

A-Level Psychology



What is psychology?

The scientific study of human mind and behaviour:
how we think, feel, act and interact individually and
in groups

True or False?

1. Unwanted intrusive thoughts and the growth of facial hair

Durac (1997):

“An increase in hair production on the end of one’s nose or ear can produce automatic negative thoughts. Equally, a negative automatic thought can produce an immediate increase in hair growth on the outer surface at the tip of the nose...”



3. The "Elderly-related Words Provoke Slow Walking" Experiment Bargh and colleagues

showed that when people were exposed to words that related to being old, they subsequently walked away from the lab more slowly.



2. Men and women holding hands: whose hand is uppermost?

Chapell et al. (1999) tell us:

“A combined total of 15,008 handholding couples were observed in six studies. Men were significantly more likely than women to have the uppermost hand.”



4. Face shape, owner vs dog breed.

Peters et al. (1982) :

“There is a significant correlation between the face length of an individual and the face length of this particular individual’s choice of dog breed”



How do I know if psychology will suit me?

You will succeed in psychology if:

- You are a critical thinker.
- You are curious about human behaviour and how the mind works.
- You enjoy discovering new and exciting research.

Possible degree options

The top six degree courses taken by students who have an A-level in psychology are:

- Psychology
- English
- Sociology
- Business studies
- Sport and exercise science
- Law

Possible career options

Studying psychology at university can give you a whole host of exciting career options, including:

- Forensic psychologist
- Clinical psychologist
- Sports psychologist
- Occupational therapy
- Nursing

Is psychology just common sense?

It might seem like **common sense** to say that gangs engage in anti-social behaviour....

- How do we know this?
- Do we have evidence for this explanation?
- Has anyone done any *research* on this topic?
- YES - Effects of crowds/groups on individuals:
deindividuation (lose sense of individual identity, lose sense of responsibility)

Scientific study

Scientific study refers to the approach which is used in psychology.

- Psychologists use empirical methods:
 - Information is gained through **direct observation** or **experiment**.
 - NOT through opinion or unfounded beliefs
- In experiments, psychologists vary one factor (independent variable) and measure its effects (dependent variable).
- We can then test a **prediction** (hypothesis) and draw **conclusions**.

Course assessment

Studied in year 12

- **Paper 1:** written exam: 2 hours, 96 marks in total, 33.3% of A-level
 - *Social influence, memory, attachment, and psychopathology.*
- **Paper 2:** written exam: 2 hours, 96 marks in total, 33.3% of A-level
 - *Approaches in psychology, biopsychology, and research methods.*

Studied in year 13

- **Paper 3:** written exam: 2 hours, 96 marks in total, 33.3% of A-level
 - *Issues and debates, relationships, eating behaviour and aggression.*

GCSE requirements

You should have a:

Grade 5 in English

Grade 5 in Maths

4-4 in Science

Essay writing skills and quality of written communication important (16 mark essays)

At least 10% of the overall assessment of psychology will contain mathematical skills

Psychology uses the scientific method (Empirical methods, objectivity, theory construction, hypothesis testing, etc.)

Regular work

- **Essays** – timed in lessons and completed as homework.
- **Research** – independent research on a topic before and after lessons.
- **Application tasks** – applying knowledge and research on a topic to a given scenario.

You will also need:

- Excellent work ethic
- Determination and motivation
- Organisation
- Willingness to participate in lessons
- Excellent homework records
- Motivation to broaden knowledge by reading more widely around topics studied in class

Why study this subject at Ruislip High School?

- A history of excellent results: in three of the past four years of external examinations, results have been in the **top 10%** in the country;
- Students have had the opportunity to run their own whole-school psychological experiment in previous years;
- The school has links with the psychology departments at top universities (UCL's Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience, Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, congratulated RHS psychology students on their replication of her team's psychology experiment!)
- RHS students are regularly asked by university psychology departments to take part in their psychology experiments;
- RHS hosts regular neuroscience lectures for students, led by experts in the field; excellent psychology post-18 and careers advice offered.

Past student success



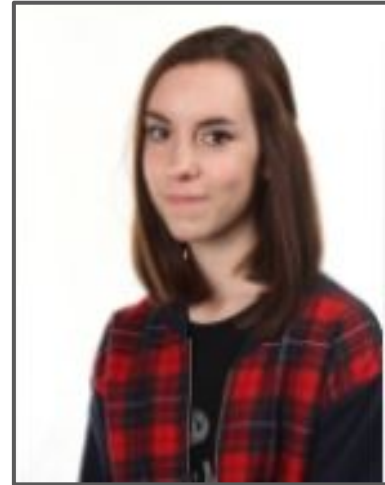
Zoe Yikuno-Amlak
A*

Went on to read
Medicine at
university



Laura Garnham
A*

Went on to read
Psychology at
university



Amy Conti
A*

Went on to read Fine
Art at university



Paul Mackay
A*

Went on to read
Psychology at
university

Associated trips and activities



Professor Philip Zimbardo's conference on 'how good people turn evil'.

Zimbardo discusses his pioneering research in social psychology - the Stanford prison experiment.



The Freud Museum

The Freud Museum was the final home of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis.

The Freud family came to England as refugees, having escaped Austria following the Nazi annexation in March 1938. Freud spent the last year of his life here and the house remains as it was in 1938.