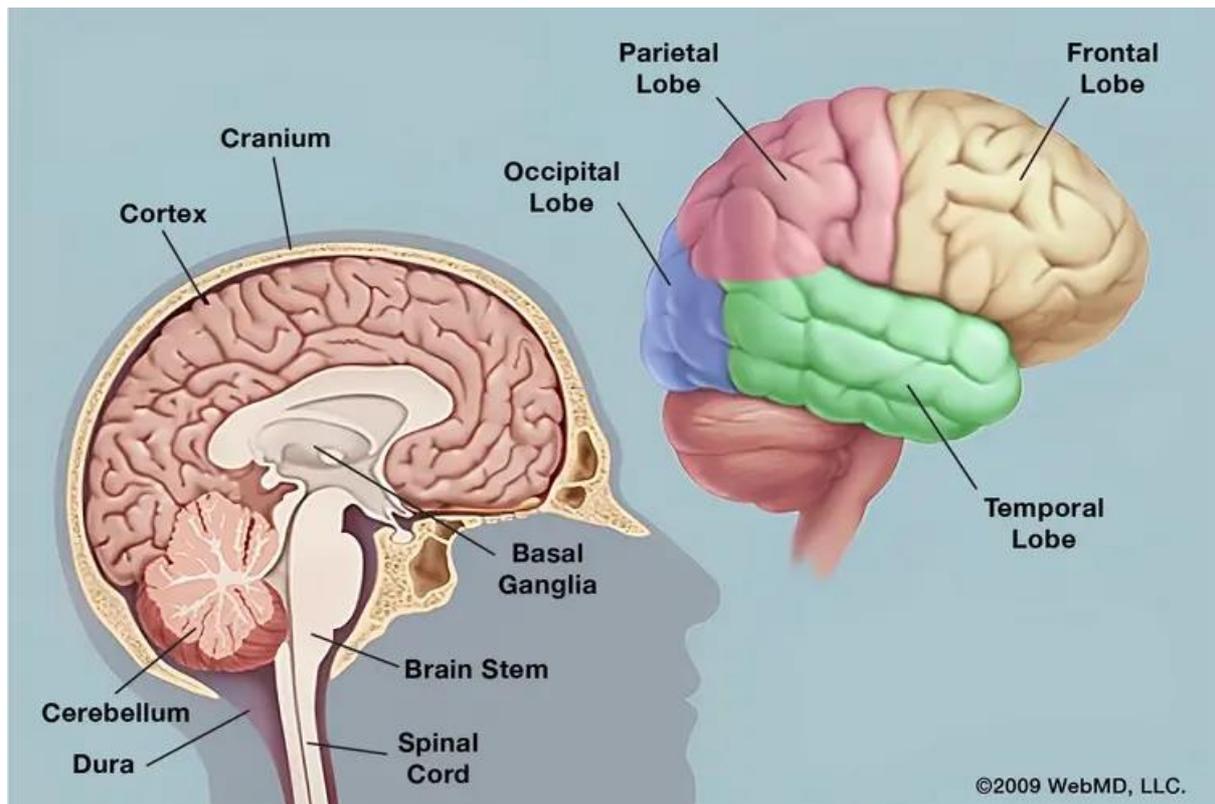


# A Level Psychology pre-course tasks

## September 2025



## Folders

You will need three folders for your Psychology A Level, one for each A Level exam paper

You will need to purchase ahead of September

- Three folders
- Dividers for each folder
  
- In folder one for Paper 1 you will need four dividers: *Social influence, Memory, Attachment, Psychopathology*
- In folder two for Paper 2 you will need three dividers: *Approaches, Biopsychology, Research Methods*
- In folder three for Paper 3 you will need four dividers: *Issues and Debates, Relationships, Schizophrenia, Addiction*

## Is Psychology a science?

There is an ongoing debate about whether psychology is a science or is not a science. Below are two articles, one from the University of Central Lancaster and one from science writer Alex B. Berezow that argue the two sides of this debate. **Your task is to read these articles and write no more than 100 words on your thoughts about Psychology as a science.**

### Article 1:

University of Central Lancaster

*Most psychologists believe it is a science, as it employs scientific methods and has a real-world impact.*

#### **What is a science?**

*Before we can answer is psychology a science, we need to understand what a science is. This is important because sciences hold a privileged position in terms of status and funding. So what do we mean by science?*

*There's no simple answer, but there are common features in the activities we class as a science.*

*Namely:*

- *Claims are based on empirical evidence.*
- *Systematic and clear procedures are followed.*
- *Theories are generated and evaluated.*

*Psychology meets this criteria, as it employs scientific methods to collect empirical evidence. The results are used to support or disprove hypotheses, and evaluate a theory.*

#### **Scientific methods**

*Psychology is the scientific study the mind and behaviour according to Dr Paul Taylor:*

*"Psychologists use scientific methods to observe, describe, predict, and explain behaviour and mental processes. These methods include controlled experiments, surveys, observations, and clinical trials, among others. Psychology aims to understand various aspects of human behaviour, cognition, emotion, and development through empirical research and evidence-based practices."*

*However, Dr Catch Sullivan points out that this may overlook nuance in the subject:*

*"Some of psychology is like that, but not all of it. So, does that mean only some of psychology is scientific?"*

*For example, a cognitive psychologist may use an EEG to measure brain activity. This is a highly scientific method which collects empirical data. A social psychologist, on the other hand, may carry out an observation. This is more open to interpretation. Although there are different approaches, psychologists will try to make research as scientific as possible. They follow British Psychological Society (BPS) guidance for best practice. For example, an observation will follow a strict procedure and control as many variables as possible. Therefore, we can still class psychology as a science*

#### **The history of psychology**

*To answer is psychology a science, we need to consider the history of the subject.*

*Science was previously believed to develop slowly, through a series of small changes that further ideas, approaches and understanding. In the 1960s, the philosopher Thomas Kuhn challenged this idea. He proposed instead that science develops to a crisis point and then experiences a scientific revolution. Psychology certainly follows this pattern. We can see several established approaches, a crisis point and then a new, improved psychology that follows*

*People are familiar with the ideas of Freud. These were rejected as unscientific and led to the development of the first psychology laboratories by Wilhelm Wundt, where he replicated techniques seen in more established sciences.*

*Then there was Behaviourism and the work of psychologists like Pavlov. The ‘rebellion’ against this by the Gestalt Psychologists led to the focus on perception and cognition as part of the Cognition Revolution of the 50s and 60s.*

*More recently, we’ve seen a move towards Biological Psychology, [Cognitive Neuroscience](#) and the Positive Psychology revolution of the late 20th Century. These approaches have increased the focus on scientific methods and empirical data.*

### ***Is psychology a science?***

*Psychology has contributed much to our understanding of the modern world. The use of scientific methods and empirical data mean that it meets the criteria of a science. It is also afforded growing respect by the scientific world, as shown by the staggering number of academic references. That means we can confidently say that psychology is a science.*

## **Article 2**

Science writer Alex B. Berezow

*The dismissive attitude scientists have toward psychologists isn’t rooted in snobbery; it’s rooted in intellectual frustration. It’s rooted in the failure of psychologists to acknowledge that they don’t have the same claim on secular truth that the hard sciences do. It’s rooted in the tired exasperation that scientists feel when non-scientists try to pretend they are scientists.*

*That’s right. Psychology isn’t science.*

*Why can we definitively say that? Because psychology often does not meet the five basic requirements for a field to be considered scientifically rigorous: clearly defined terminology, quantifiability, highly controlled experimental conditions, reproducibility and, finally, predictability and testability.*

*Happiness research is a great example of why psychology isn’t science. How exactly should “happiness” be defined? The meaning of that word differs from person to person and especially between cultures. What makes Americans happy doesn’t necessarily make Chinese people happy. How does one measure happiness? Psychologists can’t use a ruler or a microscope, so they invent an arbitrary scale. Today, personally, I’m feeling about a 3.7 out of 5. How about you?*

*The failure to meet the first two requirements of scientific rigor (clear terminology and quantifiability) makes it almost impossible for happiness research to meet the other three.*

*How can an experiment be consistently reproducible or provide any useful predictions if the basic terms are vague and unquantifiable? And when exactly has there ever been a reliable prediction made about human behaviour? Making useful predictions is a vital part of the scientific process, but psychology has a dismal record in this regard. Just ask a foreign policy or intelligence analyst.*

*To be fair, not all psychology research is equally wishy-washy. Some research is far more scientifically rigorous. And the field often yields interesting and important insights.*

*But to claim it is “science” is inaccurate. Actually, it’s worse than that. It’s an attempt to redefine science. Science, redefined, is no longer the empirical analysis of the natural world; instead, it is any topic that sprinkles a few numbers around. This is dangerous because, under such a loose definition, anything can qualify as science. And when anything qualifies as science, science can no longer claim to have a unique grasp on secular truth. That’s why scientists dismiss psychologists.*