



Transition pack

A-level Psychology

Mandatory tasks:

Task:	Page no.	Completed (tick)	Score (if applicable)
The biological approach	4-6		
The cognitive approach	7-9		
The behaviourist approach	10-12		
Social learning theory	13-15		
The humanistic approach	16-18		
The psychodynamic approach	19-21		
Written task	21-25		

Supporting optional tasks:

Task	What did you see, read or do?

Introduction

Why Psychology?

During your A-level studies, you will be exploring the scientific study of the mind and how it dictates and influences our behaviour from communication, memory, thought, emotion and much more. In Psychology, we want to understand what makes people tick and how this understanding can help us address many of the problems and issues in society today. This course is fun and challenging.

Exam board

The exam board we study A-level Psychology with is **AQA**.

You will take 3 exam papers in Year 13 and they will consist of the following:

<u>Paper 1</u>	<u>Paper 2</u>	<u>Paper 3</u>
Social influence	Approaches	Forensic Psychology
Memory	Biopsychology	Issues and Debates
Attachment	Research methods	Schizophrenia
Psychopathology		Cognition and Development

Textbooks and useful websites:

The textbooks we use are AQA approved and are from illuminate publishing.

We would really recommend picking up one of these textbooks for yourself so that you can perhaps annotate them. Don't forget to search ebay and depop for these textbooks first!



You can purchase the year 12 textbook from [amazon](#) or [illuminate publishing](#).

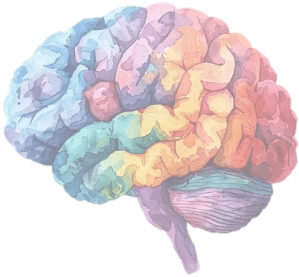
You can purchase the year 13 textbook from [amazon](#) or [illuminate publishing](#).

You can also download the app from the appstore!

Transition task introduction

Task 1: Complete the revision sheets on the following pages. You must include knowledge (the main points) and evaluation (strengths and weaknesses). Use the link below to help you complete the revision sheets.

You must include:



- The biological approach
- The cognitive approach
- The behaviourist approach
- Social learning theory
- The humanistic approach
- The psychodynamic approach



Links to help you:

- ✓ <https://studyrocket.co.uk/revision/a-level-psychology-aqa/issues-options-in-psychology/approaches-in-psychology>
- ✓ <https://www.physicsandmathstutor.com/psychology-revision/a-level-aqa/approaches-in-psychology/>
- ✓ <https://psychologyalevel.com/aqa-psychology-revision-notes/approaches-in-psychology/>
- ✓ <https://www.simplypsychology.org/a-level-approaches.html>

Use this link to help you with Task 1 <https://archive.org/details/aqa-psychology-for-a-level-year-2/page/16/mode/2up>

The Biological Approach

Evaluation

What are the assumptions of the biological approach?

Real world application

What is a genotype and phenotype? How are twin studies used to investigate this?

Neurochemical basis of behaviour

Scientific methods

Evolution and behaviour

Cognitive neuroscience

Biological determinism

The Biological Approach - application

The NASA twin study

The main goal of the Twins Study was to observe what physical, molecular, and cognitive changes could happen to an astronaut from exposure to the environment of space, as opposed to regular day-to-day life on Earth. Scott spent 340 days in space aboard the International Space Station (ISS) - while Mark stayed back on Earth. During this time both men were monitored closely. They collected and analysed samples of blood, wee, poo and saliva. Then they compared the results to see if anything was different between the brothers.

Findings: Scott came back 5cm taller than his twin. He lost 7% of his bod mass whilst Mark gained 4%. Scott was slower and less accurate in brain tests. The shape of Scott's eyeballs changed. 93% of Scott's genes went back to normal within 6 months of coming home.



Why were twins used in this study? What benefit do they provide for researchers?

What issues are there with twin studies?

Explain why the nature (biology) vs nurture (environment) debate is so difficult to answer

The Biological Approach – assessment

- 1. What is the main assumption of the biological approach?**
 - A) Behaviour is learned from the environment
 - B) Behaviour is determined by unconscious forces
 - C) Behaviour is influenced by biological structures and processes
 - D) Behaviour is the result of free will

- 2. According to the biological approach, which of the following influences behaviour?**
 - A) Culture
 - B) Hormones
 - C) Social norms
 - D) Childhood experiences

- 3. What is meant by 'biological determinism'?**
 - A) The belief that behaviour is influenced only by the environment
 - B) The belief that behaviour is determined by biological factors
 - C) The belief that behaviour is random
 - D) The belief that behaviour is caused by free will

- 4. Explain what is meant by 'genotype' and 'phenotype'.**

Your answer:

- 5. Describe one way in which the biological approach uses scientific methods.**

Your answer:

- 6. Briefly outline the role of evolution in the biological approach.**

Your answer:

The Cognitive Approach

Evaluation

What are the assumptions of the Cognitive approach?

Real world application

The role of the schema

The use of models to study cognitive processes

Scientific methods

Cognitive neuroscience

Machine reductionism

The Cognitive Approach - application

Does TikTok really cause brain rot? An example of cognitive neuroscience

Recent research published in [NeuroImage](#) has shed light on how compulsive use of short video platforms, such as TikTok, might affect the brain.

The study involved 111 college students aged 17 to 30, all of whom were regular users of short video platforms like TikTok. Participants were carefully screened to exclude those with a history of neurological or psychiatric disorders, ensuring that the findings would be attributable to the behavioral effects of short video consumption rather than pre-existing conditions. To measure short video addiction, researchers adapted a widely used scale by replacing references to smartphones with short video platforms. Dispositional envy was measured using a standard tool that captures individuals' tendencies to feel resentment or distress when comparing themselves to others.

To explore the neurological aspects of short video addiction, the researchers collected high-resolution brain imaging data using MRI scans. These scans provided insights into two key areas: structural changes in the brain, such as differences in gray matter volume, and functional activity, specifically regional homogeneity, which measures the synchronization of neural activity within a given area. Statistical techniques were then used to analyze how these brain characteristics correlated with participants' levels of short video addiction.

Finally, to investigate the biological basis of these findings, the team conducted a transcriptomic analysis, integrating gene expression data from the Allen Human Brain Atlas. This allowed them to identify specific genes associated with the brain changes observed in participants with higher levels of short video addiction.

The study found that individuals with higher levels of short video addiction displayed increased brain activity in regions linked to emotional regulation and reward processing. Moreover, these users showed structural differences in areas such as the orbitofrontal cortex and cerebellum. The study also highlighted the role of dispositional envy as a psychological factor linked to short video addiction. Participants with higher levels of envy were more likely to report compulsive use of short video platforms. This connection was mediated by changes in specific brain regions, such as the cerebellum and temporal pole, which are involved in processing social and emotional information. These findings suggest that individuals prone to envy may turn to short video platforms to cope with feelings of inadequacy.



Pick (or highlight) one issue from the study and explain why it's an issue (consider the methods used)

Explain why cognitive neuroscience has been helpful for researchers in the above study

The Cognitive Approach – assessment

1. Which of the following is a key assumption of the cognitive approach?
 - a) Behaviour is learned through reinforcement.
 - b) Behaviour is influenced by unconscious drives.
 - c) Behaviour is the result of internal mental processes.
 - d) Behaviour is determined by genetic inheritance.
2. The information processing model likens the mind to:
 - a) A light bulb
 - b) A computer
 - c) A sponge
 - d) A motor engine
3. Which research method is most commonly used in cognitive psychology?
 - a) Naturalistic observation
 - b) Brain surgery
 - c) Lab experiments
 - d) Case studies
4. The cognitive approach is most closely associated with which type of determinism?
 - a) Hard determinism
 - b) Environmental determinism
 - c) Soft determinism
 - d) Biological determinism
5. Define the term **schema** and explain how it might influence behaviour.

Your answer:

6. What is meant by the term **inference** in cognitive psychology?

Your answer:

The Behaviourist Approach	Evaluation
What are the assumptions of the Behaviourist approach?	Real world application
Classical conditioning and Pavlov's research	Highly controlled research
Operant conditioning and Skinner's research	Issues with generalising to humans

The Behaviourist Approach - application

The case of little albert

The Little Albert study demonstrated how **classical conditioning** could be used to create a **phobia** in a human subject.

Key Details:

- **Sample:** A 9-month-old baby referred to as "Little Albert."
- **Initial Response:** Albert initially showed no fear of various animals (e.g. a white rat, a rabbit).
- **Conditioning Process:**
 - Watson and Rayner paired a **neutral stimulus** (a white rat) with a **loud, frightening noise** (banging a metal bar behind Albert's head).
 - After several pairings, Albert began to **fear the white rat** even without the noise.
- **Generalization:** Albert's fear extended to other **white and furry objects**, like a rabbit, dog, fur coat, and even a Santa Claus mask



Significance:

- Showed that **emotional responses** could be conditioned in humans.
- Supported the **behaviorist** view that environment plays a crucial role in shaping behavior.

Identify the neutral stimulus, unconditioned stimulus, conditioned stimulus, unconditioned response and conditioned response.

Explain why this study may be seen as unethical. Counter this to explain the benefits for humanity

In your own words, how could classical and operant conditioning be involved in the development and maintenance of phobias?

The Behaviourist Approach – assessment

1. The behaviourist approach focuses primarily on:
 - a) Unconscious motives.
 - b) The influence of internal mental processes.
 - c) Observable and measurable behaviour.
 - d) The structure of the brain.
2. Which of the following is an example of **positive reinforcement**?
 - a) A child is given sweets for tidying their room.
 - b) A student is told off for being late.
 - c) A rat receives an electric shock after pressing a lever.
 - d) A person avoids traffic by taking a different route.
3. Classical conditioning was first demonstrated by:
 - a) Albert Bandura
 - b) Ivan Pavlov
 - c) John Watson
 - d) B.F. Skinner
4. In operant conditioning, a behaviour that is followed by the removal of an unpleasant stimulus is called:
 - a) Positive punishment
 - b) Negative punishment
 - c) Positive reinforcement
 - d) Negative reinforcement
5. Define **classical conditioning**.
6. What is meant by **extinction** in classical conditioning?
7. Outline one strength of the behaviourist approach.
8. Outline one limitation of the behaviourist approach.

Social learning theory	Evaluation
<p>What are the assumptions of the Social learning theory? What study is Bandura conduct? Explain the aims, procedure, results and conclusions.</p>	<p>Real world application</p>
<p>What are the mediational processes?</p>	<p>Integration with the cognitive approach</p>
<p>What is identification and vicarious reinforcement?</p>	<p>Contrived lab studies</p>

Social learning theory - application

The case of James Bulger

Research the 'James Bulger' case and briefly explain what happened (please note this is a sensitive case with disturbing details. If applicable, aim to find another case study of your choice)



How could the social learning theory explain this case? Refer to the mediational processes to explain how it happened.

The humanistic approach		Evaluation
The idea of freewill	Self-actualisation	Cultural bias
Maslow's hierarchy of needs		Holistic (not reductionist!)
The self, congruence and conditions of worth		Positive approach

The Humanistic Approach - application

The blackfoot tribe and Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is one of the most well-known psychological models, illustrating human motivation as a pyramid. At the base are basic needs like food and safety, and at the top is self-actualization—reaching one's full potential.

But here's something many don't know: Maslow developed this concept after spending time with the Blackfoot Tribe in 1938. His experience with the Blackfoot profoundly influenced his ideas, yet he missed a crucial part of their worldview. While Maslow saw self-actualization as a goal to be achieved, the Blackfoot believed it was an inherent birthright—something everyone is born with.

Maslow described self-actualization as “the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming.” In the worldview of the Blackfoot Tribe, the closest equivalent is *niita'pitapi*, a Siksika word that, according to Blackfoot scholar Ryan Heavy Head, means “someone who is completely developed, or who has arrived.”

This difference challenges how we think about personal growth and well-being, offering a powerful critique of Western individualism and its limitations.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/healing-the-wounded-healers/202501/did-maslow-get-self-actualization-wrong>



Using the link above, explain what Maslow observed

Explain the differences between Maslow's hierarchy of needs and that of the Blackfoot tribe

Why is it important to consider the culture in which research is founded?

The Psychodynamic approach

Evaluation

The role of the unconscious

Defence mechanisms

Real world application

Psychosexual stages

Explanatory power

The structure of personality

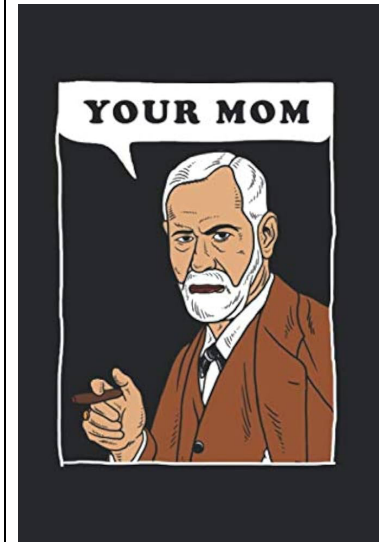
Untestable concepts

The Psychodynamic Approach - application

The Oedipus complex

Watch the following video from the Freud museum

<https://www.freud.org.uk/schools/resources/what-is-psychoanalysis-part-3-the-oedipus-complex/>



Summarise the basics of the Oedipus complex

Written task

You will need to write (or type) an essay on the following question:

Describe and evaluate the biological approach. Compare this to another approach in Psychology (16 marks)

Please use the next page to help you

Success criteria:

- A full planned essay before writing (see the next page)
- Full use of key terminology
- A detailed outline of the knowledge (AO1) for each approach (approx 1 paragraph or this can be split into two)
- 3 x evaluation points writing in PEEL and PEELCO
- A comparison to ONE other approach. You do not need to outline the knowledge for the other approach, but to simply compare them on evaluation points. My recommendation for this would be to look at the evaluation points for each approach and analyse which have the same / similar points in common.
- No need to include an introduction or conclusion!

A-level Psychology 16 marker plan	Question:	
AO1: Knowledge and understanding	AO3: Evaluation	
Concept 1:	Evaluation point 1: use PEEL or PEELCO	P - point A strength of the biological approach is that...
Concept 2:	Evaluation point 2: use PEEL or PEELCO	E - Evidence For example...
Concept 3:	Evaluation point 3: use PEEL or PEELCO	E - explain This is a strength for the biological approach because...
Concept 4:	Comparison:	L - link Therefore...
Comparison sentence starters: This is similar or different to the ... approach. This is because... Therefore...		CO - counter argument However... Despite this...



Model example

Describe and evaluate the humanistic approach. Compare this to the psychodynamic approach (16 marks)



Key terminology

PEEL is underlined

Comparison is in bold

AO1:
knowledge

The humanistic approach in psychology emerged in the mid-20th century as a response to the limitations of both behaviorism and the psychodynamic approach. It is often referred to as the "third force" in psychology and was developed primarily by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Humanistic psychology emphasizes **free will**, self-actualization, and the inherent goodness of people. It offers a holistic view of human behavior, focusing on subjective experiences and the importance of the self.

AO1:
knowledge

A central concept in the humanistic approach is **self-actualization**, a term popularized by Maslow. He proposed a hierarchy of needs, culminating in self-actualization, which refers to the fulfillment of one's potential. According to Maslow, individuals are motivated by a series of needs, beginning with physiological necessities and progressing to safety, love/belonging, esteem, and finally, self-actualization.

AO1:
knowledge

Carl Rogers contributed the concept of the **self-concept**, which includes how individuals perceive themselves and their worth. He believed that psychological problems arise when there is incongruence between the self-concept and reality. Rogers emphasized **unconditional positive regard**, empathy, and genuineness in therapeutic relationships, which he considered essential for personal growth.

AO3:
evaluation

A strength of the humanistic approach is that it's praised for its optimistic view of human nature. For example, it values personal agency and the unique experiences of the individual, offering a more positive perspective than the deterministic views of earlier psychological theories. This is a strength because it's the only approach to be person centered taking into account the individual. Furthermore, it has significantly influenced counseling and psychotherapy, particularly person-centered therapy, which remains widely used today.

AO3:
evaluation

However, the humanistic approach has been criticized for its lack of scientific rigor. Concepts such as self-actualization and unconditional positive regard are difficult to operationalize and measure objectively. Critics also argue that the approach is overly idealistic and ignores the darker aspects of human behavior. Moreover, its rejection of nomothetic methods (those that aim to generalize findings across populations) limits its ability to produce generalizable or replicable findings.

AO3:
evaluation

When compared to the *psychodynamic approach*, developed by Sigmund Freud, several key differences become apparent. The psychodynamic approach emphasizes unconscious processes, early childhood experiences, and inner conflicts, particularly those involving sexuality and aggression. It is deterministic, suggesting that behavior is driven by forces beyond conscious control.

AO3:
evaluation

In contrast, the humanistic approach views individuals as inherently good and capable of making conscious choices. It emphasizes the present and future rather than focusing on past experiences. While Freud's methods involved psychoanalysis and interpreting dreams and free associations, the humanistic approach uses non-directive therapy, where clients guide the conversation and therapists act as facilitators.

AO3:
evaluation

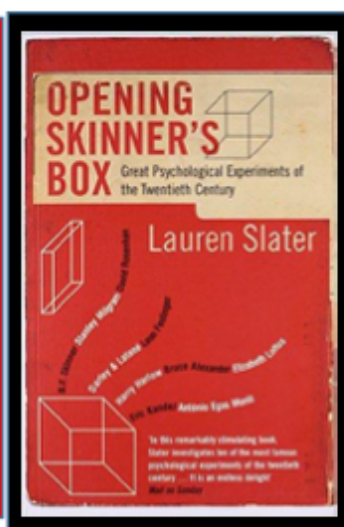
Despite their differences, both approaches share an interest in understanding the whole person and have contributed valuable insights into psychological therapy. However, where the psychodynamic approach has been more widely criticized for being untestable and unscientific, the humanistic approach is often regarded as more respectful of human dignity, even if it too struggles with empirical validation.

Describe and evaluate the biological approach. Compare this to another approach in Psychology (16 marks)

Book recommendations:

Kick back this summer with a good read. The books below are all popular books about Psychology, and great for extending your knowledge and understanding.

Your Key Read!!!



Opening Skinner's Box

A century can be understood in many ways - in terms of its inventions, its crimes or its art. In *Opening Skinner's Box*, Lauren Slater sets out to investigate the twentieth century through a series of ten fascinating, witty and sometimes shocking accounts of its key psychological experiments. Starting with the founder of modern scientific experimentation, B.F. Skinner, Slater traces the evolution of the last hundred years' most pressing concerns - free will, authoritarianism, violence, conformity and morality.

Thinking, Fast and Slow

The phenomenal *New York Times* Bestseller by Nobel Prize-winner Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* offers a whole new look at the way our minds work, and how we make decisions. Why is there more chance we'll believe something if it's in a bold type face? Why are judges more likely to deny parole before lunch? Why do we assume a good-looking person will be more competent? The answer lies in the two ways we make choices: fast, intuitive thinking, and slow, rational thinking.

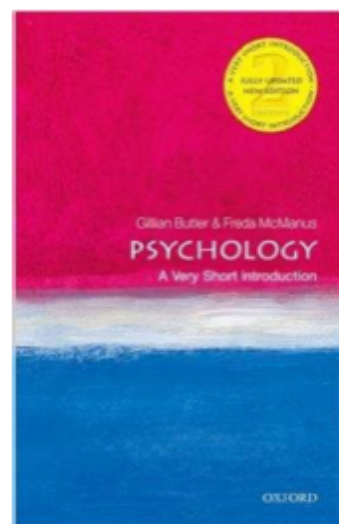
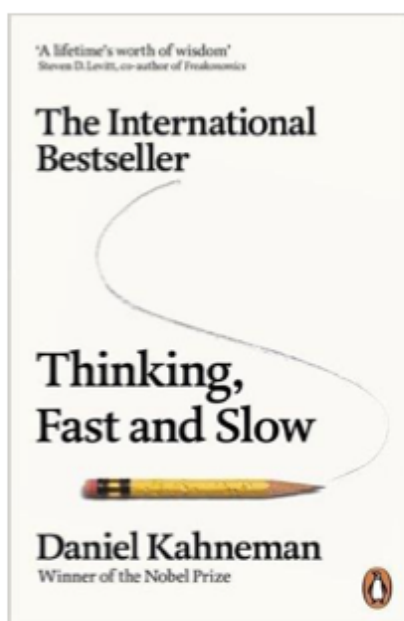
Placebo

A lucid and stimulating explanation of how the body's natural healing mechanisms work – and how they can be triggered in non-chemical ways via the 'placebo effect'. Can you cure ourselves of disease by the power of thought alone? Faith healers and alternative therapists are convinced that we can, but what does science say?



The Blank Slate

Recently many people have assumed that we are shaped by our environment: a blank slate waiting to be inscribed by upbringing and culture, with innate abilities playing little part. *The Blank Slate* shows that this view denies the heart of our being: human nature. Violence is not just a product of society; male and female minds are different; the genes we give our children shape the more than our parenting practices.



An easy read..

Psychology, a very short introduction

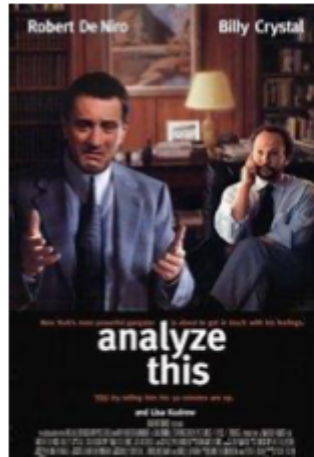
A whistle-stop tour of the main concepts in Psychology – a great introduction to the A Level course!

Movie recommendations:



Analyze This (1999)

A comedy about a psychiatrist whose number one-patient is an insecure mafia boss, played by a hilarious Robert De Niro.



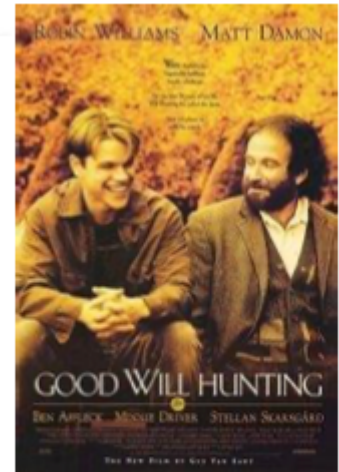
Running with Scissors (2006)

Young Augusten Burroughs absorbs experiences that could make for a shocking memoir: the son of an alcoholic father and an unstable mother, he's handed off to his mother's therapist, Dr. Finch, and spends his adolescent years as a member of Finch's bizarre extended family.



Good Will Hunting (1997)

Will Hunting, a janitor at M.I.T., has a gift for mathematics, but needs help from a psychologist to find direction in his life.



Cool Hand Luke (1967)

A man refuses to conform to life in a rural prison. This was recently produced as a West-End hit play, and teaches us a lot about prison life and the nature of conformity.



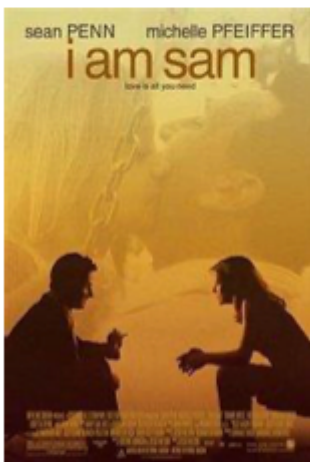
Memento (2000)

A man with total memory loss creates a strange system to help him remember things; so he can hunt for the murderer of his wife without his short-term memory loss being an obstacle.



I am Sam (2001)

A mentally handicapped man fights for custody of his 7-year-old daughter, and in the process teaches his cold hearted lawyer the value of love and family.



12 Angry Men (1957)

A jury member holds out in his attempt to prevent a miscarriage of justice by forcing his colleagues to reconsider the evidence. Demonstrates the qualities necessary for persuasion and influence.



Everyone loves a good story and everyone loves some great Psychology. You won't find any thrillers on this list, but we've looked back over the last 50 years to give you our top Psychological films you might not have seen before. Great watching for a rainy day.



We need to talk about Kevin (2011)

Kevin's mother struggles to love her strange child, despite the increasingly vicious things he says and does as he grows up. But Kevin is just getting started, and his final act will be beyond anything anyone imagined.

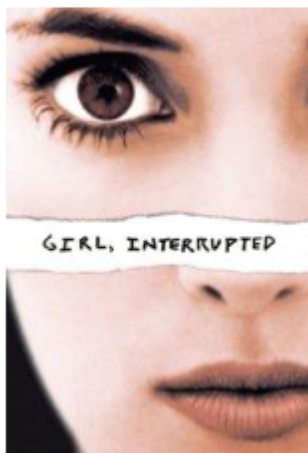


One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)

A criminal pleads insanity after getting into trouble again and once in the mental institution rebels against the oppressive nurse and rallies up the scared patients.

The Stanford Prison Experiment (2015)

Twenty-four male students out of seventy-five were selected to take on randomly assigned roles of prisoners and guards in a mock prison situated in the basement of the Stanford psychology building.



Girl, Interrupted (1999)

Based on a true story. Based on writer Susanna Kaysen's account of her 18-month stay at a mental hospital in the 1960s. This film questions what it means to be sane.



As good as it gets (1997)

A single mother/waitress, a misanthropic author, and a gay artist form an unlikely friendship after the artist is assaulted in a robbery. Looks at what life is like when you live with OCD.

There are some great TV series and box sets available too, you might want to check out: Blue Planet, Planet Earth, The Ascent of Man, Catastrophe, Frozen Planet, Life Story, The Hunt and Monsoon.

TED talk recommendations

If you have 30 minutes to spare, here are some great presentations (and free!) from world leading scientists and researchers on a variety of topics. They provide some interesting answers and ask some thought-provoking questions.

10 myths about Psychology, debunked.

Available at :

https://www.ted.com/talks/ben_ambridge_10_myths_about_psychology_debunked?language=en#t-80890

How much of what you think about your brain is actually wrong? In this whistlestop tour of dis-proved science, Ben Ambridge walks through 10 popular ideas about psychology that have been proven wrong — and uncovers a few surprising truths about how our brains really work.



Jon Ronson: Strange answers to the psychopath test

Available at :

https://www.ted.com/talks/jon_ronson_strange_answers_to_the_psychopath_test?language=en#t-129957

Is there a definitive line that divides crazy from sane? With a hair-raising delivery, Jon Ronson, author of *The Psychopath Test*, illuminates the gray areas between the two.

Martin Seligman: A new era of positive psychology

Available at :

http://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology

As the founder of the newest modern emerging branch of Psychology, Martin Seligman utilizes this TED talk to discuss how positive psychology is revolutionizing the field by moving beyond a focus on mental illness and shifting towards examining human healthy states, including happiness and optimism.



Ben Goldacre: Battling Bad Science

Available at :

http://www.ted.com/talks/ben_goldacre_battling_bad_science?language=en#t-89077

Every day there are news reports of new health advice, but how can you know if they're right? Doctor and epidemiologist Ben Goldacre shows us, at high speed, the ways evidence can be distorted, from the blindingly obvious nutrition claims to the very subtle tricks of the pharmaceutical industry.

Brain Magic

Available at :

https://www.ted.com/talks/keith_barry_does_brain_magic?language=en#t-99868

First, Keith Barry shows us how our brains can fool our bodies — in a trick that works via podcast too. Then he involves the audience in some jaw-dropping (and even a bit dangerous) feats of brain magic.



The Surprising Science of Happiness

Available at: https://www.ted.com/playlists/4/what_makes_you_happy

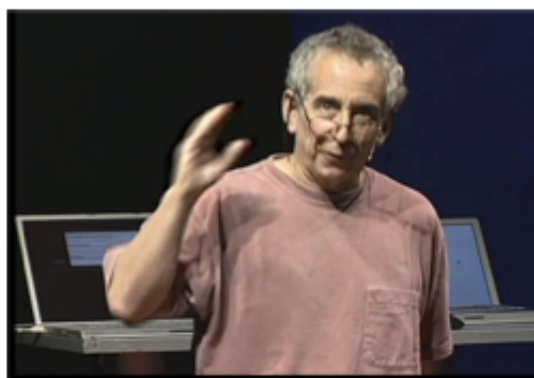
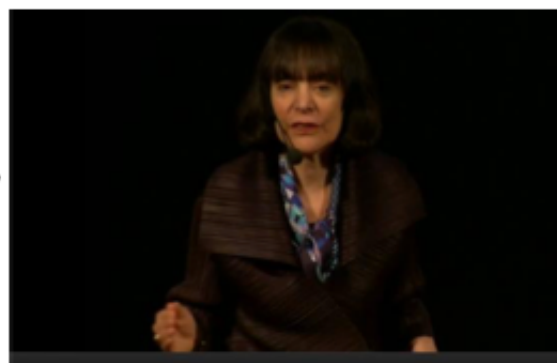
Dan Gilbert, author of "Stumbling on Happiness," challenges the idea that we'll be miserable if we don't get what we want. Our "psychological immune system" lets us feel truly happy even when things don't go as planned.

Carol Dweck: The power of believing that you can improve

Available at :

https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve#t-30982

Carol Dweck researches "growth mindset" — the idea that we can grow our brain's capacity to learn and to solve problems. In this talk, she describes two ways to think about a problem that's slightly too hard for you to solve. Are you not smart enough to solve it ... or have you just not solved it yet? A great introduction to this influential field.



The Paradox of Choice

Available at :

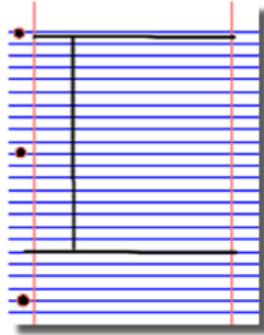
https://www.ted.com/playlists/164/how_we_make_choices

Psychologist Barry Schwartz takes aim at a central tenet of western societies: freedom of choice. In Schwartz's estimation, choice has made us not freer but more paralyzed, not happier but more dissatisfied.

OPTIONAL research activities

Research, reading and note making are essential skills for A level Psychology. You are going to practice producing 'Cornell Notes' to summarise some of the TED talks you have listened to. Choose two of the talks, and complete notes in the following format for them:

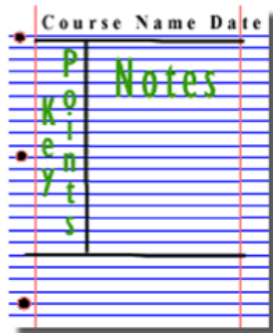
1. Divide your page into three sections like this



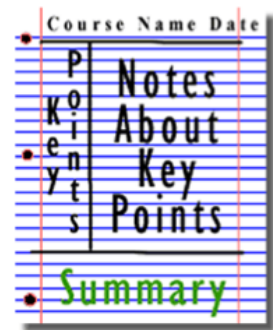
2. Write the name, date and topic at the top of the page



3. Use the large box to make notes. Leave a space between separate ideas. Abbreviate where possible.



4. Review and identify the key points in the left hand box



5. Write a summary of the **main ideas** in the bottom space

