

Key Terms in Psychology



Approaches to Psychology

These are the broad categories into which the studies you will look at can be grouped.

Approach	Definition
<i>Cognitive Approach</i>	An area of Psychology which focuses on thought processes such as memory.
<i>Developmental Approach</i>	An area of Psychology which studies the way children's behaviour changes over time.
<i>Individual Differences Approach</i>	An area of Psychology which looks at the behaviour of people who are atypical (often because they have a psychiatric disorder).
<i>Physiological Approach</i>	An area of Psychology which attempts to explain behaviour in terms of biological processes and the structure of the brain.
<i>Social Approach</i>	An area of Psychology which explains behaviour in terms of people's interactions with one another.

Evaluation Issues

Most of the marks in Psychology exams come from evaluating research using these issues.

Issue	Definition	Example
<i>Ecological Validity</i>	The extent to which the setting and task are true to life. Having high ecological validity allows findings to be generalised to real world settings.	Laboratory studies on helping behaviour are not ecologically valid because people may help less in real life, when they do not think they are being watched.
<i>Ethics</i>	Issues surrounding the protection of the participants and respect for their privacy.	Obedience studies are unethical because they make participants feel stressed when told to do something they do not want to do.
<i>Generalisability</i>	The extent to which results from study can be said to represent the behaviour of a wider population.	Studies of jury behaviour which use students are not generalisable to older adults because students are more willing to change their minds.
<i>Internal Validity</i>	The extent to which researchers measured the variables they set out to measure.	Written intelligence tests may be low in internal validity because people may score badly due to poor handwriting rather than low intelligence.
<i>Practical Usefulness</i>	How much the results of the study have helped to improve peoples' lives.	A study finding that patients in mental hospitals were not given enough attention led to changes in the way these hospitals were staffed all over the USA.
<i>Reliability</i>	The extent to which results (or measures) are consistent.	Several studies have found that memory can be changed after the event by misleading information. This is therefore a reliable finding.

