

WELCOME TO PSYCHOLOGY:

About This Book

This book contains a series of lessons designed to guide you through the AQA GCSE Psychology course. It can be used by people on their own, in groups, with a teacher or without one, at school, in college, at home or work or anywhere you choose to study. Each lesson will guide you through a topic as a teacher would guide you in the classroom. The lessons are designed to explain some complex psychology ideas in a simple way but they don't treat you like a child. Of course, you don't have to take an exam; you can use the book simply to find out more about psychology if you want.

For the best results, don't just read the book, but interact with it. When it suggests that you **jot something down**, do so; when it suggests you **check your understanding**, do so. The **Check Your Understanding** sections are not designed to simulate exam questions, but to help you check and retain the information in the lesson.

What Does it Cover?

The topics covered are those set by the exam board but they include the range of topics that many introductory psychology courses would cover. Most professional psychologists go on to specialise in one or more areas. Not all areas of psychology are included: for example, there is nothing on counselling or psychotherapy. Glance through the Contents page for more details.

What if I Don't Want to Take an Exam?

If the exam is not too important to you then you can start at almost any lesson or even pick and choose according to the topics that interest you. Occasionally you may come across a lesson that assumes you have read a previous one but it will be obvious if this is the case and you can backtrack to the relevant lesson.

The GCSE Exam

This book covers the AQA GCSE Specification 4180 syllabus. Be sure this is the exam you will be taking if you are working towards a GCSE qualification. You will find a list of schools and colleges willing to take

“external” candidates for the AQA GCSE exams in your local area on the AQA website at <http://www.aqa.org.uk/student-support/private-candidates/finding-a-school-or-college>. You will need to register with them early in the year (e.g. February) so the exams officer can fit you in. You can talk to AQA on 0161 953 1180 or go to www.aqa.org.uk/help-and-contacts to register for it before embarking on the course.

In addition to local colleges and schools, there are a number of home study organisations that offer courses to prepare for the AQA GCSE Psychology qualification. This book will be a good supplement to those courses. Course providers include the National Extension College, ICS and E-learning Centres. Their websites are listed below. Also, by using the Hotcourses website you can narrow down the search for GCSE psychology providers in your local area.

Many of the topics in this book are also part of other GCSE and A-level courses, so the book can be useful for some parts of those syllabuses too. AQA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC also offer GCSE and GCE A-Level exams. If you are studying for one of these other exams you could compare the contents of this book with their online specifications to see if you find it useful. The websites are listed at the end of this section.

How to Study

Planning

If you aim to take the GCSE exam it is best to start at Lesson 1 and work your way through the book. To achieve the best exam results, plan your course from day one. The exams are taken in June each year. There are 42 lessons in this book but they are of different lengths, ranging from 4 to 10 pages so you should pace your study timetable to suit these limits. The Specification/Lesson Map shows which lesson covers which part of the specification, so if you are just seeking better understanding of a particular part of the specification you can identify the lessons that cover it. You can find the full specification on the AQA website at this URL: www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/psychology/gcse/psychology-4180.

Working Through the Book

You will benefit from setting aside an exercise book and making notes of the main points of each lesson. This will also help you revise. Do take advantage of the suggestions in the book to jot things down or pause to think about a question. Use the “Check Your Understanding” sections and keep a record of your marks as you go along by putting your scores in the Assessment Record on page xxv. If you are using this book to study specific parts of the AQA

specification, you can find out which lesson you need by looking at the table “Specification Mapped Against Lessons”. Teachers may also find this table particularly useful.

Integrating Research Methods Lessons

Research methods lessons cover the ways in which psychologists work. Teachers, exam boards, academics and practitioners consider these lessons to be just as important as the psychological material itself. Some teachers and students prefer to integrate the study of research methods with the study of the other psychology material. Others prefer to study them in one or two “blocks” outside the context of the psychology material. In this book they are presented, out of necessity, as two blocks of lessons (one for Unit 1 of the specification and one for Unit 2). You can choose which way to study them. You can either study them in the sequence of lessons presented in the textbook or you can study particular ones at appropriate points in the study of the other material. To help you adopt this latter, “integrated” approach, a table showing a suggested sequence for studying the research methods is provided after the key studies tables following this introductory section. Also, at the end of the appropriate lesson, there is a reminder that if you want to choose the integrated approach you should skip to a particular research methods lesson. There is no problem in switching from one to the other midway as long as you cover all lessons in the end.

Other Resources

Both students and teachers may find the Teaching and Learning Resources section of the AQA website useful, especially if you are studying with one or more friends. The schemes of work will give you some idea of how to pace your study and the suggestions for class exercises can still be useful even if there are only two of you. You will find this material at the following page on the AQA website <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/psychology/gcse/psychology-4180/teaching-and-learning-resources>. You can follow up any topic that interests you by putting key words into an Internet search engine.

It is essential that you see what the exam papers will look like and you should look at samples on the AQA website. You can print them out and have a go at completing them to practise fitting your answers into the space allowed in the answer book in the exam. This will also give you an idea of the types of questions, which range from one-mark simple responses to six-mark “mini essays”. Even better, you can see the mark schemes that the examiners used for each paper. These sometimes contain answers (e.g. to one-mark questions). Even more useful are the guides given to examiners on how to award marks for the longer answers. Finally, the examiners’

reports will give an idea of the things that candidates did well and did badly in the exam. These will help you avoid mistakes made by other candidates. You can find all these at the following URL: www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/psychology/gcse/psychology-4180/past-papers-and-mark-schemes.

Whether you are working towards the exam or just using this book to further your interest in psychology generally, I hope you enjoy it and find it useful.

Geoffrey Shoemith

Some Points About Exam Questions and Answers

A special note on key studies and supplementary studies

On a number of topics the exam specification says that candidates must be able to describe and evaluate studies. Sometimes the guidelines give you a lot of leeway; for example, under “Memory” it says “Description and evaluation of studies to investigate explanations of memory”, but it does not say which studies. This means you can choose ones you prefer to write about. On other occasions it specifies the study to be described and evaluated; for example, under Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination it says “Description and evaluation of studies of prejudice and of discrimination including the work of Adorno . . . (etc.)”. Consequently, an exam question may say “Describe and evaluate one study in which prejudice was investigated” or it may say something like “Describe and evaluate a study of the authoritarian personality by Adorno”.

If the question asks you to describe and evaluate one study, then the examiners are not looking for a particular one; they will accept any study that covers the requirement. If the exam question specifies a study then it is no use describing and evaluating another study – it has to be the one specified. The key studies in this book are presented to ensure you will have the right studies to put into your exam answers, so it is strongly recommended that you read through, understand and make notes on all of the studies in each lesson so you can answer the exam question fully.

In this book Key Studies are presented in boxes like this

In addition, there are four Supplementary Studies in this book. If you prefer, you can substitute these for the ones labelled key studies (they tend to be more up-to-date); but you must make sure you are able to give a full account of one or the other. Key studies for each topic are listed after this introduction. You can use the list as a revision aid to ensure you are fully familiar with all the key studies needed for the exam. There are no key studies for the research methods sections of the specification.

The format of the studies in this book is important too. The examiners require you to describe a study under four headings. These are:

- The reason **why** the study was conducted.
- The **method** used.
- The **results** obtained.
- The **conclusion** drawn.

The exam answer booklet displays these headings under the question so you won't be left entirely without guidance in the exam; but your answer should address each of the above points in turn. It is no use just writing about the study and expecting the examiner to sort out which part is which.

Sometimes other studies are mentioned in this book using the same headings as the key studies, but it is not intended that you should memorise them, as you would the *Key Studies*.

Evaluate vs Describe

The word **evaluate** in an exam question means that you have to put a value on a study or a theory. You have to say what is good and what is bad about it. In this book, whenever the specification includes a requirement to evaluate a study or theory, an evaluation is provided: directly under the study or at an appropriate point soon after the theory is described. You do not have to use the evaluation points in this book; it may be that you consider other strengths and weaknesses of the study or theory to be more important, so don't be afraid to include your own points in the exam if you prefer; but base these on good psychology evidence, not just your opinion. If a question asking you to describe and evaluate something has six marks, then you can earn up to three marks for the description and three marks for the evaluation: note that if you only describe, then you cannot earn more than three marks, no matter how good the description. Evaluation should include both strengths and weaknesses. You can include points about the methods used, the sample used or the ethics of the study. If the question only asks you to describe a study then don't add an evaluation, as this will not gain marks. Similarly, if the question asks you to evaluate something then you will not gain marks for describing it.

Names and Dates

AQA's exam specification gives the dates of some of the studies it includes. The examiners have assured candidates that you do not have to remember these dates. You will not lose marks if you put an incorrect date in the description of a study. However, the description of the study must be accurate. If the exam question asks you to "Describe one study in which the development of aggressive behaviour was investigated" then you will not lose marks if you cannot name the researcher or if you provide an incorrect name. Sometimes, a name is followed by the phrase "et al." Just in case you do not already know, this means "and others" (e.g. Ellenbogen et al. means Ellenbogen and others). If you forget to add "et al." in your exam answer you will not lose marks; just putting "Ellenbogen" will be sufficient. Surnames are enough to identify a study; you do not have to use first names as well so you will not lose marks if you forget a first name.

Implications or Applications?

Some parts of the exam specification (and therefore of the exam questions) ask you to provide *implications* of research and others ask you to provide *applications*. There is an important difference between these two ideas so do make sure you give the right one in the exam. In general, implications of research refer to the way in which it helps us to explain behaviour in everyday life. For example, the implication of a flu epidemic is that we should try to limit our contacts with other people in case they are carrying the virus and we catch it. Applications, on the other hand refer to the way we can use the research to change people's behaviour. For example, an application of research into flu is the development of a vaccine to prevent its spread. Implications and applications are presented in different style boxes in this book.

Applications are presented in boxes like this

Implications are presented in boxes like this

Identify and Describe

For example, if the question says “Identify and describe one practical implication of research into stereotyping” you must first identify it, e.g. “Stereotyping can have negative effects on our lives” (this would probably earn one mark), then describe it “For example, children who are subjected to discrimination can become dejected and forlorn with low self-esteem and low motivation. This will affect their ability to work well at school and so could lead to lower performance in the classroom and in exams. Also, it could cause them to restrict their interactions with friends and limit their pastimes and interests outside the home” (depending on the exam question this could lead to two or more additional marks).

Give Examples

If you are asked to define something or to differentiate between two things, then adding an example can help your description.

Useful Websites

You might like to compare the AQA specification with other exam boards' specifications; their websites are listed below.

Exam boards

AQA	www.aqa.org.uk
Edexcel	www.edexcel.com
OCR	www.ocr.org.uk
WJEC	www.wjec.co.uk

Home Study Course Providers

National Extension College	www.nec.ac.uk
ICS	www.icslearn.co.uk
Elearning Ltd	www.distance-learning-centre.co.uk
Hotcourses	www.hotcourses.com