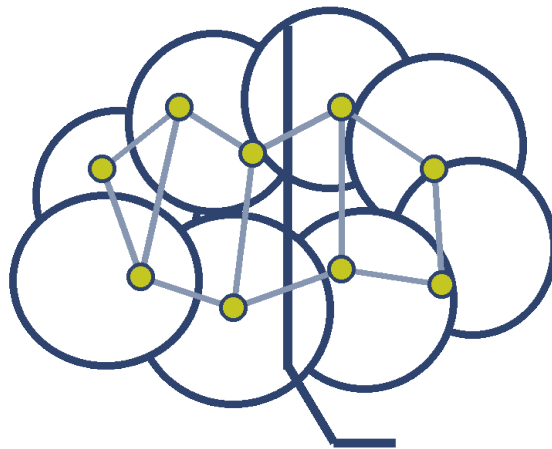


BEAL SIXTH FORM

A LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

TRANSITION BOOKLET



YEAR 12 TO YEAR 13

Research Methods and Issues & Debates summer preparation

Student name: _____

Form / tutor group: _____

Teacher: _____

Submission date: _____

A synoptic workbook for stronger analysis, data skills and A-level evaluation.

START

Preparing for the second year of A-level Psychology

Year 13 rewards students who can connect topics, analyse unfamiliar research and make evaluative judgements. This booklet therefore concentrates on Research Methods and Issues and Debates, while also previewing Biopsychology and Beal's Paper 3 options: Relationships, Schizophrenia and Aggression.

Completion expectation

Complete all Research Methods and Issues & Debates tasks. The preview tasks are shorter but compulsory. Show every calculation, use precise terminology and bring the completed booklet to your first lesson.

Where these skills are assessed

Paper	Why this booklet matters	Total
Paper 1	Research-method and maths skills can be assessed within Social Influence, Memory, Attachment and Clinical Psychology.	96 marks
Paper 2	Approaches, Biopsychology and a 48-mark Research Methods section.	96 marks
Paper 3	Issues and Debates plus Relationships, Schizophrenia and Aggression. Research methods can also appear.	96 marks

Baseline confidence audit

Area	Confidence	Action
Experimental design	1 2 3 4 5	One action I will take:
Sampling	1 2 3 4 5	One action I will take:
Ethics	1 2 3 4 5	One action I will take:
Reliability and validity	1 2 3 4 5	One action I will take:
Descriptive statistics	1 2 3 4 5	One action I will take:
Graphs and distributions	1 2 3 4 5	One action I will take:
Inferential tests	1 2 3 4 5	One action I will take:
Issues and Debates	1 2 3 4 5	One action I will take:
16-mark essays	1 2 3 4 5	One action I will take:

Specification source: AQA A-level Psychology 7182 (updated first teaching September 2025).

Designing research from a scenario

Scenario

A psychologist investigates whether notifications from a mobile phone reduce recall of information from a short article. Participants read the same article. In one condition, a phone beside them receives six notifications; in the other condition, the phone is switched off. Participants then complete a 20-item recall test.

Construct the study

1. Write a clear aim.
2. Write a directional hypothesis.
3. Operationalise the independent variable and dependent variable.
4. Choose an experimental design and justify it.
5. Identify two extraneous variables and explain how each could be controlled.
6. Select a sampling method and explain one strength and one limitation.
7. Write standardised instructions that could be read to participants.
8. Explain how informed consent, right to withdraw, confidentiality and debriefing would be managed.

RM 2

Methods, designs and sampling

A. Method comparison

Method	Defining feature	One strength	One limitation
Laboratory experiment			
Field experiment			
Natural experiment			
Quasi-experiment			
Observation			
Self-report			
Correlation			
Case study			
Content analysis			

B. Match the design

Description	Design	Most important issue to manage
The same participants complete both conditions.		
Different participants complete each condition.		
Participants are paired using relevant characteristics.		

C. Sampling decisions

Rank random, systematic, stratified, opportunity and volunteer sampling from most to least suitable for a school-based study. Explain your ranking using representativeness, practicality and bias.

RM 3**Reliability, validity and control**

Concept

How it could be assessed

How it could be improved

Test-retest reliability

Inter-observer reliability

Internal validity

External validity

Ecological validity

Population validity

Temporal validity

Applied diagnosis

1. Two observers record very different numbers of aggressive acts from the same video.

Problem: _____ Improvement: _____

2. Participants guess the aim and deliberately change their behaviour.

Problem: _____ Improvement: _____

3. A memory study uses artificial word lists in a silent laboratory.

Problem: _____ Improvement: _____

4. A questionnaire on anxiety produces very different scores when repeated one week later.

Problem: _____ Improvement: _____

Evaluation synthesis

Explain why improving control can sometimes reduce validity. Use one example from a Year 12 topic.

RM 4**Descriptive statistics and data handling****Mean**

Add all scores and divide by the number of scores.

Median

Order the scores and find the middle value.

Range

Highest score minus lowest score.

Dataset: recall scores out of 20

Condition	Scores
Phone off	18, 15, 20, 17, 19, 16, 18, 20, 17, 19
Notifications	13, 12, 16, 11, 14, 15, 13, 10, 12, 14

Calculate and interpret

9. Calculate the mean, median and range for each condition. Show your working.
10. Which measure of central tendency is most appropriate here, and why?
11. Which condition shows greater dispersion?
12. Write one sentence describing the pattern without claiming causation beyond the design.
13. Identify one possible anomalous score and explain your decision.

RM 5

Graphs, distributions and correlations

A. Select the correct display

Data / purpose	Best graph	Reason
Mean recall score in two experimental conditions		
Distribution of reaction times measured in milliseconds		
Relationship between hours of sleep and test score		
Number of students choosing each attachment category		

B. Distribution knowledge

14. Define a normal distribution.
15. Explain where the mean, median and mode lie in a normal distribution.
16. Explain what positive skew and negative skew mean.
17. Give one psychological variable that may produce a skewed distribution.

C. Correlation challenge

A study finds a correlation of $r = -0.72$ between nightly sleep and self-reported stress. Explain the direction and strength, then give two reasons why this does not prove that sleep causes lower stress.

RM 6

Choosing an inferential test

Three decisions

1. Difference or association? 2. Independent groups, related data or nominal categories? 3. What is the level of measurement?

Test	Purpose	Data level	Design / structure
Spearman's rho	Association	At least ordinal	Pairs of scores / ranks
Pearson's r	Association	Interval / ratio	Pairs of scores; parametric assumptions
Wilcoxon	Difference	At least ordinal	Related design
Mann-Whitney U	Difference	At least ordinal	Independent groups
Related t-test	Difference	Interval / ratio	Related design; parametric assumptions
Unrelated t-test	Difference	Interval / ratio	Independent groups; parametric assumptions
Chi-squared	Association / difference	Nominal frequencies	Independent categories

Select and justify

1. Whether attachment category is associated with preferred coping style; both variables are categories.

Test: _____ Justification: _____

2. Whether the same participants recall more words before or after a memory strategy; interval scores.

Test: _____ Justification: _____

3. Whether hours of exercise are related to stress ratings on a 1-10 scale.

Test: _____ Justification: _____

4. Whether two independent groups differ in reaction time measured in milliseconds and parametric assumptions are met.

Test: _____ Justification: _____

RM 7

Significance, critical values and error

Decision rule

A result is statistically significant when the calculated value meets the rule for the named test. The direction of the rule differs: some tests require the calculated value to be equal to or greater than the critical value; others require it to be equal to or less than the critical value.

A. Key terms

Term	Definition
Probability level (p)	
Critical value	
Degrees of freedom	
One-tailed test	
Two-tailed test	
Type I error	
Type II error	

B. Interpret the result

A psychologist uses an unrelated t-test. The calculated value is 2.41 and the critical value at $p \leq 0.05$ is 2.10. The test is being used in a context where the calculated value must be equal to or greater than the critical value.

18. State whether the result is significant and justify your answer.
19. Explain what $p \leq 0.05$ means.
20. Write a conclusion in the context of the phone-notification study.
21. Explain the risk of a Type I error in this study.

RM 8

Practical investigation and report writing

Choose one safe investigation

Option A: a questionnaire about study habits. Option B: a content analysis of gender representation in a set of adverts. Option C: an observation of queueing behaviour in a public space without recording identifiable information.

Planning template

Section	Your plan
Aim	
Research question / hypothesis	
Method and design	
Participants or sample	
Materials / coding system	
Procedure	
Ethical safeguards	
Planned analysis	

Report requirements

Success criteria	Done
A clear title, aim and hypothesis or research question.	[]
A replicable method with operationalised variables or coding categories.	[]
A results table and an appropriate graph.	[]
At least one descriptive statistic where appropriate.	[]
A conclusion that does not overstate the findings.	[]
A discussion of reliability, validity, ethics and one improvement.	[]

I&D 1**The synoptic map**

Issues and Debates questions reward breadth. Each debate should be illustrated with examples from topics studied elsewhere in the course.

Issue / debate	Definition and key terms	Three topic examples
Gender and culture bias		
Free will and determinism		
Nature-nurture and interactionism		
Holism and reductionism		
Idiographic and nomothetic		
Social sensitivity in research		

Synoptic challenge

Choose one Year 12 topic and explain how it can be viewed through at least three different debates.

I&D 2

Gender and culture in Psychology

Key distinctions

Term	Definition and psychological example
Androcentrism	
Alpha bias	
Beta bias	
Ethnocentrism	
Cultural relativism	
Universality	

Applied case: attachment research

A researcher uses the Strange Situation in several countries and compares the percentage of infants classified as securely attached. The researcher assumes that separation anxiety and reunion behaviour have the same meaning in every culture.

22. Explain how the study may be culturally biased.
23. Explain how an imposed etic may occur.
24. Suggest two ways the research could be made more culturally sensitive.
25. Evaluate the claim that culturally biased research has no value.

I&D 3**Free will and determinism****Forms of determinism**

- Biological determinism
- Environmental determinism
- Psychic determinism
- Hard determinism
- Soft determinism

Evaluation angles

- Scientific causal explanation
- Personal responsibility
- Practical applications
- Reductionism
- Evidence for conscious choice

Topic application

Topic	Deterministic example	Counterargument / role for agency
Social influence		
Clinical Psychology and Mental Health		
Attachment		
Approaches		

Judgement paragraph

“Deterministic explanations are useful even if they underestimate human choice.” Write a balanced PEEL paragraph and reach a clear judgement.

I&D 4

Nature-nurture and interactionism

Build an interactionist explanation

Choose one behaviour from attachment, depression, OCD, memory or social influence. Complete the chain.

Component	Your explanation
Nature factor	
Nurture factor	
How the factors interact	
Evidence	
Practical implication	
Limitation	

Advanced evaluation

26. Explain why heritability does not show that a behaviour is fixed or inevitable.
27. Explain one way gene-environment interaction makes the debate more complex.
28. Evaluate whether the interactionist approach is always more useful than a one-sided explanation.

I&D 5

Holism and reductionism

Position	Meaning	Psychological example	Evaluation
Biological reductionism	Explains behaviour at the level of genes, neurochemistry or brain structures.		
Environmental reductionism	Explains behaviour through simple stimulus-response or learning processes.		
Holism	Explains behaviour by considering interacting systems or the whole person.		

Levels of explanation

Create a layered explanation for one behaviour using at least three levels, for example: biological, cognitive, interpersonal and cultural.

Mini essay plan

Plan: "Discuss reductionism in Psychology." Include two benefits, two limitations and topic examples.

I&D 6

Idiographic and nomothetic approaches

Idiographic

- Focus on the unique individual
- Detailed qualitative data
- Case studies and personal accounts
- Rich understanding but limited generalisation

Nomothetic

- Seeks general laws
- Large samples and quantitative data
- Standardised methods and statistical analysis
- Prediction and generalisation

Classify and justify

Research example	More idiographic or nomothetic?	Justification
A detailed case study of one person with severe memory loss.		
A laboratory experiment with 120 participants.		
A thematic analysis of ten interviews about depression.		
A meta-analysis combining results from 40 studies.		

Synthesis

Explain how idiographic research can contribute to nomothetic laws. Use a psychological example.

I&D 7

Social sensitivity in psychological research

AQA focus

Consider how the research question, conduct, interpretation and application of findings may affect individuals or social groups.

Risk analysis

Research area	Possible social consequences and safeguards
Attachment and maternal deprivation	
Research on cultural differences	
Biological explanations of mental disorder	
Research on aggression	

Responsible communication

Rewrite the headline “Scientists prove violent people are born aggressive” so that it represents a cautious, evidence-based interpretation. Then explain three problems with the original headline.

Judgement

Should socially sensitive research ever be avoided? Write a balanced conclusion that considers both potential harm and potential benefit.

I&D 8

Planning a 16-mark Issues and Debates essay

Practice question

Discuss the nature-nurture debate in Psychology. Refer to at least two topics you have studied in your answer.

Plan before writing

Element	Your notes
AO1 definition and key terms	
Topic example 1	
Topic example 2	
Evaluation point 1	
Evaluation point 2	
Evaluation point 3	
Overall judgement	

Essay quality checklist

Success criteria	Done
The debate is defined accurately using specialist terminology.	[]
At least two topic examples are integrated, not bolted on.	[]
Evaluation is developed using evidence and consequences.	[]
Counterarguments or alternative interpretations are considered.	[]
Paragraphs answer the question directly.	[]
The conclusion reaches a reasoned judgement.	[]

PREVIEW**Biopsychology and Paper 3 options****A. Biopsychology primer**

Term	Definition / labelled diagram / example
Neuron	
Synaptic transmission	
Neurotransmitter	
Endocrine system	
Fight-or-flight response	
Localisation of function	
Plasticity	

B. Option-topic questions**Relationships**

- What is self-disclosure?
- How may virtual communication affect relationships?
- What is the matching hypothesis?

Schizophrenia and Aggression

- Distinguish positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia.
- What is dopamine and how has it been linked to schizophrenia?
- Give one biological and one social explanation of aggression.

C. Synoptic link

Choose one preview topic and explain how it could be linked to two Issues and Debates.

FINISH

Source log and readiness checklist

Source log

No.	Source title / organisation	Use in this booklet
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Final readiness checklist

Success criteria	Done
I can operationalise variables and write a suitable hypothesis.	[]
I can justify a method, design, sample and controls.	[]
I can calculate and interpret descriptive statistics.	[]
I can choose from all seven named inferential tests.	[]
I can explain significance, Type I error and Type II error.	[]
I can define and apply all six Issues and Debates areas.	[]
I can use examples from several topics in a synoptic essay.	[]
I have completed the practical investigation and source log.	[]

Personal target for September

My strongest area is: _____

My priority area is: _____

The first action I will take is: _____

Year 13 mindset

Be precise, show your reasoning and make links. The highest-level answers do not simply remember more; they organise knowledge into a clear argument and use evidence selectively.

Aligned to the updated AQA Psychology 7182 specification for first teaching from September 2025.