

'The Aspiring Psychologist'

KS4/5



**CHELTENHAM
BOURNSIDE
SCHOOL**



Inspiring lives through learning

'The Aspiring Psychologist'



PSYCHOLOGY

A LEVEL

>>>>>>>>>

1. SOCIAL INFLUENCE

- Theories of conformity
- Explanations for conformity
- Asch
- Explanations for obedience: Agentic state and cognitively of authority, and situational variables.
- Proximity and social influence
- Dispositional explanation for obedience
- Explanations of resistance to social influence
- Minority influence

2. ATTACHMENT

- Attachment and the nature of attachment
- Explanations of attachment: learning theory and Bowlby's monist theory
- Ainsworth's 'Strange situation' and the types of attachment
- Cultural variations in attachment
- Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation
- Effects of institutionalisation
- The influence of early attachment on childhood and adult relationships

5. RESEARCH METHODS YEAR 1

- Types of experiment
- Variables
- Control
- Demand characteristics and investigator effects.
- Experimental designs.
- Ethics
- Sampling
- Observational techniques and Observational design
- Self-report techniques
- Correlations
- The role of peer review in the scientific process
- The implications of psychological research for the economy.
- Quantitative and qualitative data, mixed methods
- Descriptive statistics
- Presentation and display of quantitative data

4. CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Theories in the field of mental health
- The behavioral, cognitive and cognitive-behavioural characteristics of phobias, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).
- The behavioural approach to explaining and treating phobias
- The cognitive approach to explaining and treating depression
- The biological approach to explaining and treating OCD

3. MEMORY

- The multi-store model of memory: capacity and duration.
- The working memory model
- Explanations for forgetting proactive and retroactive interference and retrieval failure due to absence of cues.
- Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony

6. APPROACHES IN PSYCHOLOGY

- Learning approaches: (i) behaviourist approach, (ii) social learning theory including:
 - The cognitive approach
 - The biological approach
 - The humanistic approach
 - The psychodynamic approach
 - Humanistic Psychology
 - Comparison of approaches

7. BIOPSYCHOLOGY

- The structure and function of the nervous system: central and peripheral (somatic and autonomic).
- The structure and function of sensors, relay and motor neurons.
- Synaptic transmission, neurotransmitters, excitation and inhibition.
- The brain and nervous system
- The fight or flight response
- Ways of studying the brain
- Localisation of function in the brain and hemispheric lateralisation
- Plasticity and functional recovery of the brain after trauma

8. ISSUES AND DEBATES

- The nature-nurture debate in Psychology
- Free will and determinism
- The nature-nurture debate
- Holism and reductionism
- Idiographic and nomothetic approaches
- Individuality in psychological research

11. AGGRESSION

- Neural and hormonal mechanisms in aggression
- Genetic factors in aggression
- The ethological explanation of aggression
- Evolutionary explanations of human aggression
- Transactional models
- Social learning theory
- Deindividuation
- Institutional aggression in the context of prisons.
- Media influences on aggression, including the effects of computer games, desensitisation, disinhibition and cognitive priming

10. GENDER

- The role of chromosomes and hormones in biological sex.
- Diversity in sex development.
- Klinefelter's syndrome and Turner's syndrome.
- Genomic imprints
- Biological explanations of gender development
- Cognitive explanations of gender development
- Social learning theory as applied to gender development.
- The influence of culture and media on gender roles.
- The interactionist approach
- Inheritance: biological and social/cultural explanations

9. SCHIZOPHRENIA

- Classification of schizophrenia: Issues in diagnosis
- Biological explanations for schizophrenia
- Psychological explanations for schizophrenia
- Drug therapy
- Cognitive-behaviour therapy and family therapy
- The interactionist approach in explaining and treating schizophrenia; the diathesis-stress model

RESEARCH METHODS YEAR 2

- Coding in content analysis
- Case studies
- Measures of reliability
- Types of validity: face validity, concurrent validity, ecological validity and temporal validity; improving validity
- Features of science
- Reporting psychological research
- Levels of measurement: nominal, ordinal and interval

12. STATISTICS

- Statistical testing: the sign test.
- When to use the sign test; calculation of the sign test.
- Probability distributions: use of statistical tables and critical values
- Type I and Type II errors
- Choice of statistical test

13. PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPIES

- Cognitive-behaviour therapy
- Psychodynamic therapy
- Humanistic therapy
- Family therapy
- The interactionist approach in explaining and treating schizophrenia; the diathesis-stress model

'The Aspiring Psychologist'



Welcome to the world of psychology beyond the classroom! Whether you're already fascinated by human behaviour or simply curious about what makes people think, feel, and act the way they do, this is your opportunity to explore the subject in greater depth.

As a Sixth Form student, engaging in extra-curricular psychology is an excellent way to broaden your understanding, strengthen your university applications, and discover which areas of psychology truly interest you.

Exploring psychology outside the classroom isn't just about reading more – it's about thinking critically, questioning assumptions, and applying concepts to real-life situations.

Whether you're considering psychology as a future career or simply want to understand people better, these resources will give you a strong start.

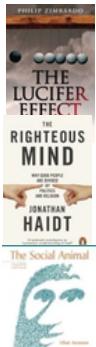
Enjoy, and don't hesitate to share your discoveries or ask questions along the way.

Curiosity is the heart of psychology!

Miss Mitchell
Head of Psychology



Reading list



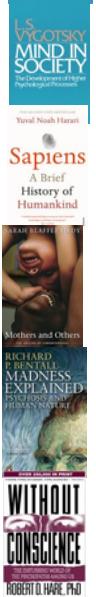
Social Influence

- **The Lucifer Effect** – Philip Zimbardo - (on obedience and situational forces)
- **The Righteous Mind** – Jonathan Haidt - (on moral psychology and social divisions)
- **The Social Animal** – Elliot Aronson - (classic insights on group behaviour and persuasion)



Memory

- **How the Mind Works** – Steven Pinker - (includes cognition, memory mechanisms)
- **Thinking, Fast and Slow** – Daniel Kahneman - (insight into dual-process thinking and memory biases)
- **Blink** – Malcolm Gladwell - (how intuition and subconscious influence memory and decisions)



Attachment / Developmental Psychology

- **Mind in Society** – Lev Vygotsky - (social and cultural roots of development)
- **Sapiens** – Yuval Noah Harari - (broad developmental and evolutionary perspective)
- **Mothers and Others** – Sarah Blaffer Hrdy - (evolutionary developmental and social bonding)

Psychopathology / Clinical Psychology

- **Madness Explained** – Richard Bentall & Gordon Beck - (understanding psychosis in human context)
- **Without Conscience** – Robert D. Hare - (psychopathy exploration)
- **The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat** – Oliver Sacks - (neurological case studies)



Reading list

Approaches / Research Methods



- **The Psychology Book** – Catherine Collin - (accessible overview of psychology's core ideas)
- **Bad Science** – Ben Goldacre - (critical thinking and understanding flawed research claims)
- **50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology** – Scott Lilienfeld - (debunking misused psychological ideas)

Biological Psychology



- **Why We Sleep** – Matthew Walker - (sleep's importance in cognition and brain function)
- **Brainstorm** – Dan Siegel - (teenage brain development)
- **The Selfish Gene** – Richard Dawkins - (evolutionary underpinnings of behaviour)

Cognitive Psychology / Thinking



- **Thinking, Fast and Slow** – Daniel Kahneman - (again highly relevant here)
- **Nudge** – Richard Thaler - (behavioural insights into decision-making)
- **Drive** – Daniel Pink - (motivation and cognitive behavior)

Issues & Debates / Interdisciplinary Topics



- **Invisible Women** – Caroline Criado-Perez - (gender bias in research and data)
- **Phantoms in the Brain** – V.S. Ramachandran & Sandra Blakeslee - (neuroscience meets perception)
- **Classic Case Studies in Psychology** – Geoff Rolls - (historical case studies shaping the field)

Competitions



Royal Holloway Psychology Poster & Video Competition

Year 12 teams (2–5 students) submit a poster and a two-minute video on a prompt such as “How can psychologists promote healthier working environments in schools?”



British Psychology Olympiad & Minds Underground Essay Competition



University of Law Psychology Essay Competition

Students write an essay on a prompt related to cyberpsychology (e.g. “How can technology support young people’s mental health and wellbeing?”) Rewards include publication in an academic journal, a £500 cash prize, and editorial work experience.

Competitions



Eduqas AS/A-Level Psychology Research Poster Challenge

Students submit research-themed posters demonstrating methodology and original ideas. Winners receive vouchers (£500 for first prize). Open to students across different exam boards.



Synaptic Essay Competition (NeuroSpark London)

Students write neuroscience-themed essays. The top 10 get published, and top 3 are converted into short videos. Encourages interdisciplinary topics.

Listen and Watch



Podcasts



The Psych Files podcast
www.ThePsychFiles.com

[The Psych Files](#) - ([Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#))

Explains key psychology concepts in an easy-to-understand way, often linking them to real-life scenarios and experiments. Covers A-Level topics like memory, social influence, research methods, and cognitive biases.



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

[Speaking of Psychology](#) ([APA](#), [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#))

This podcast explores current psychological research and its application to everyday life. Great for applying theories to real-world issues—useful for Issues & Debates and evaluation skills.



[Hidden Brain](#) ([hiddenbrain.org](#), [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#))

Explores unconscious patterns that drive human behaviour using storytelling and research. Fantastic for cognitive psychology, social influence, biases, and decision-making (Thinking, Fast and Slow themes).



[All in the Mind](#) ([BBC Sounds](#), [Spotify](#))

Covers mental health, neuroscience, and psychological research in an accessible format. Excellent for psychopathology, biological psychology, and mental health debates.

Listen and Watch



Films/YouTube/TV



One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)

Explores the treatment of mental illness, the power of authority figures, and issues surrounding institutional care and human rights. (Film)



A Beautiful Mind (2001)

Based on the life of mathematician John Nash, this film gives insight into symptoms, treatment, and the personal impact of schizophrenia. (Film)



The Stanford Prison Experiment (2015)

A dramatization of Zimbardo's famous study—perfect for understanding situational factors and ethical issues in psychology research. (Film)



Split (2016)

Although fictional and somewhat sensationalized, it provides a basis for discussing misconceptions about mental health disorders and media influence.

Listen and Watch



Social media

@simplypsychology

Covers key topics like memory, attachment, research methods, and key studies in a clear, visual format. Great for quick revision and summarised notes.

@psychologytools

Focuses on mental health and therapy resources (CBT, coping strategies). Useful for psychopathology and applied psychology.

@psychologytoday

Shares articles and posts on current psychological research and real-life applications. Great for linking Issues & Debates and contemporary examples.

@psychologyhub

Short videos explaining psychological concepts and case studies. Ideal for quick revision bursts.

@a.levelpsychology

Focused on A-Level specifications (AQA, Edexcel, OCR). Exam tips, topic summaries, and mnemonics.

PsychBoost

A-Level Psychology revision videos for every topic. Includes exam technique and model answers.

Simply Psychology

Explains theories and research studies in a clear, visual way.

Work Experience and Events



Work experience in psychology helps you understand how psychological ideas apply to real people, real behaviour and real situations. While you may not be able to shadow a qualified psychologist before university, there are many valuable ways to explore the field, develop insight into human behaviour and build skills that support future study.

Psychology-related experiences can include:

- University tasters, such as Springpod's Psychology sessions and virtual work experience programmes
- Care settings, for example volunteering in elderly care homes with organisations like OSJCT
- Children's charities, such as Barnardo's, offering insight relevant to educational psychology
- Mental health charities, including Swindon & Gloucestershire Mind, supporting those with mental health challenges or brain injuries
- Forensic psychology pathways, through volunteering opportunities with charities like Victim Support (age restrictions may apply)

These experiences help develop empathy, communication, observation and critical thinking skills, strengthening applications for psychology courses and giving a realistic sense of the diverse careers within the field.

Work Experience and Events



[Psychology University Taster | Springpod](#)

This session will detail the importance of psychology in our everyday lives and examine the influence of social media and technology.



[Psychology Unveiled: Fields and History - Virtual Work Experience | Springpod](#)

If you're passionate about deciphering what makes people tick, this program is tailor-made for you. Gain insights into recognised and practiced fields of psychology.



[Welcome to The Orders of St John Care Trust | OSJCT](#)

Though you are unlikely to be able to shadow a working psychologist before university, there are many opportunities to gain experience - e.g. elderly care homes.



[Cheltenham Charity Shop | Barnardo's](#)

Volunteering for children's charities is the best way to gain educational psychology work experience as a school student.



[Swindon & Gloucestershire Mind](#)

Mental health charities or those which support patients with brain injuries are the best way to get counselling or clinical psychology work experience.



[Volunteering Roles | Victim Support](#)

Forensic Psychology. There are various charities which support ex-offenders and victims.(age requirement is 18+)



The Careers Team at Bournside deliver regular Inspire Breakfast Lectures.

Open to students in Year 10 - 13, these business-focused breakfasts invite speakers from all corners of industry to share their professional experiences and valuable insights with Bournside students over breakfast; opening our eyes to the opportunities available across many industry sectors.

[Take a look at upcoming speakers and reserve your space here.](#)



