample, random sampling, systematic, stratified, opportunity and volunteer, representative, generalise.

2. How is observational research done?

What may motivate researchers to use an observational method as opposed to something else?

How are controlled observations conducted?

What are the different options for coding behaviour?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different methods we use?

Relevant terms: behaviour, defining, behavioural categories, time sampling, event sampling.

Advanced: Read an original psychological study

[Loftus & Palmer's experiment on memory](#)

This relates directly to the syllabus you will be studying in term 1. It is an excellent example of one of the key approaches and the experimental method.

1. Read this study and outline how the report is structured. What do each of the sections do? (This relates to the peer review process within the scientific method)
2. Summarise the study by describing what the study did (procedure) and what it found (results). Try to conclude what the findings tell us and how they are useful.
3. How does this study illustrate one of the key approaches?

OR

[Rosenhan's observational research on psychiatric hospitals](#)

This relates directly to the syllabus you will be studying towards the end of year 1 and early in year 2. It is a controversial piece of research with methodological challenges.

1. Summarise the study by describing what the study did (procedure) and what it found (results). Try to conclude what the findings tell us and how they are useful.
2. Why do you think the findings were controversial?
3. How could the study's methodology be criticised? (this has been done – you may want to explore online)

