



# **Psychology A-level**

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Well done for considering taking Psychology at A level at Haydon!

We currently study the AQA Psychology specification. Please find the specification here:

**<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/psychology/as-and-a-level/psychology-7181-7182>**

This pack contains a programme of activities and resources to prepare you to start an A Level in Psychology in September. The pack is to introduce you to some of the key topics you will study in A Level Psychology, such as psychological approaches and research methods.

You will need to complete this booklet in full and have it in your folder at the start of the year. You will need dividers in your folder to distinguish between the different units within the course (see topics at end of booklet). Being able to run your own research is a big part of what psychologists do. We hope you enjoy running your own research over the summer!

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At the back of this booklet you will find links to the specification and textbooks as well as a reading list.

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### **Tasks: Your transition work is in 3 sections.**

To complete your transition work, print of pages .....and fill in the gaps on

- 1) Researching Psychological approaches
- 2) Carrying out your own memory experiment
- 3) Reading psychological research

Use this link to help you research:

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/perspective.html>

[http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter\\_21%2FApproaches\\_in\\_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFIhttp://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter\\_21%2FApproaches\\_in\\_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFI-Pukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wgPukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wg](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter_21%2FApproaches_in_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFIhttp://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter_21%2FApproaches_in_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFI-Pukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wgPukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wg)

[http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter\\_21%2FApproaches\\_in\\_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFI-Pukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wgPukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wg](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter_21%2FApproaches_in_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFI-Pukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wgPukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wg)

[http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter\\_21%2FApproaches\\_in\\_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFI-Pukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wgPukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wg](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter_21%2FApproaches_in_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFI-Pukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wgPukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wg)

[http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter\\_21%2FApproaches\\_in\\_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFI-Pukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wgPukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wg](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter_21%2FApproaches_in_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFI-Pukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wgPukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wg)

[http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter\\_21%2FApproaches\\_in\\_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFI-Pukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wgPukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wg](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0ahUKEwj-062Vi6zNAhUsJcAKHawzD30QFghNMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2F9781848720091%2Fdownloads%2FChapter_21%2FApproaches_in_Psychology.docx&usg=AFQjCNFI-Pukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wgPukhk5O5U4vIc9meur1ss75wg)

<https://ccowland.wordpress.com/2012/09/17/the-5-approaches-of-psychology/>

### **Task one: Researching the psychological approaches**

For each approach you need to write 6 points about the main assumptions and a study/experiment that supports its ideas. The following site will help you:

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/perspective.html>

The Biological approach:

A study/experiment that supports the Biological approach

The Cognitive approach

A study/experiment that supports the Cognitive approach

The Behavioural approach

A study/experiment that supports the Behavioural approach

The Humanistic approach

A study/experiment that supports the Humanistic approach

The Psychodynamic approach

A study/experiment that supports the Psychodynamic approach

## **Task 2: Conducting a memory experiment.**

As psychology is a science, it involves psychologists conducting experiments to support their theories. As a Psychologist you will undertake your own experiments/research into areas that interest you.

### **You are going to conduct your own memory experiment:**

**a) Choose of 2 groups of people that you believe may have differing abilities to remember words.**

*This could include:*

- Men Vs Women
- Tall people Vs Short people
- Older people Vs Younger people
- Marvel watchers Vs DC watchers
- Arsenal fans Vs Chelsea fans
- People who wear glasses Vs People who do not wear glasses.....

You must have access to at least 5 people from each of your categories.

My chosen group is:

**b) Following psychological ethical guidelines-Consent form: You will write up a short script asking for the person their consent to take part**

- Ask them: Will you take part in my experiment?
- Tell them they have the right to withdraw from the experiment at any time
- Tell them their data will be confidential

Consent script:

c) Your experiment will involve:

You will test each person's ability to recall 15 words in a set amount of time (determined by you). Here are the 15 words you will need to use:

afraid	children	smile
snow	river	pay
trouble	Foreign	strength
Coffee	alone	platform
main	wipe	office

Distractor task (anything lasting a short time to distract them from the task): Then give them a chosen distractor task. This could include counting backwards in 3's from 200 for 3 minutes.

Free recall (get them to recall the key words from the list in any order): Then ask your participants to recall they words that they previously learned (again in a set amount of time chosen by you – but this needs to be the same for everyone to ensure that it is a fair test). Record how many words each participant remembered and put it in a table.

**Ensuring consistency in your study-Experimental instructions (a script of what you say to each participant explaining the task and instructions about what they must do): You must make this to ensure that you say the same thing to each participant.**

Experimental script:

d) Complete your table of findings:

Participant number	No of words recalled in Condition 1	No of words recalled in Condition 2
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		


**e) Further psychological ethical guidelines: At the end of your study, with each participant do a debrief:**

You must tell the participants what the research was investigating.

Tell them what the experiment was looking at and what results are expected.

Remind them about confidentiality, right to withdraw data, any questions? Thank you.

**d) Write up your experiment: Complete a deconstruction of your study under each of the**

Aim	'The aim of this study was to see if....'
Hypothesis	What do you think will happen? 'X participants will recall more....'
Procedure	Bullet point what you did
Results Draw a suitable graph to display your results	<p>Title:</p> 
Conclusion	What did you find?
Evaluation	Strengths and weaknesses of your study. Would you change anything next time?

**Task 3 –Reading psychological research. Read each article and answer the questions (articles below)**

<b>Article 1 Questions:</b> <i>Infants show a preference for toys that 'match' their gender before they know what gender is</i>
1. What was the aim of this research?
2. Where was this research undertaken?
3. What were the stereotypically boy and girl toys?
4. What did the research find?
5. What factors could have affected the results according to the article?
6. Has other research supported these findings?
7. How might the findings of this research affect what toys we buy for young children?
<b>Article 2 Questions:</b> <i>Men who can tell a good story are seen as more attractive and higher status</i>
1. What was the aim of this research?
2. Where was this research undertaken?
3. What was the procedure (what did they do)?
4. What did the research find?
5. What factors could have affected the results according to the article?



6. How might the findings of this research affect what people put on internet dating profiles?

**Article 3 questions:** *Parents who think failure is harmful to learning have children who think ability is fixed*

1. What was the aim of this research?

2. How did parents with a negative attitude towards failure respond to their child's setbacks?

3. How did parents with a positive attitude towards failure respond to their child's setbacks?

4. What was the procedure of the final study (what did they do)?

5. What did the research find?

6. How might the findings of this research affect how teachers give feedback to children?

**Article 1: Infants show a preference for toys that 'match' their gender before they know what gender is**



Do boys prefer playing with trucks and balls, while girls prefer dolls, because they are socialised from an early age to play this way, or do their play habits reflect innate differences in interests between the sexes? In a world where there are major gender imbalances in participation in science, sport, politics and other areas, this is a controversial question. Evidence for very early sex differences in toy interests could arguably support the idea that the sexes are directed down different

career trajectories not just because of cultural expectations or differences in opportunity, but partly because of their contrasting innate dispositions.

A new study in *Infant and Child Development* contributes to this area by testing the toy preferences of children aged 9 to 32 months during a free-play session at their day nursery. The results, though they come with caveats, appear to support the notion that boys and girls display gender-typed preferences before they are old enough to be aware of gender and even in the absence of their parents, who might otherwise influence them to play in a gender-stereotyped fashion.

Note, the researchers themselves do not frame their study explicitly in terms of gender politics – they observe instead that sex differences in toy preference are "of interest in relation to child care, educational practice and developmental theory".

Brenda Todd and her team tested 47 girls and 54 boys at four multicultural nurseries in London. Each child was tested by a female researcher in a quiet area away from the other children in the nursery. The child was surrounded in a semi-circle by seven toys identified in a local survey as being stereotypically male (a car, a blue teddy, a digger, a ball) or stereotypically female (a doll, a pink teddy, a cooking pot). The toys were placed in a random order within reach of the child, who was encouraged by the researcher to "play with any of the toys that you want to". For three minutes, the researcher then made notes on each five-second interval according to whether the child had deliberately held, touched or moved any of the toys.

The researchers divided the children into three age groups: 9-17 months, 18-23 months, and 24-32 months. At every age, there was a clear pattern – boys showed more interest in and played for longer with male-type toys and girls showed a similar bias for female-typed toys. In statistical terms, the effect size for these differences was large. Another finding was that the gender-typed preferences showed a different developmental trajectory for the two sexes: as the boys grew older they showed an even stronger preference for male toys, whereas girls started out with a very strong preference for female toys which diminished to a "merely strong" preference in the older age group.

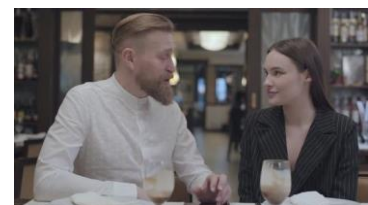
Among the caveats are the fact that the children may have been influenced by the presence of their peers located elsewhere in the room – prior research has shown that children are more likely to play in gender stereotyped ways when with their peers. Also, it's of course possible that the children had already been influenced to play with particular toys by their parents or other carers. However, the researchers concluded that "the finding of sex differences in toy choice prior to the age at which a gendered identity is usually demonstrated is consistent with biological explanations of toy preference." They added that their results also support earlier research using different methods, including a study that showed infants as young as three months displayed a preference for looking at gender-typed toys that matched their own gender.

Todd, B., Barry, J., & Thommessen, S. (2016). Preferences for 'Gender-typed' Toys in Boys and Girls Aged 9 to 32 Months *Infant and Child Development* DOI: [10.1002/icd.1986](https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.1986)

be aware of gender and even in the absence of their parents, who might otherwise influence them to play in a gender-stereotyped fashion.

### **Article 2: Men who can tell a good story are seen as more attractive and higher status**

Stories can change how we think about the world, about the people they describe, and even ourselves. According to new research, they also influence our attitude to the storyteller. An article published in the journal *Personal Relationships* suggests that people portrayed as stronger storytellers are considered as higher status than those that aren't – and this status can make them more romantically attractive, at least in the eyes of women. Cue editing of Tinder bios across the globe.



John Donahue and Melanie Green ran experiments with US undergraduate samples (388 in total, 55 per cent women, two-thirds Caucasian, average age 20) who were asked to rate the attractiveness of a potential partner of the opposite sex based upon basic printed information. In the first experiment, participants received a photo and a short biography of a would-be partner which included

information on their storytelling abilities. Participants in the strong storytelling condition, for example, heard that the person “often tells really good stories...he makes the characters and settings come alive.” Other conditions emphasised the mediocrity of the person’s storytelling or did not mention it at all. Stronger female storytellers did not tempt male participants, nor did male raconteurs foster extra female interest in short-term dating. But women were more interested in talented male story-tellers as long-term partners.

A further experiment held the design but added another category of attraction – “Do you think this person would make a good spouse?” – and a measure of the person’s perceived status. Both male and female participants considered storytellers to have higher status than non-storytellers. But for men, that didn’t translate into finding women more attractive, whereas for female raters, there was a clear route from men’s storytelling ability to status to desirability as a long-term partner or spouse.

To examine other explanations for the lure of the story-teller beyond the effect of status, the researchers ran another experiment where participants actually read a story, supposedly recounted by the potential partner. Some stories were fluid with lively vocabulary, and, as hoped, participants rated them as better and more involving than others that told the same facts in a hesitating and digressive manner.

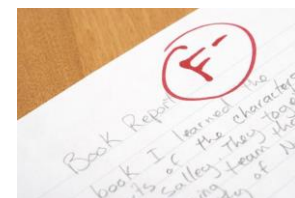
But surprisingly, attraction didn’t depend on being swept up in the story – that is, would-be partners who’d produced a more engrossing story were not rated as more attractive than the bores. I should note, however, that a short oral anecdote transcribed onto paper is not the strongest way to entangle someone in the magic of story, and the researchers acknowledged that other unmeasured qualities of the story, such as personal identification, or sheer enjoyment, may well affect attraction.

Donahue and Green advance an evolutionary theory for their findings: females, with a biologically high investment into producing young, have evolved to seek mates with resources, and storytelling aptitude reflects advantages that prehistorically meant the difference between life and death. But there are other explanatory lenses: for example, that men are socialised to be suspicious of women who take space and focus, considering that active status a threat that masks any liking they might have for storytelling traits, whereas women are socialised to appreciate first impressions of male competence. I suspect there is a rich, specific picture of when and why storytellers appeal, a picture that will depend on looking across cultures and at the specific effects their stories arouse in us. For now, this evidence suggests that young western males who can spin a good yarn are seen, on first blush, as a better catch.

DONAHUE, J., & GREEN, M. (2016). A good story: Men’s storytelling ability affects their attractiveness and perceived status *Personal Relationships* DOI: [10.1111/per.12120](https://doi.org/10.1111/per.12120)

**Article 3: Parents who think failure is harmful to learning have children who think ability is fixed**

Children respond better to learning setbacks when they believe that ability and intelligence are malleable – that is, when they have what psychologists call a “growth mindset” rather than a “fixed mindset”. This immediately raises the question of how to cultivate a growth mindset in children.



So far, there’s been a lot of attention on how to praise children (it’s better to focus on their effort and strategies rather than their ability),

but not much else. Surprisingly, parents' mindsets (growth or fixed) do not seem to be related to their children's mindsets. A new study in *Psychological Science* suggests this is because children can't tell what kind of mindset their parents have. Rather, children's beliefs about ability are associated with how their parents' view failure.

The Stanford University psychologists Kyla Haimovitz and Carol Dweck began by surveying 73 parent-child pairs. Parents' and children's attitudes to ability were not related. But parents who saw failure as a chance to learn tended to have children who had a growth mindset, whereas parents who saw failure as more negative and bad for learning tended to have children with a fixed mindset.

Why is parental attitude toward failure seemingly more important than their attitude toward ability? It's to do with what's visible to children. Further surveys of more children and their parents suggested that children don't know whether their parents have a growth or fixed mindset, but they are aware of their parents' attitudes toward failure. Moreover, children who think their parents have a negative attitude to failure tend themselves to believe that ability and intelligence are fixed.

This seems to be because parents with a negative attitude toward failure respond to their children's setbacks in characteristic ways, such as comforting them and telling them that it doesn't matter that they lack ability, that are likely to foster in children the belief that their ability is fixed. Parents with a more positive attitude to failure, by contrast, tend to encourage their children to use failures as a chance to learn or get extra help – approaches that encourage a growth mindset.

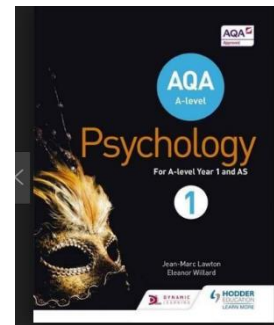
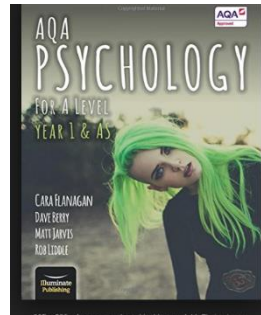
A final study tested whether parents' attitudes toward failure really do cause changes in the way they respond to their children's failures. Over one hundred parents completed an online questionnaire that was either filled with items designed to provoke in them a negative attitude to failure or items designed to promote a positive attitude to failure. Next, the parents imagined their children had come home with a fail grade and to say how they would think, feel and respond. Parents primed to see failure as harmful to learning were more likely to say that they would respond to their children's failure in ways likely to cultivate in them a belief that ability is fixed – such as worrying about their child's ability, or comforting their child for their lack of ability.

"Our findings show that parents who believe failure is a debilitating experience have children who believe they cannot develop their intelligence," the researchers said. "By establishing these links, we have taken a step toward understanding how children's motivation is socialised. It may not be sufficient to teach parents a growth mindset and expect that they will naturally transmit it to their children. Instead, an intervention targeting parents' failure mindsets could teach parents how failure can be beneficial, and how to react to their children's setbacks so as to maintain their children's motivation and learning."

Haimovitz K, & Dweck CS (2016). What Predicts Children's Fixed and Growth Intelligence Mind-Sets? Not Their Parents' Views of Intelligence but Their Parents' Views of Failure. *Psychological science* PMID: [27113733](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27113733/)

## **Textbooks:**

We use both of the following textbooks. We suggest you buy **one** of them, either one would be appropriate



## **A-level psychology specification:**

### **A Level Psychology topics and assessment**

By studying Psychology you will learn the fundamentals of the subject and develop skills valued by Higher Education (HE) and employers, including critical analysis, independent thinking and research.

You will sit 3 equally weighted exams at the end of the second year of study.

#### **Paper 1:**

- Social Influence
- Memory
- Attachment
- Psychopathology

#### **Paper 2:**

- Research Methods
- Biological Psychology
- Psychological Approaches



#### **Paper 3:**

- Aggression
- Issues & Debates in Psychology
- Schizophrenia
- Gender

## **Books and websites**

Subject specific magazines are a good way of keeping up to date with what's happening in the world of Psychology. You can subscribe for a year or buy individual past publications. Some good Psychology magazines are:

- The Psychologist: <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/>
- The inquisitive mind: <http://www.in-mind.org/issue-overview>
- Research Digest (Fortnightly email):  
<http://www.bps.org.uk/publications/research-digest/research-digest>

There is always new research that is being undertaken in Psychology and students should, where possible, keep abreast of new research and how psychological research can impact our everyday lives.

Students should look out for things in the news to do with the topics we are studying. You can use Google Alerts to make this easier <http://www.google.co.uk/alerts?hl=en>

There are also many good websites you can use. News websites are partially good at keeping you informed and up-to-date.

News websites include but are not limited to

[www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk>

Title	Author
Working memory, thought, and action	Baddeley, Alan
Fundamentals of cognition	Eysenck, Michael W
The blank slate : the modern denial of human nature	Pinker, Steven
Genie : a scientific tragedy	Rymer, Russ
The moral animal : evolutionary psychology and everyday life	Wright, Robert
The Lucifer effect : how good people turn evil	Zimbardo, Philip
Humanity : a moral history of the twentieth century	Glover, Jonathan
Causing deaths and saving lives	Glover, Jonathan
The black swan : the impact of the highly improbable	Taleb, Nassim
The language instinct : the new science of language and mind	Pinker, Steven
The stuff of thought : language as a window into human nature	Pinker, Steven
The psychopath : emotion and the brain	Blair, James, Mitchell, Derek, Blair, Karina
Managing performance stress : models and methods	Pargman, David
A clockwork orange	Burgess, Anthony
Heart of darkness; with Youth, and the End of the tether	Conrad, Joseph
The heart of darkness & Youth	Conrad, Joseph
Three novels: Heart of darkness; The secret agent; The shadow-line	Conrad, Joseph Page, Norman [Editor]
Heart of darkness & The Congo Diary	Conrad, Joseph
Middlesex	Eugenides, Jeffrey
Schindler's ark	Keneally, Thomas
Nineteen eighty-four	Orwell, George
We need to talk about Kevin	Shriver, Lionel

[https://www.sciencedaily.com/news/mind\\_brain/psychology/](https://www.sciencedaily.com/news/mind_brain/psychology/)

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/psychology>

Always ensure that you read psychological research with a critical eye. Be aware that not all research that is published in some news feeds/newspapers has undergone the strict regulations set down by the British Psychological Society.

You can also use student friendly websites including

<http://www.s-cool.co.uk/a-level/psychology>

<http://www.tutor2u.net>

**Other books**

*We look forward to seeing you in September! :)*