Summer Work - Suggested Tasks

If you have studied Psychology or another social science before (i.e. Sociology)	If Psychology/Social Sciences are brand new subject areas for you
Complete the quick quiz on RMs key concepts and ideas - If you get 75% or more correct, feel free to engage in any of the recommended reading/research tasks below. - If you get less than 75% we would recommend that you review the attached slides and make a revision resource of your choosing for the content you find most challenging	1. Before completing the quiz, we recommend that you review the slides in this pack, making notes on key ideas and concepts – you are very welcome to make your own revision resources as you go if this would help. 2. Complete the quick quiz on RMs key concepts and ideas – there is no designated "pass mark" for this but it will help us know which areas to provide the most support in when we begin teaching in September!

In your A-Level course, there are a number of theories and/or named studies that you will cover, feel free to research and read about any of the following pieces of research;

- Asch's study into conformity (STUDY)
- The Multi-Store Model of Memory (THEORY)
- Ainsworth's Strange Situation (STUDY)

The quick quiz can be found here

An Introduction to Research Methods

In psychology, there are many different methods that a researcher might use to test their theory.

The 'research metho**d**' (singular) that they choose will depend on what they want to get out of the study, with each research method having it's own **strengths** and **weaknesses** depending on the situation.

Whilst the experimental method is the most common 'research metho**d**' in psychology, there are many more – here are the main ones we will cover in the A-Level course:

1) **Experimental Method (Laboratory, Field, Natural)**
2) **Questionnaire**
3) **Interview**
4) **Observation**
5) **Case Study**

All information from this pack comes from our existing RGS GCSE resources – this is not an exhaustive list of the A-Level content but has been selected to offer a foundational understanding of some key concepts.

Methods of Investigation

Theory – A suggested explanation for behaviour that needs to be tested.

Aim – A general statement of why the study is being carried out.

Hypothesis – A clear, precise, testable statement that is written at the beginning of an investigation. It states the relationship between the variables being investigated.

Different Types of Research Method

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1) **Experimental Method**
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The Experimental Method

Experiments are the most common type of 'research method' used in psychology, but not every study in psychology is an 'experiment'

In an experiment, you will always have **at least 2 different conditions of the independent variable (IV),** which are then directly compared against each other using the **same dependent variable (DV).**

One condition in an experiment should always be the '**control**' condition, where the participants are not manipulated at all, whereas the other condition(s) will be the '**experimental**' condition(s), where the participants are manipulated in some way. The purpose of the 'control' condition is to give a neutral baseline to compare against.

The purpose here is to keep everything the same EXCEPT for whatever the IV is (**standardisation**), which allows researchers to see **cause-and-effect** between the change in the IV and the resulting differences in the DV scores.

There are 3 different 'types of experiment' that a researcher may use:

- **Laboratory**
- **Field**
- **Natural**

Each 'type of experiment' has **strengths** and **weaknesses** depending on the topic being investigated

Type of Experiment – Laboratory Experiments

When identifying the 'type of experiment' in a study, you must first identify whether it is possible for the researcher to control how participants are allocated to their condition of the IV, and then identify whether the setting and/or task is artificial or similar to the real-world.

In a laboratory (lab) experiment, the researcher **is able to control** how participants are allocated to their condition of the IV (they could hand-pick participants for each condition themselves, or (more likely) use random allocation methods).

Laboratory experiments are highly **artificial**, as they take place in highly **controlled** environments, and often involve simplified tasks that are **not representative** of the real-world.

✓ One strength of lab experiments is that there is high control over variables. Researchers are able to limit the amount of extraneous variables that could affect the DV in the study. This is good because this high level of control allows researchers to see a cause-and-effect relationship between the IV and DV, increasing the internal validity of the lab experiments.

× One weakness of lab experiments is that they are highly artificial. Lab experiments take place in highly controlled lab settings and often involve simple tasks that would not be seen in the real world. This is bad because it is difficult to generalise the findings to real world tasks, which lowers the external validity of lab experiments.

Type of Experiment – Field Experiments

When identifying the 'type of experiment' in a study, you must first identify whether it is possible for the researcher to control how participants are allocated to their condition of the IV, and then identify whether the setting and/or task is artificial or similar to the real-world.

In a field experiment, the researcher **is able to control** how participants are allocated to their condition of the IV (they could hand-pick participants for each condition themselves, or (more likely) use random allocation methods).

Field experiments take place in a **real-world environment <u>AND</u>** include a **real-world task** for that environment. Participants **may not always be aware** they are taking part in a study.

✓ One strength of field experiments is that you get more natural behaviour from the participants. When participants are in their normal environment, or if they do not know they are being studied in the first place, they are less likely to show demand characteristics and change their behaviour. This is good because the results of field experiments are more representative of real world behaviour, increasing the external validity of the research.

× One weakness of field experiments is there is lower control over extraneous variables. As field experiments often take place in public places, there is less control over the environment. This is bad because it makes it less clear as to whether the IV has directly affected the DV, lowering internal validity.

Type of Experiment – Natural Experiments

When identifying the 'type of experiment' in a study, you must first identify whether it is possible for the researcher to control how participants are allocated to their condition of the IV, and then identify whether the setting and/or task is artificial or similar to the real-world.

In a natural experiment, the researcher **cannot control** how participants are allocated to their condition of the IV – this is because they **naturally** belong to the condition before the study takes place, as natural experiments investigate differences between **natural, real-world variables**.
(the setting of the study does not matter)

For example, boys vs girls, or year 7s vs year 10s – the researcher cannot decide who goes into each condition, as they are already in those groups.

✓ One strength of natural experiments is that they allow researchers to investigate real world differences. As participants already belonged to each condition of the IV before the study began, the effects of the IV has had a longer time to affect participants thoughts/behaviours. This is good because it increases the external validity of the study, as the results can be applied to the real world.

× One weakness of natural experiments is that the participant sample may be biased. There is a higher chance of individual differences between participants, as the researcher cannot control who goes into each group. This is bad because these individual differences may affect the results of the DV as well as/instead of the IV, which lowers the internal validity of natural experiments.

Self-Report Methods: Questionnaires

Questionnaires and interviews are self-report methods of collecting data. This means that the participants respond to questions on their thoughts, feelings, and opinions.

Questionnaires are a set of written questions used to find out a person's thoughts or attitudes on a particular topic. They contain both closed and open questions.

✓ One strength of questionnaires is they collect a lot of data. This is because they are quick and convenient to distribute to a large portion of the target population, and quick and easy for the participants to complete. This is good because participant sample sizes in questionnaire studies are often large, increasing the generalisability of findings.

× One weakness of questionnaires is they rely on self-report methods. Ppts may not always respond truthfully, especially when asking about a sensitive topic, and so they may lie to please the researcher, which is known as social desirability bias. This is bad because the data gained from questionnaires might not be a person's honest answer, which lowers internal validity.

Closed Questions

Have a fixed set of possible answers that can be tallied – quantitative
E.G. "Yes" or "No", or rating from 1-10

Quick to gather & easy to interpret ✓ ✗ Limited detail

Open Questions

Don't have a fixed set of possible answers to allow ppts to elaborate – qualitative
E.G. "How did you feel when…", "Why?"

Allow for elaboration ✓ ✗ Open to interpretation

Self-Report Methods: Interviews

Interviews are face-to-face conversations between the researcher and the ppt. They are used to find out a person's thoughts or attitudes on a particular topic. There are 3 types of interviews – structured, unstructured, and semi-structured.

✓ One strength of interviews is that the researchers get rich, in-depth information from the participants. Participants are allowed to explain their answers, so the researcher gets a lot of information about the participant's opinions. This is good because the rich and insightful data gained increases the internal validity of the research.

× One weakness of interviews is that they rely on self-report methods. Ppts may not always respond truthfully, especially when asking about sensitive topics, and so they may lie to please the researcher, which is known as social desirability bias. This is bad because the data gained from interviews might not be a person's honest answer, which lowers internal validity.

Structured Interviews

Have a fixed set of questions like a script

Easier to compare results

Limited detail

Unstructured Interviews

No fixed questions like a conversation

A lot of data is collected

Can go off topic

Semi-Structured Interviews

Some prepared questions, but tangents followed

Stays on topic but allows elaboration

Needs a skilled interviewer

Observation Studies

Observations involve watching & recording people to look for **common trends in behaviour**. These observations could be set up in a number of ways (next slide), but will often use **categories of behaviour** and will have **more than one observer.**

✓ One strength of observations is they give a better indication of behaviour compared to questionnaires or interviews. Questionnaires and interviews are often hypothetical, but observations see whether someone actually behaves how they said they would in the real world scenario. This is good because it means that observations are better representations of real world behaviour, which increases the external validity of the findings.

× One weakness of observations is that participants may change their behaviour if they know they're being observed. When someone is being observed, they may act unnaturally or try to become more productive – known as the Hawthorne Effect. This is bad because the participants behaviour might not represent how they would behave in the real world when not being observed, which reduces the external validity.

Categories of Behaviour

Breaking up the behaviours you are looking for into more specific **sub-categories**. These are often then **tallied** every time they are seen. E.G. punching, shouting, slapping, etc. for 'aggression'

Inter-Observer Reliability

"The extent to which the record sheets of **two or more** researchers carrying out an observation match one another." If record sheets are **similar**, the study has **high** inter-observer reliability. This is to remove bias from subjective observations.

Ways to increase inter-observer reliability:

- Use standardised categories of behaviour
- Observe the same sequence of behaviours
- Compare data afterwards and discuss their observations

Types of Observation

Naturalistic		Controlled
Participants are observed in their natural environment with no control from the researcher.	–VS–	Environments are artificial, but are simulated as accurately as possible – more control over variables.

Covert		Overt
Participants are unaware they are being observed. The researchers are under **cover**	–VS–	Participants are told in advance that their behaviour is being observed and recorded.

Participant		Non-Participant
The researcher(s) interact with the participants in some way, sometimes secretly becoming part of the group.	–VS–	The researcher keeps their distance and does not interact with the participants being observed.

Case Studies

Case studies are detailed, **in-depth**, natural investigations into an individual, a small group, an organisation, or a specific situation. They use **many different methods of investigation** and are often **longitudinal** – meaning that they take place over a long period of time.

Case studies often investigate people or events that are **unique** and unusual, using pseudonyms to hide their identities, such as the cases of 'Genie' & 'HM'.

✓ One strength of case studies is they are in-depth and allow for understanding of psychology to develop. The unique participants used in case studies allow psychologists to make significant leaps in psychological understanding that cannot ethically or practically be reproduced using other methods. This is good because the knowledge gained from case studies can allow psychologists to make significant breakthroughs and be the springboard for future research.

× One weakness of case studies is that they are not very representative of the wider population. Due to the unique nature of the participants, it is incredibly rare to find anyone in a similar circumstance to the participants. This is bad because the generalisability of the findings is very limited, reducing the external validity of case studies.