



GUIDE FOR UNDERGRADUATES IN PSYCHOLOGY

About Psychology

Psychology is a behavioral science that focuses its attention on the behavior of people and animals. Psychologists ask the question,

“Why do people do the things they do?”

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**To access the Psychology
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the code below.**



Many people have a very limited view of the field of psychology. They think all psychologists are primarily involved with the treatment of mental patients. Indeed, many psychologists are classified as clinical and counseling psychologists and work with people having various degrees of difficulty in dealing with their world. However, other specialties in psychology are far removed from counseling.

Experimental psychologists attempt to understand the fundamental causes of behavior in people and animals and are usually found in a laboratory doing experiments. Industrial psychologists apply psychological principles in industries and organizations, primarily in selecting and placing employees, training personnel, and generally relieving problems associated with any organization of people. Human factors psychologists work with engineers to design and modify equipment to be user friendly. Educational and school psychologists apply psychology principles to improve the teaching-learning process. Social psychologists study how people influence each other. Psychometric psychologists develop various types of tests, including IQ tests and personality tests. Developmental psychologists study how living organisms change from the moment of conception until death.

Psychology is a very broad field that includes many different subfields of specialization. The American Psychological Association (APA), the professional organization of psychologists, lists 54 individual subdivisions of psychology. APA represents clinicians and counselors, the practitioners of psychology, as well as the scientists.

The American Psychological Society (APS) is primarily oriented to research and academics. The goal of all these psychologists is to advance or to apply the scientific understanding of behavior. All psychologists in all these areas need to know how to use the scientific method. Beyond this common reliance on the scientific method, however, psychology is a multi-faceted field.

Because there are so many facets to psychology, there are many decisions you will need to make concerning your course of study here at Texas State University. This information is just a brief introduction to psychology. For further details about the field and the degree at Texas State University, we encourage you to visit our website: www.psych.txstate.edu.

For career information and access to resources on graduate schools visit the website of the American Psychological Association at: www.apa.org and the website of the Association for Psychological Science at www.psychologicalscience.org.



Degree Decisions

With a major in psychology, a student can pursue 1 of 2 degrees at Texas State University, a Bachelor of Arts (BA), or a Bachelor of Science (BS). Psychology requirements are the same for either degree. The major difference between the two degrees is the modern language requirement. The BA degree requires sophomore level modern language, whereas the BS requires only first-year modern language. See the *Advising Checklist* in the department for the exact requirements.

Career Planning

Most psychology majors find employment after graduation in a wide range of professions in business, education, social services, government, and healthcare. A BA or BS degree does not directly prepare you for a job as a professional psychologist. If you want to work as a psychologist, you should plan to go to graduate school and obtain an advanced degree (see p.3). However, these are some of the jobs for which a bachelor's degree in psychology prepares you:

- Program Director
- Human Resources
- Consultant
- Service Coordinator
- Sales Representative



A bachelor's degree indicates to a potential employer that you are able and willing to learn, that you are driven to complete goals, and responsible. Large companies and state and federal agencies will train you after are hired so long as they have been assured that you are flexible, intelligent, and responsible. In addition, a degree in psychology indicates that you are interested in people and have "people-skills"—a valuable trait for jobs involving sales, personnel recruiting, and management.

Psychology is a valuable pre-professional major for several fields. Former Texas State psychology majors have received graduate degrees in medicine, theology, business, computer science, criminal justice, nursing, physical therapy, and social work, as well as in psychology.

Even if you are not a psychology major, you might consider pursuing one of our specialty minors, such as Forensic Psychology or Sports Psychology. See your academic advisor for details.

Careers in Psychology

If you are interested in working more directly in the field of psychology, you may want to earn a master's degree in psychology. With a master's degree you may be able to:

- Work with patients in a mental hospital
- Teach in a junior college or small college
- Be part of a research team in industry or government.
- Work in industrial psychology
- Supervise psychological technicians in schools and government agencies
- Work as a school psychologist
- Become a licensed professional counselor



If you are interested in teaching at the university level or practicing clinical psychology, you will want to earn a doctorate in psychology. The Psychology Department would be pleased to talk with you about advanced graduate training in psychology.

Helpful Hints

1. The psychology major includes 36 hours; 18 must be advanced hours (courses numbered 3000 and above). Students must have 9 hours of Writing Intensive (WI) courses. PSY 3402, PSY 3341, PSY 4342 or PSY 3321 (Group C), and PSY 4391 are all WI and satisfy this requirement.
2. There is a critical three-semester sequence of courses that should be started early if you are to graduate on time. Math 1312 is a prerequisite for Intro to Statistics PSY 2301 (lecture) and PSY 2101 (lab), which is a prerequisite for PSY 3402 (Research Methods). PSY 3402 is a prerequisite for Group C and PSY 4391. Therefore, we strongly recommend taking Math 1312 during your freshman year, PSY 2301/2101 and PSY 3402 during your sophomore year.
3. Of the 120 hours required for graduation, 36 must be advanced (3000 or 4000). Eighteen advanced hours are required in psychology, as many as 28 of these 36 may be taken in psychology. This means that you must take at least 8 advanced hours outside your major.
4. Plan your sequence of courses ahead of time to avoid missing courses that are taught only once a year or every other year. Some ungrouped courses are taught even less often, so take advantage of them whenever they appear on the schedule.
5. To plan your schedule, please see Liberal Arts Advising at <http://www.liberalarts.txstate.edu/advising/>
6. Your course catalog is a contract between you and the University. Because you are bound by requirements listed in the catalog assigned to you, you should at least become familiar with the sections most relevant to your degree.
7. If you are seriously considering pursuing a doctoral degree in clinical psychology, experimental psychology, or any other area of psychology, it is advisable to take as many theory- and research-based courses as possible. Most graduate psychology departments prefer a student who has had a strong background in general experimental psychology plus mathematics and the biological and physical sciences.
8. For a student wishing to pursue a doctorate, the department of psychology strongly recommends coursework in computer science, biology, biochemistry, chemistry, physics, math, philosophy, or writing.
9. If you apply for admission to a doctoral graduate school in psychology, your chances of being accepted and given financial support may depend on the following things:

Objective criteria

- Graduate record exam (GRE) score. Many doctoral programs have minimum GRE scores, which vary by program.
- Grade point average. Many graduate schools will not consider students with a GPA less than 3.0. For the best schools, a GPA of 3.5 to 4.0 is probably necessary. For most schools, the GPA in your major and the GPA for your last two years may be more important than your overall GPA.

Non-Objective criteria

- Research experience with a professor is essential. (PSY 4395 Individual Study is a way to gain it.)
- Letters of recommendation. (Get to know at least two psychology faculty members well!)
- Clinically related service experience. (PSY 4396 Internship is one way to gain it.)
- Extracurricular activities. (These include participation in Psychology Association and Psi Chi.)
- Work experience related to Psychology.

A listing of faculty by research area can be found at <http://www.psych.txstate.edu/faculty/psydirectory.html>