

A level Psychology Transition Pack 2025

"Everything that irritates us about each other can lead us to an understanding of ourselves."

- Carl Jung (psychoanalyst)





Welcome to Psychology!

You have made a great start to your sixth form education – choosing A level Psychology! Psychology is the scientific study of brain and behaviour. Psychologists aim to uncover the reasons why people behave the way they do and suggest ways in which new behaviour can be entrained.

Armchair psychologists are people who simply watch people interacting with each other without doing or manipulating anything. That is not what we will be doing. As part of your learning experience, you will be conducting experiments, reading about key and sometimes frightening studies and understanding that many strange behaviours are actually part of a psychological disorder. We will be spending a significant portion of time studying research methods to ensure you are equipped with the knowledge and understanding, before we turn you into crazy psychologists!!

The format of the psychology course over the next two years is as follows:

Topic	Detail	Year
Social Psychology	An investigation into why people conform and obey even when they do not agree with the instruction. We consider how people use various psychological processes to convince a majority to vote in their favour, think of the Brexit and Bremain campaigns...	1
Cognitive Psychology (memory)	Here, we consider how human memory works, why we often forget chunks of information and remember what seems to be useless information. We also look at how the police and investigative forces use this information about how fallible memory is to inform their interviewing techniques	1
Developmental Psychology (attachment)	This unit explores the importance of childhood in the development of healthy adult relationships personalities. We also consider the implications of maternal deprivation and study the behavioural effects of institutionalisation.	1
Psychopathology	This is what everyone loves about Psychology! This unit explores abnormality with specific exploration of three disorders; depression, phobias and OCD. We consider their symptoms, explanations and what we can do about them!	1
Research methods	Psychology is not just about reading studies, it is about carrying out experiments to investigate and observe the effects of particular variables on human behaviour. In this unit, students are equipped with the knowledge and understanding of research skills and methods to enable them to be participants and experimenters to a variety of investigations.	1 and 2
Biopsychology	An exploration into the link between the physical and the psychological. We consider the structure and function of the nervous system and how the workings of it affects behaviour. We also consider brain plasticity and how the brain recovers after trauma. Students unearth the language difficulty	1 and 2

	that some stroke victims have by studying 'split brain patients' and we take a look at some biological rhythms like our sleep-wake cycle.	
Approaches in Psychology	This is the history of psychology! Students will learn about the origins of psychology, the main approaches used to explain (and treat) behaviours as well and how we are effected by our evolutionary past. Counselling and therapy grew out of these approaches so we will take a closer look at that. Students will also be comparing and contrasting approaches.	1 and 2
Issues and debates in Psychology	This is the debating unit! Students will learn and about the issues with generalising results found in psychology on a global level and identify some key reasons as to why this cannot happen. Students will also consider a range of debates which focus on how well certain approaches are able to explain a variety of simple and complex human behaviours.	2
Relationships	An exploration of the psychological interpretation of how we form, maintain and dissolve relationships. We will also consider how evolution plays a large part in who we consider to be attractive, and criticise this with how the media is also key in relationship formation. A new addition to the module is parasocial relationships – who, what and why?!	2
Schizophrenia	Get ready to learn about the symptoms, explanations and tried and tested therapies for schizophrenia, one of the most talked about disorders in psychology. Here, we dispel myths about what schizophrenia is and isn't, as well and looking at the barbaric methods of 'treatment.'	2
Forensic Psychology	A new and exciting addition to the psychology course; in this unit we look at offender profiling, geographical profiling, reasons for offending, theories of criminal profiling, dealing with criminal and delinquent behaviour and custodial sentencing. Criminal Minds, watch out!	2

Course requirements:

Psychology is a subject that requires skills from all of the core subjects: English, mathematics and science. Students are required to write coherent and well planned essays; interpret data and conduct mathematical tests; to know and understand some basic anatomy. Although there is no entry requirement for the course it is worth noting that it combines all of these elements which some students find difficult.

Organisational requirements:

You must ensure that you are fully prepared and organised for every psychology lesson. The expectation is that you will bring the following to every psychology lesson:

- Lever arch folder (no small books)
- Dividers
- Normal stationery: pens, pencil, ruler, highlighters etc.
- Lined paper
- Plastic wallets
- Psychology textbook (you are encouraged to purchase your own).

A level Psychology preparatory tasks

Please complete all three tasks and bring your answers and/or findings with you on the first day in September

Task 1: Psychology: what, why, who?

As psychology is a new subject it is important that you understand what it is.

Your task is to research the following areas and be able to talk about them in detail. You will have to make notes on this area, but it is up to you how you present this information (e.g. mind maps, notes, presentation, video etc. **The presentation is due on the first lesson in September.** There will be no extensions.

- What is psychology?
- What do psychologists do?
- What are the different areas of psychology and what do they assume?
- Name one famous psychologist and explain why they are famous.
- What jobs can psychology lead you to?
- Why do you want to study psychology?

This is a useful place to start:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/mind/articles/psychology/what_is_psychology.shtml

Please make sure you state where you are finding the information from.

Task 2:

Psychology is often considered a whole new language due to the variety of new and complex terms used to describe phenomena. Your next task is to define the following words, all of which will be taught in year 1 of the psychology A level. This will form the start of your glossary and is a great start to the course:

Psychopathology

ABC model by Ellis:

Adrenaline

Autonomic nervous system

Cognitive behavioural therapy

Depression

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Phobia

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5 (fifth edition)

Attachment:

Affectionless Psychopathy:

Anti-social personality disorder:

Classical conditioning

Operant conditioning

Critical period

Positive reinforcement

Negative reinforcement

Maternal deprivation

Memory:

Amnesia

Encoding

Capacity

Duration

Chunking

Working memory model

Multi store model

Leading questions

Episodic memory

Procedural memory

Semantic memory

The cognitive interview

Research methods:

Anomalous results

Measures of central tendency

Measures of dispersion

Independent variable

Dependent variable

Extraneous variables

Internal validity

External validity

Temporal validity

Population validity

Ecological validity

Reliability

The six ethical issues in psychology

Social influence:

Conformity

Internalisation

Identification

Compliance

Mundane realism

Obedience

Social identity theory

Locus of control

The agentic state

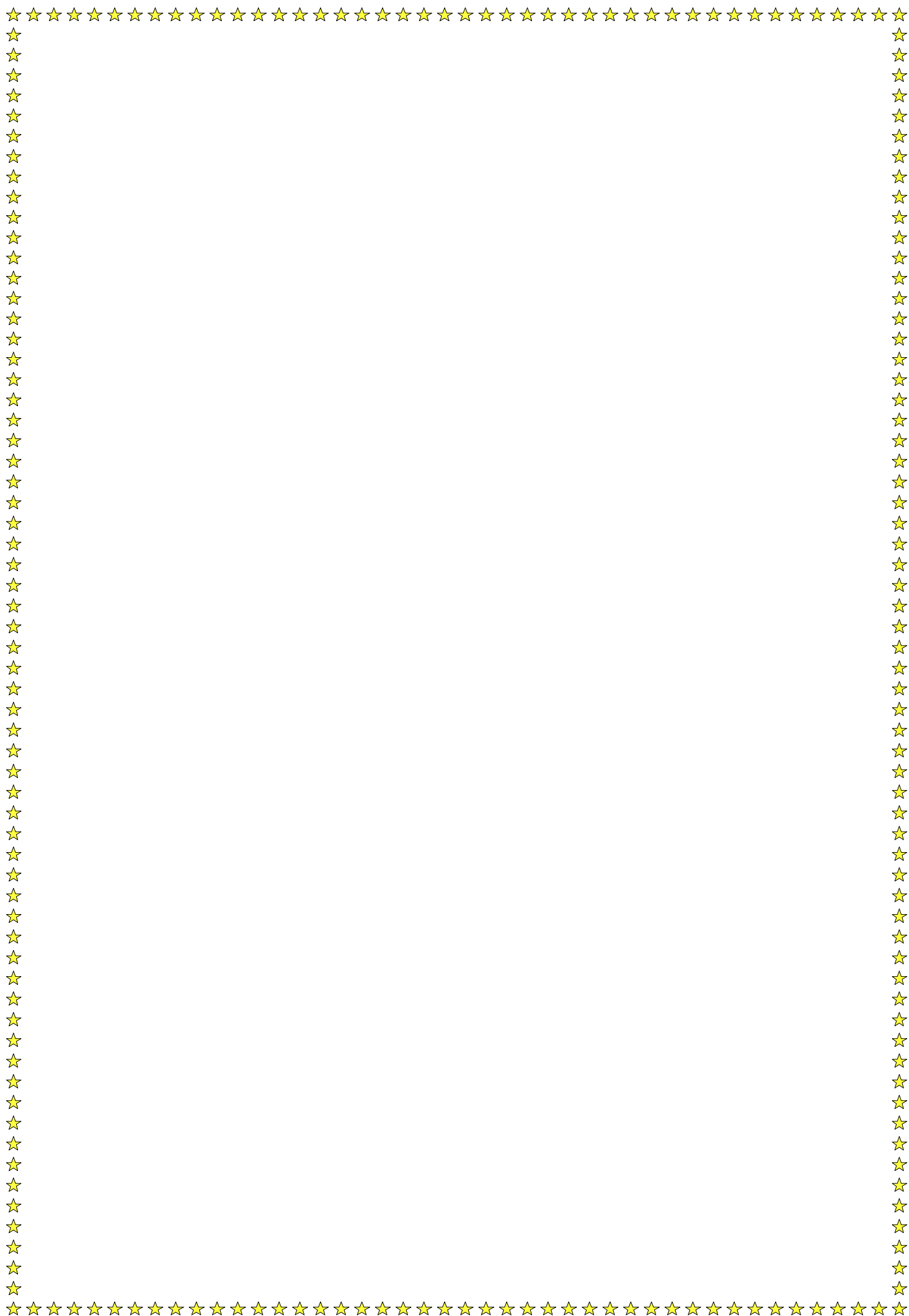
The authoritarian personality

Minority influence

Social cryptomnesia

The snowball effect

All five of the aforementioned topics will be covered in year 1 of the A level; by completing this task you will be ready to grapple with the content in September with confidence.



Task 3:

Read one of the following articles and summarise 4 -5 points from each. These will be a point of discussion during the first week back.

- BBC news article: children and memory (Unit: Memory)
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-33204165>
- The Stanford Prison Experiment (Unit: Social influence)
<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/jun/15/fact-based-thriller-the-stanford-prison-experiment-unshackles-trailer>
- Can a questionnaire tell if you're a psychopath? (Unit: Psychopathology)
<http://www.theguardian.com/science/head-quarters/2015/jun/10/can-an-online-quiz-spot-a-psychopath>
- Psychology in football (unit: Issues and debates)
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/active/10568730/Mind-games-how-footballers-use-sports-psychology.html>

Thank you for making your way through this pack. I have no doubt that if you continue to take responsibility for your learning and continue to complete all work set to the appropriate standard, this will be the right course for you and you will progress well.

I look forward to seeing you in September and teaching you the wonders of Psychology at A level.

I shall now leave you with the fine words of Dr Seuss:

