PREVIEW

IB PSYCHOLOGY

A Student's Guide

Travis Dixon

SECOND EDITION

For my fellow teacher geeks who want to teach students cool stuff that one day they will use.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Dear Student,

If you can google everything, why do you need this textbook? Why not choose any topic you like? Well, most students agree it's more fun studying and discussing the same topics. Your teacher and I also know a lot about psychology. In this book, I have carefully selected topics and content that are the most interesting for students. We can save you the time of wading through the boring and irrelevant bits. By learning these facts first, hopefully you will be inspired to go and do more of your own research and learn more about psychology.

You'll also be better off studying the content in this book because it's the most effective way to learn, become an excellent psychologist, and do well on your exams.

Good luck,

Mr Dixon

Dear Teacher,

If the answer to any question can be googled or answered by AI, we don't need to know anything. Students should be taught skills and critical thinking instead.

Unfortunately, this idea has pervaded teaching. Knowledge is undervalued. Courses and curriculums are designed around abstract ideas and concepts, with little regard for content or facts. This, I believe, is the fundamental problem facing schools, teachers and students.

The arguments against this sentiment are simple. Firstly, you can't think critically about something you know nothing about. Therefore, all critical thinking begins with knowledge. This book is written with this simple truth in mind. All lessons are designed around three questions that get progressively more challenging, beginning with basic comprehension of content and moving into thinking critically about that content. Secondly, you can't ask questions about something you know nothing about. Student-centred learning fails when students are given too much freedom too early. And the final reason is because knowledge is sticky. We learn new things by connecting it to things we already know. If we don't know anything, we can't learn anything.

This book is designed using our themantic model of curriculum design (thematic + semantic): using themes to improve semantic memory of content. It's goal is to give you relevant and interesting content for students to love their introduction to psychology and do well on their exams.

I hope it helps,

Travis

CONTENTS

Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of **psychology** – the scientific study of individual human **behaviour** and **cognition**. Psychologists observe people's actions, look for patterns of behaviour and wonder why they happen. They also study cognition – the internal mental processes that happen inside our minds, like memory, thinking and decision-making.

The big question in psychology is "how and why do people think and act the way they do?" As you'll learn in this course, there's no easy answer to this question. It's complicated. If you finish this textbook with more questions than answers, you've become an excellent psychologist.

Psychologists explain why things happen, but we can't explain the why if we don't know what it is we're explaining. For example, our first lesson is about behaviour, so we'll begin by finding out what a "behaviour" is. With this in mind, I like to use three levels of questions in Psychology. You'll see these questions in every lesson. The first question usually begins with "What is…?" Then we get to the "How and why…." And then the final question challenges your critical thinking by making you think deeper about the subject.

You can become an excellent psychologist by mastering the basics first. The goal of this textbook, therefore, is to help you with the basic knowledge, develop a deep understanding of why things happen and then provide probing questions to challenge your critical thinking.

Lessons

1. Behaviour
2. Cognition
3. Approaches
4. Psychological Research
5. Effects, Theories and Models
6. Course Overview

Critical Thinking Concepts: Bias, Causality, Change, Measurement, Perspective and Responsibility

This course has six general concepts that will develop your critical thinking.

- Measurement
- Causality
- Bias
- Change
- Responsibility
- Perspective

Each chapter will focus on one concept. For example, in "Criminology", we'll focus on "Causality." Each lesson in this book ends with one specific key term related to the broader concept. These terms will be used to help develop your critical thinking and conceptual understanding. Challenge yourself to be able to answer these critical thinking questions at the end of each lesson.

1. Behaviour

What is behaviour?

Why do psychologists study behaviour?

Why is it difficult to study the prevalence of some behaviours?

Psychologists study **behaviour** – observable actions - things people do. Let's look at two examples you'll study in this course: conformity and compliance.

Conformity is when someone goes along with the group. They change their behaviour so they're doing the same as everyone else. It can lead to terrible consequences like the Jonestown massacre.

Real World: Jonestown, 1978

In 1978, over 900 people committed mass-suicide in Jonestown, Guyana. These people were members of the Peoples Temple cult, led by Jim Jones. The cult started in 1954 in Indiana, USA. It had origins in positive Marxist and Christian ideals, like social equality. By the 1970s, Jones had a loyal following and moved his cult to Guyana, South America. He promised his followers a utopian society, but he became an authoritarian dictator. In the end, he tragically convinced all his followers to drink from a barrel of Kool-Aid which was laced with deadly cyanide.

Jonestown is an extreme and tragic, real world example of conformity. Examples like this motivate psychologists to understand why people do the things they do. Another example that inspired a lot of research was the holocaust in World War II. This prompted psychologists to ask questions like, "how can ordinary people commit such horrible crimes?" While Nazism might have been a result of conformity, it was also a result of **compliance** – behaving in a particular way because someone has asked you to. Armies are based on rank and complying with orders from higher ranking officers. Some Nazi soldiers gave the reason, "we were just following orders." This inspired social psychologists to design experiments to test the limits of compliance. You'll learn more about the Stanley Milgram's famous compliance experiments later in this course.

Once we know the causes of behaviours like compliance and conformity, we can use that knowledge in the real world. For instance, psychological theories of compliance can be used to influence behaviour in a positive way. Governments and businesses use compliance strategies to promote behaviour like recycling and conserving water.

In this lesson you've learned what we mean by the study of behaviour. In the next lesson we'll look at cognition.

Psychologists study why people are compliant. Symbols of authority, like uniforms, are one reason.

Critical Thinking Concept: Change and prevalence

An example of a specific key term relevant to "change" is **prevalence**. Psychologists study the prevalence of some behaviours, which means how common they are. For example, the prevalence of obesity is increasing in many countries. This means that more and more people are becoming obese (overweight). Psychologists research why this happens. They then publish their findings in studies like this Indonesian one in 2021 called *"The correlation between sleep quality and the prevalence of obesity in school-age children."*

A related concept is **prevalence rate** – this is a percentage. It's usually the percentage of people who have a particular health problem or disorder. For example, in 2013, a Chinese study reported a childhood obesity prevalence rate of 10.4%.

Some behaviours and problems are easier for psychologists to study than others. Why do you think this is? For example, do you think it's as easy to measure the prevalence rate of conformity and compliance? Why?

2. Cognition

Psychology is the scientific study of how and why we think and act certain ways. Actions are behaviour, thinking is **cognition** – the internal mental processes.

It can be difficult to comprehend the term "cognition," so here are some examples to help:

- Memory
- Decision making
- Perception
- Judgement
- Attention

Cognition can be loosely defined as "thinking". It's what's happening in our minds.

Can you see these things happening? No. I can't see you remembering, or what you're paying attention to or the decisions you're making. This is why cognition is also called internal mental processes. They are the things happening within the mind. Think of it this way, if behaviour is the actions performed by the body, cognition is the mental processes performed by the mind. Let's look at memory, decision making and attention to get a better understanding.

Memory is probably the most studied cognitive process. As a result, it's been divided into many different types. For example, we have short-term memory and long-term memory. You can remember the words you're reading right now in your short-term memory. If you think hard, you might remember something stored in your long-term memory like your first day of school. How much information you can keep in your short-term memory can affect your exam scores and academic success. Some people have amnesia and remember nothing while others have hyperthymia and remember everything. Psychologists have discovered this and dig deeper to find out why.

Similarly, the decisions we make shape our lives. Those decisions, however, can also be shaped by outside influences. This is one reason why psychologists study decision-making. One theory of decision-making is that we either think fast or slow when making a decision. If we think fast, we're more likely to make a mistake. If we stop and think a bit longer, we're more likely to make an accurate decision. This knowledge has been used in behavioural economics – the study of psychology in economics. For instance, the next time you're shopping online, your decisions might be influenced by companies using behavioural economics to get you to buy their products.

Key Study: Gandhi and Anchoring Bias

Kahneman and Tversky designed an experiment to see how irrelevant information could affect people's decision-making. They asked people to guess how old Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi was when he died. However, before people guessed they asked a question. One group was asked, "Was Gandhi older or younger than 9 years old when he died?". The other group was asked, "Was Gandhi older or younger than 140 years old when he died?". The low-number group guessed he was 50 years old, while the high-number group guessed he was 67. This study demonstrates anchoring bias – the influence of an irrelevant number on judgement.

Cognitive psychology seems to be growing in popularity alongside the increased use of technology in our lives. One cognitive process relevant here is attention – focusing on a particular thing. Like memory, it's been divided into different parts, like selective and sustained attention. Selective attention means blocking some things out so you can concentrate on one thing, whereas sustained attention is the ability to focus on one thing for a long time. Both are important for some things. For example, when you write your Extended Essay for the IB Diploma, you want sustained attention. When you're trying to read this textbook in a noisy classroom, you'll need selective attention. Technology seems to be affecting our attention. Could the rise of ADHD be a result of technology? This is another thing cognitive psychologists study.

Just like with behaviour, if psychologists can understand and influence these cognitive processes, they can use them in applied fields of psychology, such as educational, clinical and health psychology, as well as in other areas like behavioural economics.

Exam Tip: Paper 1, Section A:

In this 4-mark question, you need to include an example to support your answer. Your example could be a real study, or a real-world example. This book includes one study and one real-world example for every topic so you can choose.

Critical Thinking Concept: Bias

A **cognitive bias** is a way of thinking that increases our chances of making mistakes. One example is the ***IKEA effect*** – the tendency for people to place a higher value on things they've assembled themselves (like kitset or flatpack furniture bought from IKEA). Another common bias is **confirmation bias** – people's tendency to focus on and remember information that confirms their existing beliefs.

You can look online to find more examples. In fact, psychologists have identified over 100 specific cognitive biases. Why do you think these biases (or other cognitive processes) are difficult to study?

3. Approaches

What are the different approaches in psychology?
Why do psychologists use different approaches?
What is the problem with dividing psychology into approaches?

Why do we do the things we do? Why do people commit crimes? Why do people fall in love, get married and then get divorced? Why do people go along with the group? It's complicated. This is why psychologists take different **approaches** to study the same behaviours. For instance, a psychologist might take a **biological approach** by seeing how biological factors like genes and our brain affect behaviour. Another psychologist might take a **sociocultural approach** by looking at environmental factors, such as childhood and cultural influences. The **cognitive approach** looks at our thoughts and how they affect our actions. These are the three main approaches covered in the IB Psychology course. There are others, like the **behaviourist approach** (a.k.a. behaviourism) and the **psychodynamic approach** based on Sigmund Freud's theories. Behaviourists believed that all behaviour was learned through conditioning whereas Freud believed our childhood experiences shaped our personality and affected our behaviour through subconscious forces.

Which approach do you think would be the most effective for studying criminal behaviour?

What do we mean when we say a psychologist takes a particular approach? It's usually referring to psychology professors at universities conducting research. They observe an interesting behaviour they want to study, ask questions why it happens and then narrow their focus to a particular range of explanations. Some might focus on biological factors, for instance, whereas others might focus on social or cultural ones.

Let's use two examples of famous psychologists to demonstrate. Adrian Raine is a British psychologist who studies criminology. He tries to find out why humans commit acts of violence. He wrote a popular book called *An Anatomy of Violence: The Biological Roots of Crime*. From the title, you can see what approach he prefers to explain crime – the biological approach. Raine looks at genes, hormones and the brain to explain violence.

Albert Bandura, on the other hand, focused on a different explanation for violence. Bandura became famous in the 1960s when he proposed his social learning theory of behaviour. This theory suggested that violent behaviours were learned by observing others and imitating them. His famous Bobo doll studies show that young children will act more violently after watching a violent adult. This seems like common sense now, but his theory contradicted the dominant theories of the time. By focusing on societal influences on behaviour, Bandura was taking a sociocultural approach.

Real World: Prison Populations

In the field of criminology, psychologists observe interesting patterns in the data and ask, "Why?" Take the following data from the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC):

- Approximately 90% of prisoners around the world are men.
- Most criminals commit their first crimes before the age of 25.
- Most criminals are young men.
- The rate of female criminals is increasing faster than that of male criminals.
- The Americas have the highest number of prisoners, and Africa the lowest.

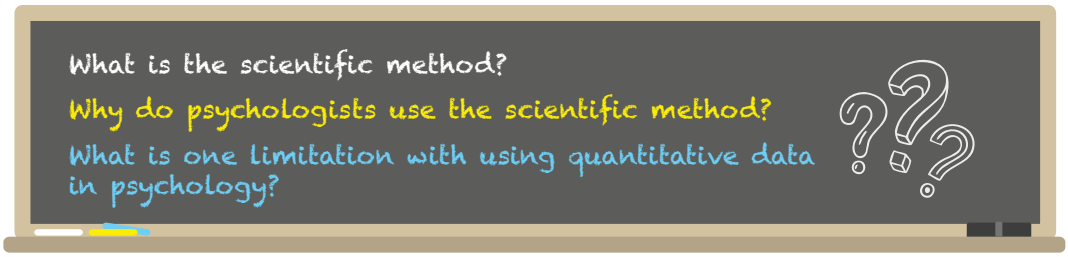
How would psychologists like Raine and Bandura take different approaches to investigate these patterns?

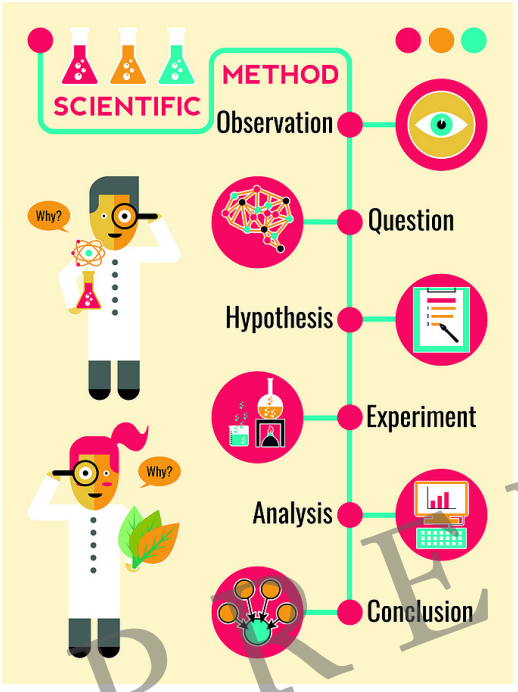
It's useful to think of the distinct approaches when you're first studying psychology. However, by the end of the course, you should see that the categories aren't black-and-white. Many psychologists can't be placed into a neat category. They prefer to focus on the behaviour and combine approaches to understand it. Bandura, for example, changed his theory in the 1980s to reflect our understanding of behaviour being a combination of biology and the environment. You'll also see that none of these approaches can fully explain human behaviour, but they can all play a part.

Critical Thinking Concept: Perspective

The psychological approaches are sometimes called psychological perspectives. A perspective is a way of seeing something. In psychology, different psychologists have different perspectives. It's easy for us to think of psychology in different perspectives (or approaches). However, this has problems. Think about the major topics we'll study in this course like criminology, depression and memory. What is one problem with psychologists taking only one perspective or approach to study these behaviours? You could use the example of young men in prison.

4. Psychological Research





Gathering data is essential in the scientific method.

If one driving question in psychology is, "How and why do humans think and act the way they do?", another is, "How do we know?" This brings us to the scientific study of behaviour and cognition. To be a science, psychology must use the scientific method. This means we don't rely on faith, gut instinct or ancient wisdom, but we objectively gather data and draw conclusions from that data. This is why psychological studies are important – they are how we discover new knowledge.

The scientific method generally goes like this:

Make an observation >
Ask a question >
Create a hypothesis >
Test the hypothesis and gather data >
Analyse the data >
Draw conclusions >
Publish result.

Here's an example.

One day in 1964, two social psychologists called John Darley and Bibb Latane were reading a story about a woman who was murdered in New York City. They **observed** something strange about the story: there were 38 witnesses to the murder, but no one helped. They asked, why did no one help? They made a **hypothesis** that it was because there were other people around who also didn't help. They predicted that if only one person saw the murder, that person would have been more likely to help. Darley and Latane designed an experiment to **test their hypothesis**. They used a classroom in a university and had participants fill out a questionnaire. While that was happening, they slowly filled the room with smoke through an air vent. There were three different situations. A participant was either alone, with another participant, or with two actors pretending to be participants who were told to ignore the smoke. Researchers **gathered data** by timing how long it took the participant to leave the room and tell someone about the smoke. They **analysed this data** and found that when people were alone, they were much faster at getting help than when they were with someone else. They were slowest when there were two paid actors. Darley and Latane **concluded** that the more people there are around, the less likely they are to help. The smoky room study was **published** and became famous in psychology. It identified the bystander effect – the more people around in an emergency, the less likely they are to help.

Most psychological studies are **quantitative.** This means they are measuring things that can be represented as numbers. Averages can be calculated and results can be displayed on a graph. For example, to test how stressed out someone is, psychologists can give the "Perceived Stress Scale." This is a questionnaire using Likert scales that gives a stress score out of 40. Or they might measure the levels of cortisol in their blood – this is the hormone released when you're stressed. You'll learn about a lot more methods of quantifying human thinking and behaviour throughout the course.

Likert scales are questions that ask participants to select a number along a range.

For example, "Are you enjoying psychology? 1 – Not at all, 2 – Not really 3 – Undecided, 4 – Somewhat, 5 – Very much."

Critical Thinking Concept: Measurement

The key word in the scientific method is **data**. For us to get quantitative data, we need to measure something. The concept of measurement, therefore, is very important in psychological studies. For example, the severity of psychological disorders like depression, PTSD and eating disorders are measured using quantitative data. Patients answer questionnaires with Likert scale questions and each answer gets a score. The total scores are counted and the psychologist knows how severe someone's disorder is. Can you see any limitations with trying to understand psychological disorders using only this quantitative data?

5. Effects, Theories and Models

What are psychological theories and models?

How are theories and models connected to studies?

How can we evaluate theories and models?

A theory is a proposed explanation for why something happens. A **psychological theory**, therefore, is a proposed explanation for why people think or act the way they do. Let's look at two famous theories from social psychology: social learning theory and realistic group conflict theory to demonstrate.

Social learning theory (SLT) was created in the 1960s by Albert Bandura. According to SLT, behaviour can be learned by observation. The reason we do the things we do, Bandura proposed, is because we've watched others do it and we copy them. For example, some kids might grow up to be more violent if they've observed and copied their violent parents or played a lot of violent video games. It seems like a simple explanation nowadays, but at the time it challenged other existing theories of behaviour.

SLT is a theory that can cover a wide range of behaviours. Other theories focus on specific behaviours. For example, realistic group conflict theory (RCT) tries to explain why people get into conflict with each other. According to this theory, groups of people get into conflict with each other when they are competing for limited resources. With these two examples, we can see how psychological theories work. They give a possible explanation for people's behaviour.

Generally speaking, a theory explains why something happens, whereas a model summarises how it happens. A psychological model, therefore, shows how a psychological process or behaviour happens. A famous model is the multi-store model of memory. This is a summary of how memories are made. Another famous model is the dual processing model of decision-making. Dual means two, so this model shows how using two different types of thinking can lead to different decisions.

Psychological effects are patterns of behaviour that are very predictable because they have been observed in numerous studies. You already learned about the bystander effect. Other examples include the anchoring effect, the misinformation effect and the Google effect. One of the oldest and most famous examples is the Stroop Effect.

Key Study: The Stroop Effect

John Ridley Stroop identified this effect almost 100 years ago in 1935. His famous experiment shows how we have automatic and controlled cognitive processes which interfere with each other. In the experiment's congruent condition, the colour of the word and the name are the same (e.g. BLUE is written in blue ink). In the second, incongruent condition, the name and colour are different (e.g. BLUE is written in red ink). Participants are timed to see how fast they can read the ink colour. Consistently, people are slower in the incongruent condition. This is the Stroop Effect.

Red Green Purple
Brown Blue Red

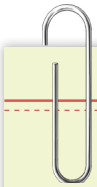
Purple Red Brown
Red Green Blue

This is a sample from a Stroop test. Which one is easier?

A good acronym to remember when evaluating an effect, theory or model is **DEAL**. First, **describe** the theory, then analyse the **evidence**, look at the **applications** and then consider other **limitations**.

Theories, models and effects are closely related to studies. If a study supports a theory or model, it will be more credible. This is one way we can evaluate the validity of theories and models – we can look at the supporting or contradictory evidence of their claims.

Similarly, a psychological model or theory is only as useful as its real-world applications. Therefore, the strength of any theory is how much it's been used to help people in the real world. To evaluate a theory, we look at the value and extent of its applications. This brings us to our next lesson on the different fields of psychology.



Critical Thinking Concept: Causality

A psychological theory is only as good as its supporting evidence. In this course, you'll learn how to evaluate the validity of psychological evidence. One way is to consider **causality** – when one variable is directly responsible for the change in another. Experiments test causality. For example, Bandura's famous experiment showed observing aggressive models caused an increase in aggression in children. Throughout this course, you will learn to evaluate theories and psychological studies like Bandura's. Can you see any problems with using Bandura's study on American three-year-olds in the 1960s to conclude that aggression is caused by watching other violent people?

6. IB Psychology Course Overview

The IB Psychology course is designed around the 3Cs: **Content, Contexts and Concepts**. This is confusing at first, but this textbook covers the 3Cs logically and systematically. How the course content fits with exam questions is covered in more detail in the "Exam Preparation" chapter. By the time you're ready for exams, it won't feel so overwhelming.

The Contexts

There are four contexts. Your understanding of these contexts is assessed in Paper One.

- Learning and cognition
- Human relationships
- Health and wellness
- Human development

The Content

In IB Psychology, content knowledge is divided into two parts:

- **Approaches:** biological, cognitive and sociocultural.
- **Research methodology:** methods, sampling, data analysis and interpretation.

The approaches are mixed into the four contexts. For example, in "Addiction," you'll learn about biological, cognitive and sociocultural explanations for why people abuse drugs like opioids. In criminology, you'll focus on the biological approach for interpersonal aggression.

Research methods are also mixed into the contexts. Each context has one practical investigation. In this investigation, you'll learn about the research method, data analysis and interpretation. You will also learn more about research methods when you're completing the Internal Assessment (IA).

Chapters in the IB Contexts			
Human Relationships	**Learning and Cognition**	**Health and Wellness**	**Human Development**
Group Behaviour Cults	**Thinking and Learning** Manipulation	**Health Problems** Addiction	**Development of Self** Personality
Interpersonal Relationships - Aggression Criminology **Social Relationships** Couples*	**Cognitive Processes** Memory*	**Mental Health** Depression*	**Models of Development** Morality
***Practical** Survey / Questionnaire	***Practical** Experiment	***Practical** Interview	***Practical** Observation

This table shows how the chapters of this textbook map onto the different contexts and topics in the IB Psychology course.

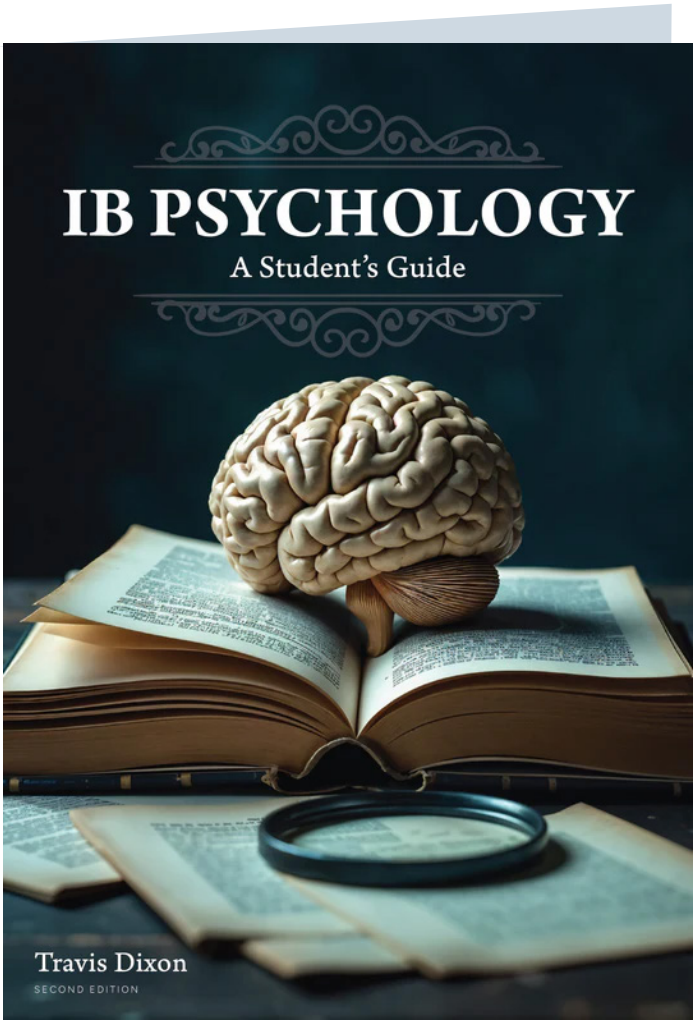
The Concepts

There are six concepts in the IB Psychology course. To simplify things, this textbook focuses on one concept per chapter. Next to each concept, I have a suggested learning. These outcomes are not stated in the IB Psychology Guide. I have created them to make it easier for you to study. They apply to psychological research and practice.

- **Bias:** Evaluate methods used to reduce bias.
- **Causality:** Evaluate methods used to understand causality.
- **Change:** Evaluate methods used to change human behaviour.
- **Measurement:** Evaluate methods used to accurately measure behaviour.
- **Perspective:** Evaluate different perspectives for understanding behaviour.
- **Responsibility:** Evaluate methods used to conduct responsible research and practice.

You're probably feeling overwhelmed. That's OK. There is a lot to learn in IB Psychology. Imagine we're building a tower of psychological knowledge in your brain. Right now, we're standing on an empty building site. We're only going to build this tower one block at a time. Every new word you learn in this course is a building block. By adding these blocks into your brain, you'll find them easier to connect to other blocks you've already got.

You're not going to build anything if you stand and stare at the blocks. You won't learn anything if you don't pick up a pen and this textbook and start working. Use your highlighter, take notes in the margin, keep a workbook for your notes. The more you do, the more you'll think and the more you'll learn. It's that simple.



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