

Step up to A-Level Psychology

What will I study in this course?

A-Level Psychology covers a huge diversity of units, including:

- Approaches
- Attachment
- Social influence
- Memory
- Research Methods
- Psychopathology



What is Psychology

Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and behaviour. The four main goals of psychology are to describe, explain, predict and change the behaviour and mental processes of others.

It's about understanding what makes people tick and how this understanding can help us address many of the problems and issues in society today.

As a science psychology functions as both a thriving academic discipline *and* a vital professional practice, one dedicated to the study of human behaviour - and the thoughts, feelings, and motivations behind it - through observation, measurement, and testing, in order to form conclusions that are based on sound scientific methodology.

What skills will this course develop?

You will develop your ability to **think critically**, as well as research methods skills like **interpretation and analysis of data**.

You will gain **confidence** in **discussing ideas** and **presenting them to others**.

You will also gain an understanding of physiological, emotional, cognitive and social determinants of behaviour which **are key to success within the workplace**.

Psychologists will also be able **to interpret data, understand probabilities and correlations** and know how to perform a range of **different statistical calculations**.

What can I go on to study?

This course is ideal preparation for a wide range of subjects at university including Law, Biology, Politics, History, English, Philosophy, Sociology, Maths, Marketing and Economics.

Step up to A-Level Psychology

This is a menu of tasks to help you get ready to study Psychology at A-Level. Try to choose a ‘balanced diet’ of activities each week; e.g. explore some of the video clips, listen to a radio programme, complete one of the written challenges, read part of one of the suggested books and watch one of the recommended documentaries or TV programmes.



Video clips

Each of these clips introduces an idea or theme that is relevant to the A-Level course. Write down what questions the clip raises and how you would respond to them.

How reliable is your memory?

https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_loftus_how_reliable_is_your_memory

The Psychology of Evil

https://www.ted.com/talks/philip_zimbardo_the_psychology_of_evil

Strange answers to the psychopath test

https://www.ted.com/talks/jon_ronson_strange_answers_to_the_psychopath_test

Conformity: Are we afraid to stand out?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiC0Gi0nK9g>

The power of the placebo effect

https://www.ted.com/talks/emma_bryce_the_power_of_the_placebo_effect

Why teens confess to crimes they didn't commit

https://www.ted.com/talks/lindsay_mallopy_why_teens_confess_to_crimes_they_didn_t_commit



Documentaries

These documentaries will get you thinking even more deeply about psychological ideas. Write down five key ideas from the documentary and a list of questions that you will explore further.

From Romania with love: linked to our attachment topic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EU7vC3wUtMo>

The Dangerous Few: Explores claim that it is impossible to identify 4 year olds as potential criminals

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVxGZGPvYPo&index=18&t=0s&list=PLsF6HTtnrEbtI9AkILXfa3bjgGS57FWGm&safe=true>

Conformity to Social Roles – BBC Prison Experiment

Linked to our social influence topic, explores how people are capable of terrible things...

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5is8ry>



Radio programmes and podcasts

These challenging programmes are great for making you think hard. These have been chosen to stretch you so don't worry if you find some parts difficult to understand. Write down what you learned about the topic of each programme. Which opinions do you agree with and why?

The Boy who was Raised as a Girl: Twin sons born in 1965 involved in a psychological experiment. One was raised in line with his biological sex; the other raised as a girl. Key psychological study explored.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00t97xf>

Bedlam: Guests discuss the early years of Europe's oldest psychiatric hospital. This links well to our psychopathology unit, where we study depression, phobias and OCD.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0739rfg>

Freakonomics: Loads of great psychological links here. My favourites are '5 Psychology terms you're probably misusing', 'How to change your mind' and 'Why we choke under pressure'

<https://freakonomics.com/archive/>



Questions to debate

These questions may look simple, but there are no easy answers. Choose a question and try discussing it with somebody else. Then write at least 500 words exploring different possible responses and explaining your own opinion.

Would you obey an order to hurt someone?

Which is more important, nature or nurture?

To what extent do our early (attachment) experiences determine our future life outcomes?

Is our gender identity innate or learnt?

Would you confess to a crime you didn't commit?

How effective is diagnosis of mental illness?



Books

These books are excellent introductions to themes we study in Psychology. They are all available to buy online for less than £10. Write a short summary of a section of the book or a more detailed book review.

It's All in Your Head by Suzanne O'Sullivan (free audiobook or £1.99 kindle edition)

Talking to Strangers: What we Should Know About the People We Don't Know by Malcolm Gladwell (free audiobook)

Opening Skinner's Box by Lauren Slater (£6-£7 pound used on amazon)

The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil by Philip Zimbardo (£9 on amazon, free audio)

Prozac Nation by Elisabeth Wurtzel (£9 from amazon)

The Woman Who Changed her Brain by Barbara Arrowsmith-Young (£1.24 on amazon)



TV programmes and films

Lots of TV programmes and films are inspired by psychological questions. Here are a few that link to the A-Level course. If you get the chance, watch them and think carefully about the ideas which they explore.

The Mind Explained; available on Netflix.

Killer Inside: The Mind of Aaron Hernandez; available on Netflix.

Babies; available on Netflix.

Louis Theroux: By Reason or Insanity; available on iPlayer.

Three Identical Strangers; available on 4OD and Netflix.

Louis Theroux: A Different Brain; available on iPlayer.

Independent learning log

Use this log to keep a record of your preparation work. You can also upload your work to the Step up to A-Level Psychology Google Classroom. Find out more by emailing BMinns@thequestacademy.org.uk

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