

Independent Study in Psychology

Effective students do at least **five** hours independent work per A-level subject per week but your homework won't take up five hours...what else should you be doing?

Make sure you understand the topic and where it fits into the course

- ★ Make links between your notes, the [Specification Edexcel 9PSO](#) and the textbook.
- ★ Do they make sense - if not do something about it: read the textbook; search on the internet; ask a friend; email your teacher. Useful sites include [Psychology Wizard](#) and [Psycholotron](#)
- ★ How does the topic link with what you have done previously - are there common theories or issues & debates that also apply? Can you spot any competing arguments? Eg the idea of brain function and dysfunction appears in several sections; biological, cognitive and clinical - in how many ways can you link the Pre-Frontal Cortex to different behaviours? Where does Freud fit in [?!?]

Learn the Material

- ★ Create revision materials e.g. flash cards, games, posters, mind maps [Xmas tree method]
- ★ Play "Pictionary", Charades or Taboo with key terms
- ★ Use past papers from [Edexcel exam board](#) to familiarise yourself with how questions are asked, what A01, A02 & A03 mean, and how your answers will be marked.
- ★ Wider reading develops and embeds your learning of the specified content. Opening Skinner's Box, Psychology review [library] and The Tipping Point are good places to start.

Practice your Skills

- ★ Practice exam technique **and** content knowledge using the **3 Colour Method**. Try to answer a section after revising it in **one colour pen** eg do a section on Social psychology. Then use your notes to fill in any gaps in a **second colour** [so you can see what needs additional revision]. Then open mark scheme and assess your answers in a **3rd colour**, adding/changing as necessary. Now you have a colour record of your learning so far. Put your responses away, do some more work and retry questions after 2 weeks - you should be able to see how you have improved. Then try some different questions using the 3 colour method to check that you have no gaps in that section. Repeat with another section - they don't have to be done serially - you can have several sections [or even subjects] going at once!
- ★ Have races to complete statistical tests - you can make up the data yourself using 5-10 participants, with scores between 0-20.
- ★ Look at the exam papers with the specification - what else can they ask? Are there any gaps so far? Try to write your own scenarios and bring them to class [Dimitri & Rufus!]

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Scheduling work

- Aim to revisit work irregularly (“spaced retrieval” and “interleave”). Yes, these are advanced cognitive ideas - look them up :)
- It is useful to review material after: 1 day 1 week 1 month 1 year
- Plan a schedule to ensure all work is covered and recovered. Either use Google calendars with programmed reminders or try a revision website eg <https://getrevising.co.uk/planner>

Links and Resources:

Specification - the best place to start

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/psychology-2015.html>

Psychology Wizard <http://www.psychologywizard.net/>

Psychlotron <http://www.psychlotron.org.uk/>

Past papers from Edexcel - the SAMS

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/psychology-2015.course.materials.html#filterQuery=category:Pearson-UK:Category%2FSpecification-and-sample-assessments>

And past years [most current year will be blocked but the rest will be open

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/psychology-2015.course.materials.html#filterQuery=Pearson-UK:Category%2FExam-materials>

Textbook: Edexcel AS/A Level Psychology Ed Karren Smith with Active Book

Psychology Review magazine - produced quarterly and written especially for the exam boards, so highly relevant. Articles by regular and guest psychologists eg Philip Zimbardo

Books for wider-reading and interest:

The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil - Philip Zimbardo

Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View - Stanley Milgram & Philip Zimbardo

Opening Skinner's Box - Lauren Slater

The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat - Oliver Sacks

Forever Today - Deborah Wearing

The Invisible Gorilla - Simons & Chabris

Predictably Irrational - Dan Ariely

The Honest Truth about Dishonesty - Dan Ariely

Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth & Happiness - Richard Thaler & Cass Sunstein

The Tipping Point - Malcolm Gladwell

Outliers: The Story of Success - Malcolm Gladwell

The Psychopath Test - Jon Ronson

Against Empathy - Paul Bloom

Mindhunter: Inside the FBI Elite Serial Crime Unit - John Douglas & Mark Olshaker

Confessions of a Sociopath: a Life Spent Hiding in Plain Sight - M.E. Thomas