AP PSYCHOLOGY SUMMER ASSIGNMENT
DISCOVER PSYCHOLOGY THROUGH RESEARCH DESIGN

Welcome to your summer assignment for AP Psychology! This assignment is designed to prepare you for the research methods component of the course, improve your scientific literacy, and expose you to a variety of topics within psychology. By completing this assignment, you will gain valuable skills in critical thinking, research design, and ethical decision-making, all of which are essential for success in the field of psychology. Selecting a research question will not only guide your exploration into specific areas of psychology but will also provide insight into what psychology is and how it contributes to understanding human behavior, cognition, and emotions. Through this process, you will have the opportunity to delve into contemporary issues or debates in psychology, applying psychological theories and methodologies to real-world problems.



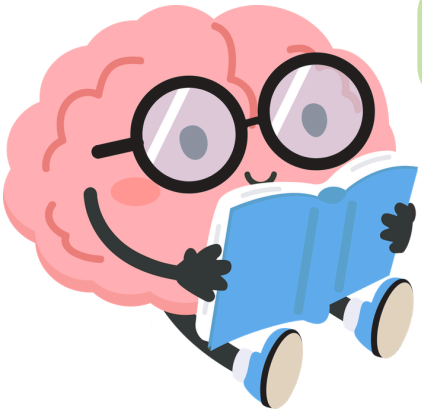
ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

You will develop a research proposal, using the template provided, to investigate a question within the realm of psychology that interests you. **You will not be conducting the actual study, but will be planning what it would entail.** This planning phase is called a research proposal where you outline the details of your proposed study.

IDEOLOGY BEHIND SUMMER ASSIGNMENT

Psychology is a social science. In AP Psychology, we will delve deeply into research methods to prepare your for the reality of the field as well as your examination which is heavily research-based. Understanding research methods is essential for interpreting psychological studies and conducting your own research in the field. By completing this research proposal as a summer assignment, you will not only asses your science background but also familiarize yourself with important research concepts that we will explore through the course. Embracing this opportunity to engage in scientific inquiry will equip you with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in AP Psychology and beyond. As you read the instructions, key psychological terms may be underlined. It may be helpful for you to begin your vocabulary building now by keeping a record of these terms, creating flashcards, or utilizing a review tool like quizlet. These terms will be reviewed in our first unit, but will need to be accessed routinely throughout the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY EXPECTATIONS



Utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) is appropriate only for research purposes. You may use AI to refine your question and gather/interpret sources, all other use of AI is prohibited.

The completion of this assignment is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding, criticial thinking skills, and ability to independently engage with the material. My hope is that the study of psychology is interesting to you and I would rather see your genuine work than a polished product. A research proposal is not intended to be polished but a work in progress.

DEADLINE & GRADING EXPECTATIONS

Your completed research proposal is due September 2, 2026 (the second day of school). As we discuss the concepts from Unit 0 of AP Psychology you will be asked to share your research proposal and make connections with the course content and terminology.

The completed assignment will be counted as a 30 point formative assignment, the first recorded grade of the year. The grading rubric is attached for your reference.

Estimated Completion time: 2-4 hours of work

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS & STEPS

STEP 1: SELECT A RESEARCH QUESTION

Choose a specific research question within the field of psychology that interests you. Psychology is the study of the mind and behavior, exploring topics like why people think, feel, and act the way they do. Think about things that intrigue you about how people behave, think, or feel. Your question should be clear, concise, and relate to issues or debates happening in psychology today. A list of example research questions is included and can be used if needed, but you will get more out of this project if you choose something relevant to your passions and psychological questions.

STEP 2: CONDUCT ONLINE RESEARCH (LITERATURE REVIEW)

Begin your literature review by conducting online research related to your chosen research question. Look for reliable and reputable websites, online databases, and articles from trusted organizations or educational institutions. Remember to cite your sources. You may use either the MLA format that you are used to or APA (American Psychological Association) format that is the predominant style in the field.

STEP 3: SUMMARIZE KEY FINDINGS

As you explore online resources, take notes on the key findings, facts, and insights related to your research question. Summarize the main points of each source in your own words. Think critically about the credibility and reliability of the information you find online. Consider factors such as the author's expertise, the website's reputation, and whether the information is supported by evidence. **You should have at least 2 different sources.**

STEP 4: CHOOSE YOUR RESEARCH DESIGN

Decide on the type of study would best suit answering your research question. You have several options:

Experimental - you manipulate one variable (independent) to observe its effect on another variable (dependent). For example, you might want to investigate the impact of music on studying by assigning participants to either a study group with music or control group without music.

Correlational - you examine the relationship between two variables without manipulating them. For instance, you might explore the relationship between screen time and sleep quality by collecting data on both variables and analyzing their correlation. This type of study can provide useful information but will not allow you to say one variable causes the other.



Descriptive Methods - you gather detailed, non-numerical data to explore phenomena in-depth. This includes:

- **Structured Interviews** - conducting interviews with predetermined questions
- **Surveys** - administrering questionnaires to gather information
- **Naturalistic Observation** - observing behavior in natural settings
- **Case Studies** - in-depth examination of individuals, groups, or events

These research types may be new terminology for you. If you need help understanding the differences and what is best suited for your research question, these videos may help. (Youtube videos by Psych Explains, "Intro to Psychological Research" & "Correlational Research and Other Non-Experimental Methods")

STEP 5: PARTICIPANT SELECTION CRITERIA

Determine who will participate in your study (remember, this is your hypothetical research, not something that has to be physically possible). Consider factors such as age, gender, and any specific characteristics relevant to your topic. For example, if you are studying the effects of exercise on mood in teenagers, your participants might be high school students aged 14-18.

STEP 6: DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Make a list of the data you would need to collect from your participants. Then, outline how you would the data. Depending on your research design (step 4), this could involve various methods:

Surveys or questionnaries: create a set of questions related to your research question and administer them to your participants.

Observations: watch and record behavior in a natural setting, such as observing interactions between peers in the school cafeteria.

Interviews: conduct structures or semi-structured interviews with participants to gather qualitative data.

Experiments: plan the steps involved in conducting your experiment, including how you will manipulate variables and measure outcomes.

STEP 7: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Consider ethical issues related to your research, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and potential risks to participants. Ensure that your study complies with ethical guidelines and respects the rights and well-being of participants. For example, if you are conducting surveys or interviews, obtain consent from participants and ensure them of confidentiality.

See here for APA ethical guidelines (apa.org/ethics/code)

More digestible version for AP Psychology
(Youtube video by Psych Explains, "What is ethics? Ethical guidelines. | AP Psychology | Unit 0, Topic 6"

RELEVANT ETHICAL CONCERNS FOR AP PSYCHOLOGY

- Institutional Review
- Informed Consent
- Protection from Harm
- Confidentiality
- Deception (appropriate use?)
- Debriefing

EXAMPLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

While I believe you will get more out of this experience by designing your own research question that aligns with your interests, these are provided as examples and may be used if you are unable to develop your own.

THE EFFECTS OF MUSIC ON MOOD

How does listening to different types of music impact teenagers' emotions?

SCREEN TIME AND SLEEP QUALITY

Does the amount of time teenagers spend on screens affect the quality of their sleep?

STUDY HABITS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Do different study habits influence teenagers' grades?

PEER PRESSURE AND DECISION MAKING

How does peer pressure affect teenagers' decision making process?

SOCIAL MEDIA AND BODY IMAGE

Does social media use influence teenagers' perceptions of their own bodies?

EXERCISE AND STRESS RELIEF

How does physical activity impact teenagers' stress levels?

HEALTHY EATING AND MOOD

Is there a relationship between teenagers' diets and their moods?

PETS AND WELL-BEING

How does owning a pet affect teenagers' mental health?

MINDFULNESS AND STRESS REDUCTION

Do mindfulness techniques help teenagers reduce stress?

VIDEO GAMES AND ATTENTION SPAN

Does playing video games affect teenagers' ability to concentrate? Do frequent gamers have shorter attention spans than those who play less often?



Note: You do not have to focus your research on teenagers, you can choose your own participant pool. But it is worth noting the format of these questions - the are all looking at the relationship between two defined variables and narrowing down the participant focus. When we include too many variables or too wide a participant pool, it becomes difficult to draw any usable conclusions.

Additionally, there is no one right research method for any of these questions. The same question could be approached using multiple research processes.

GRADING RUBRIC

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT (5)	PROFICIENT (3)	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT (1)
Research Question	The research question is clear, concise, specific, and highly relevant to contemporary issues in psychology. It demonstrates a deep understanding of the topic.	The research question is clear and relevant to contemporary psychology. It provides a specific focus for the proposed study.	The research question is vague or lacks relevance to contemporary issues in psychology. It does not provide a clear focus for the proposed study.
Literature Review	The literature review is comprehensive and thoroughly summarizes key findings. It demonstrates critical thinking and synthesis of information. At least 2 sources are provided and correctly citied.	The literature review summarizes key findings from relevant sources, demonstrating a good understanding of the topic. Some critical analysis and synthesis are evident. At least 2 sources are provided.	The literature review is superficial or lacks depth. It may rely on limited sources or fail to critically evaluate the information present.
Participant Selection	The description of participants to be included is specific, detailed, refined and clearly correlates to the research question.	The description of participants is insufficiently detailed or may not be refined enough for a feasible study.	The description of participants is too vague or may not relate to the research question.
Method & Data Selection	The methodology is well-developed, clearly outlining the chosen research design and data collection procedures. It demonstrates a strong understanding of research methods.	The methodology provides sufficient detail on the chosen research design and data collection procedures. It demonstrates a basic understanding of research methods.	The methodology lacks clarity or detail in describing the chosen research design and data collection procedures. It may demonstrate misunderstandings.
Ethical Considerations	Ethical considerations are thoroughly analyzed and discussed, demonstrating a thoughtful approach to participant rights and well-being. Potential risks are identitifed and strategies for ensuring ethical conduct are proposed.	Ethical considerations are adequately addressed, with some analysis of participant rights and potential risks. Strategies for ethical conduct are outlined, but may lack depth or detail.	Ethical considerations are incomplete or superficial. There may be a lack of analysis of participant rights or potential risks, and strategies for ethical conduct may be missing or unclear.
Overall Quality of Submission	Demonstrates exceptional quality in all aspects. Reflects deep engagement with topic and a high level of effort and understanding.	Research proposal meets expectations and demonstrates proficiency in most aspects. Reflects a solid effort and understanding.	Proposal falls below expectations with notable weaknesses in several aspects. May reflect limited effort or understanding.