

Chapter 1 - Introducing Psychology

Section 1 - Why We Study Psychology



A psychologist is a person who:

studies human behavior

Read Exploring Psychology on pg.7

A. Why study psychology?

Learning about psychology can help you gain a better understanding of your own behavior, knowledge about how psychologists study human and animal behavior, and practical applications for enriching your life.

B. Overview of Psychology

Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes.

When applied to humans, psychology covers everything that people think, feel, and do.

Some psychologists believe that you should study only behavior that you can see, observe, or measure directly.

While psychologists may differ on which types of behavior are important, they do agree that the study must be systematic.

The use of a systematic method of asking and answering questions about why people think, act, and feel as they do reduces the chances of coming to false conclusions.

(example on bottom of p.9)

We cannot rely on simplistic explanations...we must combine all our thoughts in order to understand our observations.

B. Overview of Psychology (*continued*)

The Goals of Psychology

Overall, psychologists seek to do four things: describe, explain, predict, and influence behavior.

1. Description

The first goal for any scientist or psychologist is to describe or gather information about the behavior being studied and to present what is known.

2. Explanation

Psychologists are not content simply to state the facts, they also seek to explain why people behave as they do.

Psychologists propose these explanations as hypotheses.

A **hypothesis** is an educated guess about some phenomenon.

As research studies designed to test each hypothesis are complete, more complex explanation called theories are constructed.

A **theory** is usually a complex explanation based on findings from a large number of experimental studies

Theories change as new data improves our understanding, and a good theory becomes the source of additional ideas for experiments.

B. Overview of Psychology (*continued*)

The Goals of Psychology

3. Prediction

The third goal of psychologists is to predict, as a result of accumulated knowledge, what organisms will do and, in the case of humans, what they will think or feel in various situations.

By studying descriptive and theoretical accounts of past behaviors, psychologists can predict future behaviors.

4. Influence

Some psychologists seek to influence behavior in helpful ways by doing **basic science** - conducting studies with the long-term goal of finding out more about human behavior.

Basic Science - think "Understand - Not Fix"

Other psychologists use applied science and are more interested in discovering ways to use what we already know about people to benefit others.

Applied Science - think "Fix - by Understanding"

C. The Scientific Basis of Psychology

Take a few minutes to copy the chart at the top of p.12 into your notes.

To ensure that data are collected accurately, psychologists rely on the scientific method

In psychology, facts are based on data (information).

The data are obtained from methods such as experiments, surveys, and case studies.

This means that psychologists reach their conclusions by identifying a specific problem or questions, formulating a hypothesis, collecting data through observation and experimentation, and analyzing the data.

SCIENTIFIC METHOD

PURPOSE
State the problem.

RESEARCH
Find out about the topic.

HYPOTHESIS
Predict the outcome to the problem.

EXPERIMENT
Develop a procedure to test the hypothesis.

ANALYSIS
Record the results of the experiment.

CONCLUSION
Compare the hypothesis to the experiment's conclusion.

C. The Scientific Basis of Psychology (continued)

The scientific basis of psychology goes back to Wilhelm Wundt

Wundt is credited for setting up the first psychology lab in Leipzig, Germany.

Wundt believed that psychological experience is composed of compounds, much like compounds found in chemistry.

He claimed that psychology has two kinds of elements - sensations and feelings.

He tried to collect information by testing statements in a process he called "*introspection*" (which is what eventually became the scientific method).

Although psychologists use the scientific method to demonstrate and support many theories, many questions about behavior remain unanswered.

New theories and technological developments are constantly generating new questions and new psychological studies.



Wilhelm Wundt

In groups of 3

Use the four goals of psychology to approach the following questions:

1) Why are you attending school at OEHS when there are thousands of high schools around the nation?

2) Do #5 on pg. 13