

Introduction to Psychology

Introduction to Psychology – Study Notes

1. What Is Psychology?

Aspect	Description
Definition	The scientific study of behavior and mental processes.
Goals	1. Describe – Observe and catalog phenomena. 2. Explain – Identify causes and mechanisms. 3. Predict – Anticipate future behavior or experience. 4. Control/Influence – Apply knowledge to improve wellbeing.
Scope	Covers everything from neural activity to social interactions, across the lifespan and across cultures.

2. Historical Foundations

Era / Figure	Key Contributions	Influence on Modern Psychology
Wilhelm Wundt (1879)	Established the first laboratory of experimental psychology in Leipzig.	Birth of psychology as an independent scientific discipline; emphasis on introspection and controlled experiments.
William James (1890)	<i>The Principles of Psychology</i> ; functionalism.	Focus on how mental processes help individuals adapt to environments.
Sigmund Freud (late 1800s-1930s)	Psychoanalysis, unconscious mind, psychosexual stages.	Introduced depth psychology, therapeutic techniques, and the idea that early experiences shape later behavior.
John B. Watson (1913)	Behaviorism manifesto.	Shift to observable behavior, measurable outcomes, and learning principles.
B.F. Skinner (1930s-1970s)	Operant conditioning, reinforcement schedules.	Applied behavior analysis, behavior modification.
Cognitive Revolution (1950s-1960s)	George Miller, Ulric Neisser, information processing models.	Reintegration of mental processes (memory, perception, problem-solving) into scientific study.

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Humanistic Movement (1950s-1970s)	Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow.	Emphasis on self-actualization, client-centered therapy, positive aspects of human nature.
Biopsychology & Neuroscience (late 20th-c.)	Advances in brain imaging, neurochemistry.	Direct links between brain structures, neurotransmitters, and behavior.

3. Major Subfields

Subfield	Core Focus	Typical Methods
Biological (Neuro) Psychology	Brain, nervous system, genetics, hormones.	fMRI, EEG, lesion studies, pharmacology.
Cognitive Psychology	Perception, memory, language, decision-making.	Laboratory experiments, reaction-time tasks, computer modeling.
Developmental Psychology	Psychological change from infancy to old age.	Longitudinal & cross-sectional studies, observational protocols.
Social Psychology	How people think, feel, and act in groups.	Surveys, field experiments, social priming.
Clinical & Counseling Psychology	Assessment & treatment of mental disorders.	Psychotherapy, diagnostic interviews, outcome research.
Industrial/Organizational (I/O) Psychology	Workplace behavior, employee selection, ergonomics.	Job analyses, psychometrics, field interventions.
Educational Psychology	Learning processes, instructional design.	Classroom experiments, standardized testing.
Health Psychology	Interaction of psychological factors with health/illness.	Stress-response studies, health-behavior interventions.

4. Research Methods

Method	Description	Strengths Limitations
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Experimental

Manipulate independent variable(s) & measure effect on dependent