

# Preparing to Study A Level Psychology



Allestree Woodlands School

At Allestree Woodlands school you will be studying the AQA psychology specification. An outline of what is included in each unit can be found in the table below.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>Unit 1</b>	<b>Social Influence</b>	Conformity, Obedience, Minority Influence, Resistance to Social Influence, Social Change.
	<b>Memory</b>	Models of Memory, Types of Long-Term Memory, Forgetting, Eye Witness Testimony.
	<b>Attachment</b>	Caregiver-Infant Interactions, Explanations of Attachment, Variations of Attachment, Deprivation, Privation and Institutionalisation.
	<b>Psychopathology</b>	Definitions of Abnormality, Phobias, Depression and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.
<b>Unit 2</b>	<b>Approaches</b>	Behavioural, Cognitive, Psychodynamic, Humanistic and Biological Psychology.
	<b>Biopsychology</b>	Endocrine & Nervous System, Neurones & Synapses, Localisation of Function in the Brain & Hemispheric Lateralisation, Brain Plasticity, Ways of Studying the Brain, Biological Rhythms.
	<b>Research Methods</b>	Experimental and Non Experimental Methods, Scientific Processes, Data Handling and Analysis, Inferential Testing.
<b>Unit 3</b>	<b>Issues Debates</b>	Gender and Culture Bias, Free Will/Determinism, Nature/Nurture, Holism/Reductionism, Idiographic/Nomothetic, Ethics.
	<b>Relationships</b>	Evolutionary Explanations, Attraction, Theories of Romantic Relationships (Formation, Maintenance, Breakdown), Virtual Relationships, Parasocial Relationships.
	<b>Schizophrenia</b>	Classification and symptoms of schizophrenia. Reliability and validity of diagnosis. Biological explanations and treatments. Psychological explanations and treatments. The interactionist approach.
	<b>Aggression</b>	Neural, hormonal, ethological, evolutionary and social explanations of aggression. Institutional aggression. Media influences. Deindividuation, disinhibition and cognitive priming.

The purpose of this booklet is to introduce you to the area of psychology and to prepare you for studying the A Level course at Allestree Woodlands School. It is divided into 2 sections which are outlined below. Section 1 is compulsory and must be completed by all students. Section 2 is optional for those who would like to take their study a little further.

### Section 1: Approaches in psychology (Compulsory)

This section will introduce you to the idea that human behaviour can be studied and explained using different ideas. There are many approaches in psychology but here you will look at only three of the main ones. These approaches feature heavily throughout the entire A level course and to have a good understanding of them now will stand you in good stead going forward.

It is important for you to know that psychology is a science subject. This is because, in order to find out about human behaviour, we must conduct research (including experiments). The data that is collected from this research is analysed and conclusions are drawn leading to possible explanations for behaviour being formulated. This section will introduce you to some pieces of psychological research and you will be expected to show your knowledge of some scientific principals and terminologies.

### Section 2: Starting with Psychology (Open University) – (Optional)

This booklet is also designed to run alongside a free Open University course which you will may wish to complete. To access the course you will need to use one of the following:

- \* Type into google “starting with psychology open university”
- \* Use this link <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/psychology/starting-psychology/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab>

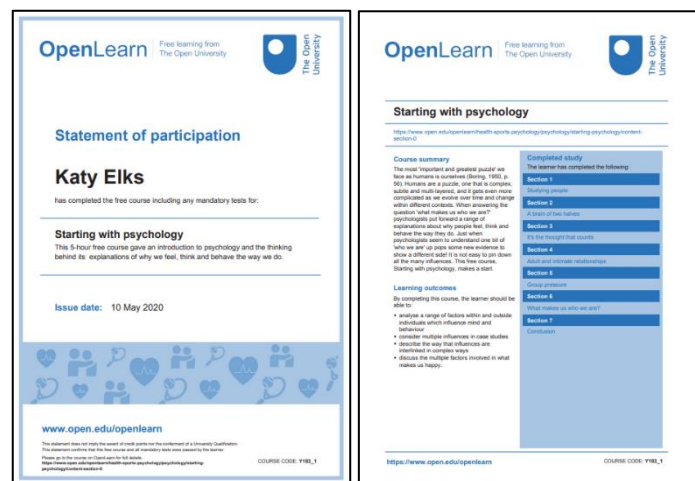
To access the course you will need to create an account then click on ‘enter course’ on the introduction page. Then simply read the information in each section and complete the corresponding questions and activities within this booklet.

Once you have enrolled on this OpenLearn course and have completed it, you will be expected to access and download a free Open University Statement of participation as a PDF.

To gain a Statement of participation learners must:

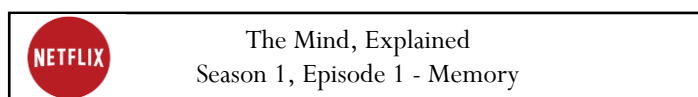
- Read the course Introduction and Guidance.
- Be enrolled on the course.
- Read every page of the course.
- You will be notified by email if you have received a Statement of participation but **please allow up to 24 hours for this to happen**. At this point, it will also appear in your ‘My OpenLearn Profile’ in the Achievements section where you can download and print it.

The statement of participation does not carry any formal credit towards a qualification.



### Additional information:

There are two series on Netflix called ‘Explained’ and ‘The mind explained’ which have many interesting episodes relevant to psychology. All episodes are around 20 minutes long and can be very helpful in expanding knowledge and understanding of the course. Signposts will appear throughout this booklet to direct you to specific episodes helpful for the sections of this course. Below is an example of what the signposts will look like.



Good luck! We look forward to welcoming you onto the psychology course 😊

## Section 1: Approaches in Psychology

Watch the video using the address below and then try to complete the following activities.

*Approaches in Psychology – A-level Psychology Revision Video – Study Rocket*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqzlKoleXnk>

**Three** of the main approaches you will examine in psychology are described below. Put a circle around the name of the approach being described in each box.

Behaviour is a result of internal factors such as genetics, brain structure and chemicals in the body.	Biological	Cognitive	Behavioural
All behaviour is learnt from our environment and our experiences.	Biological	Cognitive	Behavioural
Behaviour is a result of the way that our brains process information and the way we think.	Biological	Cognitive	Behavioural

An approach in psychology is also called a perspective. Why do you think this may be?

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Psychology is a science subject. This is because we learn about human behaviour by conducting scientific research. Read the studies and:

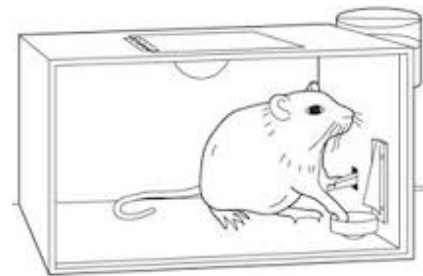
- Write a conclusion for the study
- Identify which of the three approaches the study is supporting

A conclusion is a statement which tells us what the results of the study show about behaviour. You could start it like this...

“The results of this study suggest that...”

Skinner

Method	Skinner placed a rat into a box. The box had a lever which released a food pellet when pressed. The behaviour of the rat was observed.
Results	The rat explored its surroundings and sometimes accidentally pressed the lever receiving a food pellet when it did. After a while the rat began to deliberately press the lever so it could get a food pellet. The food pellet was seen as a reward.
Conclusion	



Approach \_\_\_\_\_

Gudjonsson and Sigurdsson

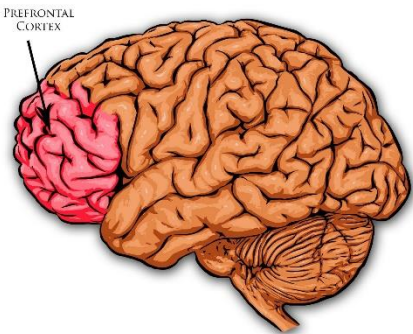
Method	The researchers gave questionnaires to 128 male juvenile offenders to assess their attitudes toward offending.
Results	They found that 36% did not think they would get caught when committing their crimes and 38% did not think about the negative consequences of their crimes.
Conclusion	



Approach \_\_\_\_\_

Raine

Method	Raine conducted brain scans on a group of murderers and a group of non-murderers. The brain scans were able to show the size of brain structures.
Results	The area of the brain called the prefrontal cortex was significantly smaller in the murderer group than the non-murderer group. This area of the brain is involved in impulse control.
Conclusion	



Approach \_\_\_\_\_

Now to try to use the knowledge you have about the approaches to become psychologists yourselves. Read the case below and try to explain the behaviour of the individual from each of the three approaches. Use information from the scenario in your response and, **if you can**, use research as evidence to back up what you are saying.

James is a gang member and is now serving time in prison due to a series of attacks on innocent victims. When he was 13 he was involved in an accident which left him with damage to the front part of his brain. Since then his behaviour became much more reckless and out of control. His parents also reported that at around the same time he would post images of himself on social media in gang scenarios and get hundreds of likes. This made James feel good and so he carried on posting the images. James just didn't care about the pain and hurt that he inflicted on his victims and their families. In his view, they deserved it! He thinks that, because they had more money and expensive things than he did that he had a right to take them.

*Biological explanation for James' behaviour*

*Cognitive explanation for James' behaviour*

*Behavioural explanation for James' behaviour*

## Section 2: Starting with Psychology

### 1. Studying People

How does the British Psychological Society (BPS) define psychology?

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*Activity 1: Boys' toys and girls' toys*

Try to think of at least three ideas for this activity.



1. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

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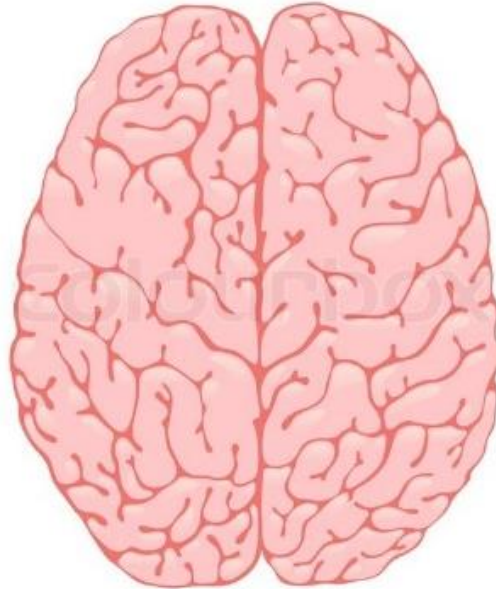
After reading the discussion points, are there any ideas which were similar to yours? Note them below.

Are there any ideas you didn't think of? Note them below.

## 2. A brain of two halves

### 2.1. Introduction

Label the brain using all the terms in the box.



Corpus Callosum  
Front of Head  
Back of Head  
Left Hemisphere  
Right Hemisphere

What is the corpus callosum?

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What side of the body does the left hemisphere control? (circle)

RIGHT

LEFT

What side of the body does the right hemisphere control? (circle)

RIGHT

LEFT

Identify two areas in which the left hemisphere is dominant.

- 1.
- 2.

Identify two areas in which the right hemisphere is dominant.

- 1.
- 2.



## 2.2. The story of split-brain patients

Describe what is meant by a split-brain patient.

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Now watch the video using the link below.

*Split-brain patient 'Joe' being tested with stimuli presented in different visual fields*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCv4K5aStdU&feature=youtu.be>



*Activity 2: Sorting out right from left*

If a word is flashed on the right hand of the screen will a person with a split brain be able to:

	YES	NO
a) Name the word.		
b) Pick out the corresponding object from behind the screen with their right hand.		
c) Pick out the corresponding object from behind the screen with their left hand.		

If a word is flashed on the left hand of the screen will a person with a split brain be able to:

	YES	NO
a) Name the word.		
b) Pick out the corresponding object from behind the screen with their right hand.		
c) Pick out the corresponding object from behind the screen with their left hand.		

Put a tick net to each column you answered correctly 😊



### 3. It's the thought that counts

#### 3.1. Organisation and improved recall

What does cognition mean?

What are cognitive psychologists interested in?

What areas does a cognitive psychologist study?

#### 3.2. Using mental images

Describe what is meant by the 'key word technique'.

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*Activity 3: Identifying variables*

1. The independent variable is \_\_\_\_\_
2. The dependent variable is \_\_\_\_\_
3. A variable that should be controlled is \_\_\_\_\_

Define the term mnemonic

Describe what is meant by the method of loci.

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*Activity 4: Method of loci*

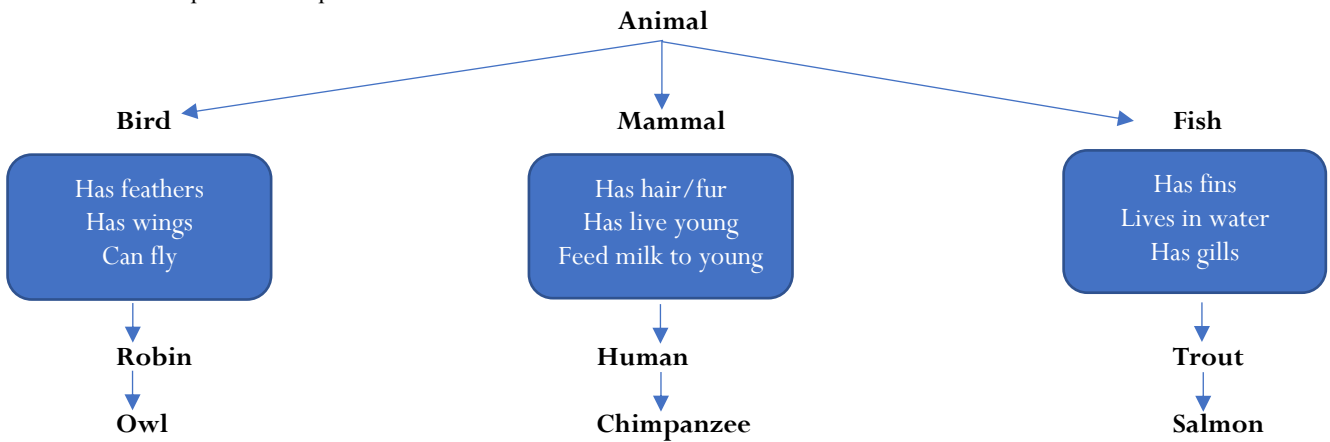
Complete the activity then, after waiting for an hour, write the list in the space below without looking at the original list.



### 3.3. Forming concepts

Organising our thoughts by developing categories with defining features is called \_\_\_\_\_

Here is an example of concept formation.



Now think about the following animals. Put a tick into each box the animal fits into. The first one has been done for you.

	Bird			Mammal			Fish		
	Feathers	Wings	Fly	Hair/fur	Live young	Milk	Fins	Lives in water	Gills
Bat		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Penguin									
Dolphin									

What problem have you encountered?

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What does this suggest about our categories or our concept formation?

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#### Activity 5: Defining a simple concept

What characteristics do people state when asked to make a list of the defining features of a table?

How might this be problematic?

What is meant by a fuzzy concept?

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Describe how a child may overgeneralise a concept.

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*Activity 6: A memory test*

Complete the activity then answer the following questions.

Have the cues helped you remember any more words?  Yes  No

Have a look at your first try at recalling words.

Did you realise that the words belonged to categories?  Yes  No

Did you recall them in category clusters?  Yes  No

*Activity 7: Identifying variables again*

Read the information on the study by George Mandler (1967) and complete the following tasks.

Identify the independent variable \_\_\_\_\_

Identify the dependent variable \_\_\_\_\_

How could you use the information in this section to help you with your studies?

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**3.4. Schemas**

Imagine you are going to the cinema with your friends. Write a brief description about the experience.

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This is your schema of what a cinema trip cinema is like. It is a mental framework allowing you to form expectations and to predict what a situation will be like. Read the section on schema and answer the following question.

How are schema helpful to us?

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#### 4. Adult and intimate relationships

##### 4.1. Introduction

Most research into relationships has focused on the idea of romantic love and free choice of partner but what is the most common type of marriage in the world?

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Why might it be a problem that research has only focussed on typically Western relationships?

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##### 4.2. Attraction

What are the three most important influences to explain why we might be attracted to one person but not to another?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



##### 4.3. Proximity and familiarity

What does proximity mean?

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Using this idea of proximity, who are we most likely to form relationships with?

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What is the 'mere exposure effect'?

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#### 4.4. Similarity

According to research, is it true that 'opposites attract'?

Yes

No

What is one of the most important similarities for a romantic couple to have? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is this similarity so important?

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#### 4.5. Physical appearance

What characteristics are seen as attractive in males and females?

Males	Females

#### Activity 8: Testing Cameron's research

Do your findings support Cameron et al's findings?

What does Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection suggest attraction that is based on physical attraction is related to?

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When a characteristic is found in lots of different cultures it suggests there is a biological, genetic, evolutionary cause for the behaviour. What is the waist to hip ratio (WHR) that males in many cultures find most attractive in females?

WHR =



Explain why males in economically developed countries prefer females with a lighter build and males in economically developing countries prefer females with a heavier build.

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Identify and briefly outline three characteristics which are viewed as attractive in certain cultures only.

Culture	Characteristic	What does it signify? Why is it attractive?

What does the matching hypothesis suggest about who we choose as romantic partners?

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#### 4.6. Staying together or falling apart

What does Sternberg (1999) suggest are the three components of love?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



Activity 9: Your relationships

Relationship (e.g. grandparents, parents)	How important are the different components in this relationship?			Specific strategies that may have helped maintain the relationship.
	Passion	Intimacy	Commitment	

## 5. Group pressure

### 5.1. Introduction



Explained  
Season 2, Episode 1 - Cults

What is 'Heaven's Gate'?

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What happened to the individuals that belonged to this group?

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### 5.2. 'In-groups' and 'out-groups'

What is meant by an 'in-group'?

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What is meant by an 'out-group'?

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*Activity 10: Us and them*

Identify the us and them thinking in the article and note them in the box below. Hint: There are more than one!

What did Sherif et al (1961) show was a major factor contributing to conflict between groups?

- a) Friendship       b) Empathy       c) Competition       d) Ethnicity

Why is the expression of inter-group conflict different between cultures? Use examples in your answer.

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Social Identity Theory suggests that our response to joining groups involves three key stages.

Match the term to the correct explanation.

Social Categorisation	When we belong to a group we assume the characteristics of that group and behave in ways which are consistent with the group identity. Others also see us in the same way.
Social Identification	We place ourselves and others into categories using labels (e.g. gamer, smart, trekkie). We then imply things about others using these labels.
Social Comparison	We view our in-groups more positively than our out-groups. This increases self-esteem. It can also lead to prejudice and discrimination of outgroup members.

When we identify someone as belonging to a group we assume they have all of the characteristics of that group. We ignore the individual differences of people within a group and assume they are all the same.

Write a definition for the term 'stereotyping' then give an example of a stereotype.

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How does stereotyping help us?

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Describe a potential negative consequence of stereotyping.

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### 5.3. Groups and conformity

#### Activity 11: Conformity and group pressure

Can you think of one occasion in real life where you have been subjected to some form of group pressure? What happened and what did you do? What, if anything would have swayed you to go along with the group? Write some brief notes describing your experience.

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How many genuine participants were there in each trial in the Asch study?

What were the findings of Asch's study?

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What effect did allowing participants to write their answer down rather than saying it out loud have on the levels of conformity?

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Why might this be the case?

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What is a collectivist culture?

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What is an individualistic culture?

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Which culture has been shown to have higher levels of conformity using the Asch line study technique? Circle

**Collectivist**

**Individualistic**

## 6. What makes us who we are?

### 6.1. Introduction

What is an approach in psychology?

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List some of the main approaches you have addressed within this booklet.

Explain why it is not easy to explain human behaviour using only one approach.

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### 6.2. Multiple influences

Explain what it means to have multiple factors which influence behaviour. Include reference to what these factors include and how they can work together in your response.

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### 6.3. The Zidane head-butt

*Activity 12: The incident*



Read the description of the incident and note down any thoughts you have about what happened.

After reading the discussion for this activity describe what is meant by making inferences.

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#### 6.4. Zidane's background

*Activity 13: Why did he do it?*

Can you suggest any factors related to Zidane's biological state, his thinking, relationships and social identities that could help explain what happened?

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How are your ideas similar or different to those in video clip 1 'Every day explanations'?

Similar	Different
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*Activity 14: Explanations from three psychologists*

Listen to the audio clip 'Psychological explanations' and make notes on the key points of each explanation.

Biological

Cognitive

Social

## Congratulations!

You have now reached the end of this booklet and so have completed your introduction to psychology. You are now in a position where you are prepared for your A level course.

**Please don't forget to print off your statement of participation. Refer to the instructions at the start of this booklet to remind yourself how to do it.**

Hopefully you have found this short course interesting. Should you wish to continue your familiarisation with psychology there are plenty of things you can watch and read. Below are some ideas for you.

### Things to watch

#### Anything done by Derren Brown

##### Channel 4

- <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/derren-brown-the-experiments>
- <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/derren-brown-the-specials/episode-guide/>

##### Netflix

- The Push
- Miracle
- Sacrifice



#### Crash Course Psychology

These short videos are on youtube and there are plenty to have a look at. Here is the link to the first video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vo4pMVb0R6M>

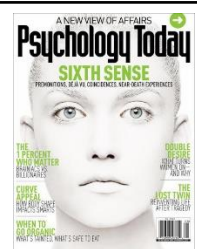


### Things to read

#### Psychology Today

This is a magazine where a group of renowned psychologists, academics, psychiatrists and writers contribute their thoughts and ideas.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb>



#### The Psychologist

This is the official monthly publication of The British Psychological Society. The Psychologist serves as a forum for communication, discussion and debate on a range of psychological topics. We publish a wide range of scientific, professional and personal formats aimed at our large and diverse audience

<https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/>



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