

Psychology Year 11 Summer Assignment 2024: Learning to think like a psychologist

Sailing boat analogy

Life is like a journey by boat across the sea; a huge space full of possibilities and things to discover and experience....

- You have your own boat
- You can decide where to go
- You are free to choose...



However, though you are free to choose how many sails to use and where to point your boat, you quickly learn that your freedom is restricted by two things in particular:

- Winds
- Currents

Wind and current are invisible forces that affect your journey. So, you could point your boat towards Portsmouth, but end up in Calais!

So, let's imagine this is what LIFE is like; there are 'things that affect us.' These things could be helpful or unhelpful. But if we can identify and understand these things, we might be able to appreciate and maximise the positive influences, and reduce the impact of the negative ones.

- Can we name and describe the 'winds and currents' that affect our lives?
- Can we explain **how** they affect our lives?
- How can we measure or investigate their influence?

This is the main goal of Psychology; using research to explain why we behave as we do.

So, this activity sheet is intended to encourage you to start 'thinking like a psychologist' as you prepare for your Psychology A level.

To do over the summer holiday....

1. **Identify a behaviour** that interests you. (In our sailing analogy, this is the boat.) Bear in mind that 'behaviour' is a BIG thing;
 - It includes what people say, and how they act, as well as how they feel, and what they think or believe.
 - It includes things that may happen automatically like sleeping/dreaming, and behaviours that may be routine like eating, catching the bus, showering.
 - It includes behaviours that are necessary - like putting on clothes, going to school, and optional - dancing, going to gigs, climbing mountains.
 - Behaviour includes things that are seen as desirable/good and those that are illegal or immoral.

In terms of the scientific language that you have learnt, behaviour is the dependent variable (DV), and it is affected by a wide variety of factors (IVs). For instance psychologists might consider:

- What is the effect of cardio exercise (IV) on mood (DV)?
 - What is the effect of listening to music (IV) on concentration (DV)?
 - What is the effect of age (IV) on memory (DV)?
 - What is the effect of gender (IV) on addiction behaviours (DV)?
2. **Identify something that you suspect has an impact on behaviour.** (In our sailing analogy, this is the wind and currents). The scientific term for this is the independent variable. See above for examples.
 3. Having named the independent variable (the 'thing that affects behaviour,') try now to **describe how it affects behaviour** (the dependent variable). For instance, does it have a noticeable, dramatic effect, or is it a subtle influence? Does it affect behaviour quickly or slowly, in a positive or negative way? Does it change the way we feel/think/react to others....?
 4. Now the clever bit. **Work out a method** by which you could investigate the effect of your IV on your DV. Bear in mind that there will not be one correct way of doing this; there could be many different possibilities - so feel free to be imaginative with the research that you suggest. Try to explain your method like a recipe for making a cake - be precise and specific.

Type up your work on a Google Doc, ready to share in your first lesson in Sept:

1. Identify a behaviour.
2. Identify something that you suspect has an impact on behaviour.
3. Describe how it affects behaviour.
4. Work out a method that could be used to investigate this....

Wider Reading Ahead of September

Why not listen to a few psychology-related podcasts or immerse yourself in a psychology book over the summer holidays? It will broaden your horizons and give you a sense of what psychology is all about before you start the course. You can find plenty of wider reading/listening/viewing suggestions here:

[☰ A Level Psychology Resources](#)

Also, you can find out more about how Psychology is taught at Aylesbury High School, including specification links and our learning journey, by going to our [Psychology webpage](#).