SIXTH FORM CENTRE
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BIRMINGHAM

A-Level Psychology
Summer Transition Work
2025-2026

A Level Psychology

Summer Workbook

Welcome to AQA A Level Psychology!

Congratulations on choosing to study A Level Psychology! This fascinating subject will provide you with a deep understanding of human behaviour and the mind.

To help you transition smoothly into A Level Psychology, we have prepared this summer work booklet, which includes:

- Reading Materials to explore some foundational concepts.
- Exercises and questions to test your understanding and spark your curiosity.
- The opportunities to explore different approaches in psychology.

This booklet is designed to give you an ideal grounding for your A Level Psychology course, giving you a head start and preparing you for some key topics you will explore at the beginning of the course.

We hope this booklet will ignite your passion for psychology and prepare you for an exciting year ahead. Remember, psychology is not just about learning facts; it's about developing a deeper understanding of yourself and others.

Enjoy your summer, and we look forward to seeing you in Year 12!

The Psychology Team at UCB6

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Instructions

In order to successfully complete this work booklet, you will need:

1. The resources provided in this pack

2. The internet – as there is a lot of unreliable information out there. I have complied a list of **AQA compliant website for you to use.**

- **Attempt all the questions** - as an A level student, you are expected to take pride in your work. Please do not return this booklet incomplete. The booklet is intended to allow you to experiment with the materials and demonstrate your willingness to give things a go!

3. Please complete in full sentences, depth, and detail.

4. This booklet must be **completed solely on your own.**

5. You need to make sure all your work is summarised and written in your own words. Copying and pasting information from the internet is **not allowed.**

Thank you and all the best.

Part 1: Psychology in the Media Task

Psychology in the Media Task

Choose 1:

Memory

- "The Mind, Explained" – Episode: Memory (Netflix)
  Which involved a visually engaging overview of how memory works, including false memories.

Attachment

- Babies (Netflix Documentary)
  → Shows stages of infant development and bonding.

Psychopathology

- A Beautiful Mind (2001)
  → Follows mathematician John Nash's struggle with schizophrenia.
- The Soloist (2009)
  → A journalist discovers a homeless man who is a musical genius with schizophrenia.

Social Influence

- The Stanford Prison Experiment (2015)
  → Dramatised version of Zimbardo's classic study.

Issues and Debates / Research Methods

- Three Identical Strangers (2018)
  → Triplets separated at birth as part of a secret research study.

Task: Once you have chosen and watched the documentary/movie complete the following questions below:

Write a short review:

What was it about?

What psychological concepts did it touch on?

Part 2: Key Approaches Research Task

Task: Each approach looks at human behaviour from a different perspective. They all contribute to our understanding in different ways. Your task is to research the 5 core approaches and fill in a summary table:

Approach	**Main Assumptions**	**Key Psychologist**
Biological		
Behaviourist		
Cognitive		
Psychodynamic		
Humanistic		

Approaches: Application of knowledge:

John started stealing when he was just 10 years old. In the beginning it was just sweets from the local shop however by the age of 17 he had joined a local gang. Along with other members of the gang he started stealing cars and breaking into houses. An important part of being a gang member is acting tough and aggressive and he regularly got into fights with other gang members.

Match the approach to the appropriate description below.

The Biological Approach		*John's behaviour is all learned from his environment. He may have learned this by getting rewards from acting aggressively in the past. Alternatively he may have learned from imitating role models.*
The Cognitive Approach		*There is a physical cause to his criminal behaviour. He might have inherited aggressive genes from his parents. Or he might have high levels of testosterone which is associated with aggressive behaviour.*
The Psychodynamic Approach		*John's behaviour is driven by an unconscious conflict stemming from traumatic childhood experiences.*
The Behaviourist Approach		*John's aggression stems from his own conscious choice to commit crime. He has made a decision to join the gang and act aggressively.*
The Humanistic Approach		*John's perception of stealing is that it is acceptable and he has developed an expectation that aggression is the way to resolve conflicts. He is almost 'programmed' to behave in an aggressive manner.*

Part 3: Famous Psychologists Research

Task: Research 2 of the following and summarise:

- Sigmund Freud
- B.F. Skinner
- Albert Bandura
- Ivan Pavlov
- Elizabeth Loftus
- John Bowlby

Guidance: Include their main theory/study and why it's important in psychology.

Researcher name: _____

Main theory/study

Explain why it's important in psychology.

Researcher name: _____

Main theory/study

Explain why it's important in psychology.

Part 4: Research Methods – Experimental methods

Research methods are crucial in A level Psychology because they help you understand how psychologists gather and analyse data. By learning these methods, you can critically evaluate studies and understand scientific findings. In total 25% of your overall marks will be about research methods and the scientific process - it is a **VERY IMPORTANT** part of psychology - it is a theme that runs throughout A level psychology.

Independent variables (IV's) and Dependent variables (DV's)

Independent and dependent variables are essential in psychology research because they form the basis of experiments and research studies.

- The Independent variable is the variable that the researcher ***manipulates***. It is also known as the IV. There are usually two levels of the IV - a control condition and an experimental condition.
- The dependent variable is the variable that the researcher ***measures***. It is also known as the DV.

Examples 1: a psychologist wants to discover whether exam results are affected by the quality of teaching received. The IV is the quality of the teacher (either good or bad) and the DV is exam results (grades).

For example, to test a hypothesis that drink coffee improves concentration, the experimenter would assign one group to drink 230 ml of coffee (experimental group) vs a group that doesn't, instead drinks a 230ml placebo (control group).

Link to support: Independent and Dependent Variables | Reference Library | Psychology | tutor2u

Task: Your task is to identify the IV and DV in each of the following examples (write your answers into the boxes). You should not leave any gaps. Make sure you include the levels of the IV.

	Investigation	IV	DV
1	A psychologist wants to investigate if the amount of sleep affects students' test scores. They let one group of students sleep for 8 hours and another group for only 4 hours before taking a test.		
2	A group of college students were given a short course on mathematics. The instructor wanted to know whether offering money would influence their performance on the final test. Half were offered £5.00 for obtaining at least 80% on the test, the other half were not offered any money		
3	A study aims to find out if a new therapy technique reduces anxiety levels in patients. One group receives the new therapy, while the other group receives standard therapy.		

	Investigation	IV	DV
1	An experiment is conducted to see if the type of breakfast (high protein vs. high carbohydrate) affects the concentration levels of students during morning classes.		
2	Researchers are testing if the amount of daily exercise impacts stress levels. One group exercise for 30 minutes daily, while the other group does not exercise at all.		

Types of experiments

Different types of experiments (laboratory, field, and natural experiments) allow psychologists to study behaviour in various settings and conditions. Different experiments are suited for different research questions.

Link to support: Types of Experiment: Overview | Reference Library | Psychology |

Identify whether the following scenario is an example of a laboratory experiment, field experiment, quasi experiment or natural experiment.

Apply it
Methods

Lab, field, natural or quasi? You decide

Questions

Which of the four investigations below is the lab experiment, the field experiment, the natural experiment and the quasi-experiment? (*1 mark each*)

1. Three groups were recruited – autistic children, children with Down syndrome and a control group (*no diagnosis*). The autistic children did significantly worse on a task involving putting a comic strip in the right order (Baron-Cohen *et al*. 1986).

_____

2. An experiment was conducted on a busy New York subway in which a researcher pretended to collapse. It was found more people helped when the victim was carrying a walking stick than when they smelt of alcohol (Piliavin *et al*. 1969).

_____

3. The behaviour of children aged 6–11 in a Canadian town was monitored before and after television was first introduced. Increases in levels of aggression were observed after the children had access to television (Williams 1986).

_____

4. Participants were deprived of food and water for four hours and then shown pictures of food. These participants rated the pictures of food as being brighter than the control group who had not been food-deprived (Gilchrist and Nesburg 1952).

_____

A psychologist wanted to test whether listening to music improves running performance.

The psychologist conducted a study using 10 volunteers from a local gym. The psychologist used a repeated measures design. Half of the participants were assigned to condition A (without music) and half to condition B (with music).

All participants were asked to run 400 meters as fast as they could on a treadmill in the psychology department. All participants were given standardised instructions. All participants wore headphones in both conditions. The psychologist recorded their running times in seconds. The participants returned to the psychology department the following week and repeated the test in the other condition.

(a) Identify the type of experiment used in this study. Shade **one** box only.

A Laboratory ⬭

B Natural ⬭

C Quasi ⬭

D Research ⬭

(1)

Part 5: Research Methods - Descriptive statistics

A psychologist was interested in testing a new treatment for people with eating disorders. She put up adverts in several London clinics to recruit participants. Thirty people came forward and they were all given a structured interview by a trained therapist. The therapist then calculated a numerical score for each participant as a measure of their current functioning, where 50 indicates excellent, healthy functioning and zero indicates failure to function adequately. The psychologist then randomly allocated half the participants to a treatment group and half to a no-treatment group. After eight weeks, each participant was re-assessed using a structured interview conducted by the same trained therapist and given a new numerical score. The trained therapist did not know which participants had been in either group.

For each participant, the psychologist calculated an improvement score by subtracting the score at the start of the study from the score after eight weeks. The greater the number, the better the improvement.

Median and range of improvement scores for the treatment group and for the no-treatment group

	Treatment group	**No–treatment group**
Median	10.9	2.7

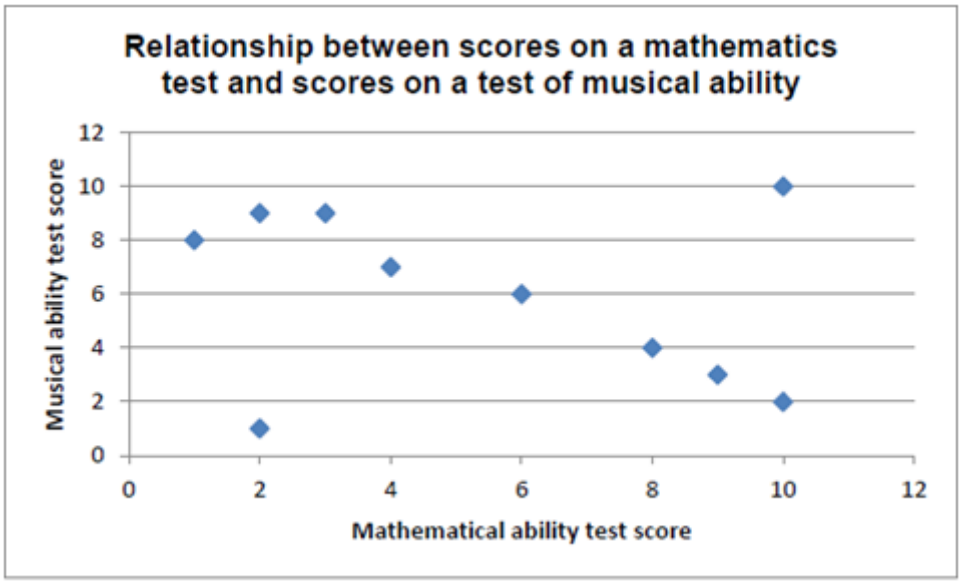
(a) With reference to the data in the table above, **outline what the findings of this investigation seem to show about the effectiveness of the treatment.**

(2)

Part 6: Research Methods – Correlations

A maths teacher wondered whether there was a relationship between mathematical ability and musical ability. She decided to test this out on the GCSE students in the school. From 210 students, she randomly selected 10 and gave each of them two tests. She used part of a GCSE exam paper to test their mathematical ability. The higher the mark, the better the mathematical ability. She could not find a musical ability test so she devised her own. She asked each student to sing a song of their choice. She then rated their performance on a scale of 1–10, where 1 is completely tuneless and 10 is in perfect tune.

The results of the study are shown in the graph below.



Link to support: Correlations | Reference Library | Psychology |

Discuss what the data in the table shows about the **relationship** between mathematical ability and musical ability.

(3)

Challenge: What is the difference between correlations and experiments?