

PSYCHOLOGY SUMMER WORK

The best way to decide if you really want to study psychology at A level, is to take a look at some of the issues that psychologists study. Your task is to discover what we do in psychology, and to *find a topic that intrigues you*.

In September I will want to see a summary of what you have found out, and will expect you to be able to tell me (and the others in your new class) about it. (See below for the format).

On the A level course we study many aspects of psychology –what we think, what we do, and what is going on in our brains (and body) that affects these.

Start your investigation into psychology by going on YouTube and finding the following channels:

Crash Course –Psychology <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8dPuualjXtOPRkzVLY0jJY-uHOH9KVU6>

SciShow Psych: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUdettijNYvLAm4AixZv4RA>

These both have playlists with groups of videos around particular topics. Think about why you are choosing to study psychology –what interests you about it? Is it that you like Biology and want to know more about the brain and how it controls us? Or are you interested in how/why people become addicted to various things? Or maybe you are particularly interested in child development?

Pick a topic that interests you and use the videos to kick-start your learning about this topic. The choice of psychological phenomenon to investigate is entirely up to you! You do not need to pick a topic from the syllabus, in fact this is an opportunity to explore areas that we won't have time to look at in class!

With your topic, choose one or two questions that you are trying to answer for yourself. Think about real-world applications and ethical questions that might arise from this.

Find key words / phrases and concepts, or particular psychologists that you have seen and heard about in the video, and find articles that have been written on this. Read at least three such articles and ensure that they are from different sources. Note what they were and where you found them. Think about mixing articles that explain the topic from a biological point of view (brain structure and chemistry) or from a social learning view (influence of the family or media etc), so that you get a balanced understanding of the issue.

Examples of topics could be:

- Addiction (is computer game addiction really an addiction?)
- Love (is this just chemistry?)
- Resilience (is it a thing that can be taught?)
- Synaesthesia ('tasting' words / 'seeing' music etc)
- Why do we dream?
- Gambling (why do people do it, and how do we stop it becoming a problem?)
- Changes in teenage brains (what don't most adults understand about this?)
- Celebrity crushes / fandom (is it 'normal'?)
- Autism (what is it, and should we try to cure it?)
- Visual illusions (how do they 'work'?)
- The mind of an elite athlete (how/why do only some people win?)
- Gender dysphoria (what is it, and how can we help people who have it?)
- Alzheimer's (what do we need to know and do, now that we have an aging population?)
- IQ / intelligence (can we define and test it? If so, should we treat people with different IQs differently?)

If you are already a student at GCH, you will have a login to the Library app. Going on to this will enable you to search the catalogue of stored pdf articles, as well as being able to search many other academic databases that the school subscribes to. Other libraries (school or public) will have similar catalogues that you can search.

As you read these articles, you may find that you want to then watch further, more detailed and in-depth videos. YouTube has channels from places such as Scientific American, New Scientist, Cambridge University and organisations such as 'Brain Facts', that show up-to-date research. There are also many websites with interactive activities (such as simple IQ tests) and ones with summaries of recent research, such as <https://digest.bps.org.uk/>.

Podcasts can also be a good source of interesting discussions such as <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxx9/episodes/downloads>

Make sure that you use reputable websites and channels to source your information –remember that psychology is a science and so should be backed with good quality research.

Keep notes on what you find out. Use these notes to create a summary of the topic and what you have learned about it in the following format:

1. An outline of the phenomenon you have studied –what it is.
2. Why you are particularly interested in this issue and what question(s) you investigated.
3. What websites / databases / video channels did you use in this research?
4. Summarise the theories / explanations of this that you have learned about.
5. Summarise at least one study / research investigation that has examined this issue, including the method they used and the results/conclusion they came to.
6. How might this area of interest impact on people in the real world –why is it important to study this?

Be prepared and aware that I will ask you to tell the whole class what you did and what you found out from your research into your chosen topic.

You can read from your summary (I would expect around 2 sides of writing), or you can collate this as a PowerPoint or Prezi that will take 3-5 minutes to present. Note: a good presenter won't just read from slides, but will know their topic and use the presentation to illustrate points.

Skills that will be important in psychology A level include an understanding of scientific methods of investigation, and an ability to create logical flowing summaries of theories and research evidence. Think about how to write about or explain your topic clearly and succinctly, so that someone who knew nothing about this issue could understand what you have said.

For further information only:

Psychology A level Course Outline

Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and behaviour. We examine competing theories as to how and why people think and behave in all the varied ways that they do, remembering that a theory must have evidence to substantiate it. Thus we take scientific approach to the evaluation of research evidence to discuss whether a theory can be said to be supported or valid. Each lesson will introduce students to new concepts, so there is much to learn, but most students find it fascinating to try to understand themselves and the people they meet and see in the wider world.

The topics covered are as follows. Please note that this is subject to potential change as we will be flexible in response to the needs of students and the school.

See [AQA | Subjects | Psychology | AS and A-level](#) for more detail of each topic

Term	Content
1	Research methods in Psychology Approaches in Psychology Attachment
2	Memory Social Influence Data analysis
3	Biopsychology Psychopathology
4	Issues and Debates Aggression Relationships
5	Stress Inferential statistics Scientific method
6	Revision and exam preparation

During the two years students will also complete investigations in small groups (e.g. an experiment, questionnaire, observation and/or correlation). This will enable them to practice their research methods skills as well as data analysis.

Note that the emphasis throughout is on **science** – the need for investigations surrounding theories of the mind and behaviour, and analysis of the results of research in order to draw conclusions.

Skills: During the course you will develop skills of knowledge and understanding (facts), data analysis and interpretation of research evidence, evaluation of evidence, discussion of opposing theories, and application of these topics to the real world (for example the issue of the credibility of eye-witness testimony).

Exams: The course is linear (meaning that all the assessment is at the end of the 2 years) and has no coursework. Grades are determined from results of 3 written papers, each of which is 2 hours. Every paper will require all of the skills.

Please note that across the papers, the Research Methods and Statistics element is worth 33% of the total marks. Students must therefore have good mathematical and scientific analytical skills.

Exams contain a mix of multiple choice, short answer and extended writing (essay) questions. Therefore students require good skills in English and a coherent and concise writing style. Entry requirements to study Psychology A level at GCH are therefore 6+ in English Language and 5+ in Maths and 6+ in at least one science (preferably Biology).