Psychology is the scientific study of mental processes and behaviour. Psychologists observe and record how people and other animals relate to one another and to the environment. They look for patterns that will help them understand and predict behaviour, and they use scientific methods to test their ideas. Through such studies, psychologists have learned much that can help people fulfill their potential as human beings and increase understanding between individuals, groups, nations, and cultures.

Psychology is a broad field that explores a variety of questions about thoughts, feelings, and actions. Psychologists ask such questions as: "How do we see, hear, smell, taste, and feel? What enables us to learn, think, and remember, and why do we forget? What activities distinguish human beings from other animals? What abilities are we born with, and which must we learn? How much does the mind affect the body, and how does the body affect the mind? For example, can we change our heart rate or temperature just by thinking about doing so? What can our [dreams](http://uadreams.us/%22%20%5Ct%20%22http%3A//study-english.info/_blank) tell us about our needs, wishes, and desires? Why do we like the people we like? What is mental illness?"

The research findings of psychologists have greatly increased our understanding of why people behave as they do. For example, psychologists have discovered much about how personality develops and how to promote healthy development. They have some knowledge of how to help people change bad habits and how to help students learn. They understand some of the conditions that can make workers more productive. A great deal remains to be discovered. Nevertheless, insights provided by psychology can help people function better as individuals, friends, family members, and workers.

The human mind is perhaps the most complex and unique field of study, and has been a puzzle to humankind for hundreds of years. The human mind is the source of all thought, behaviour, emotions, interactions, and it determines how we conduct ourselves in society.

The mind is highly complex and enigmatic. Many wonder how psychologists can study such an abstract and extremely sophisticated thing. Even if scientists look inside the brain, as in an autopsy or during a surgical operation, all they see is gray matter (the brain). Thoughts, cognition, emotions, memories, dreams, perceptions, etc. cannot be seen physically, like a skin rash or heart defect.

Experts say that the approach to psychology is not that different to other sciences. As in other sciences, experiments are devised to confirm or disprove theories or expectations. For a psychologist, human behaviour is used as evidence - or at least an indication - of how the mind functions. We are unable to observe the mind directly; however, virtually all our actions, feelings and thoughts are influenced by the functioning of our minds. That is why human behaviour is used as raw data for testing psychological theories on how the mind functions.

German psychologist Wilhelm Wundt opened the first experimental psychology labs in the late 1800s. Since that time we have learned an enormous amount about the relationship between brain, mind, memory and behaviour.

 The work of psychologists and psychiatrists has much in common. Both psychologists and psychiatrists can provide psychotherapy and counseling services. Both psychologists and psychiatrists are trained to diagnose neuropsychological disorders and dysfunctions plus psychotic, neurotic and personality disorders and dysfunctions. Both professionals are granted the right to make such diagnoses by law while other doctors cannot. Both psychologists and psychiatrists help people maintain and enhance their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and interpersonal functioning.

However, there are some important differences in training and special skills. Psychiatrists, as medical doctors, can prescribe medications for psychological distress. Psychologists do not prescribe medications, instead focusing their treatment on psychotherapy. In addition, psychologists are the only mental health professionals who are fully trained and qualified to use psychological tests.

The education of psychologists provides knowledge of psychological and emotional problems, personality, and human development, integrated with specialized training in how to apply this knowledge to helping people with emotional distress and other problems in living. The psychologist's training in research allows them to evaluate the best ways to help people and to make decisions on what helps and what doesn't help different people with various situations.

Psychologists also specialize in psychological testing. Psychological tests are used in situations where there are questions about what a person's particular problem is. For example, a psychologist may use psychological tests to determine whether a child has a learning disorder. Psychologists also use psychological tests in legal cases or any time there is uncertainty about what is troubling an individual Psychological tests can include assessments of personality styles, tests of emotional well-being, intellectual (or "IQ") tests, tests of academic achievement and tests for possible brain damage. The use of psychological tests requires years of training that involves not only learning how to give the tests, but also how to integrate all the information from a variety of tests, background information, interviews, and knowledge of theories, research, psychological problems, personalities, and human development. Psychologists are the only mental health professionals who are fully trained and qualified to use psychological tests.

It is important to be aware that there can be broad differences in training and philosophy among psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and other therapists which can often lead to widely differing treatment approaches and understandings of psychological and emotional problems.

magine yourself in the following situation: you sign up for a psychology experiment, and on a specified date you and seven others whom you think are also subjects arrive and are seated at a table in a small room. You don't know it at the time, but the others are actually associates of the experimenter, and their behaviour has been carefully scripted. You're the only real subject.

The experimenter arrives and tells you that the study in which you are about to participate concerns people's visual judgments. She places two cards before you. The card on the left contains one vertical line. The card on the right displays three lines of different length.

The experimenter asks all of you, one at a time, to choose which of the three lines on the right card matches the length of the line on the left card. The task is repeated several times with different cards. The other "subjects" unanimously choose the wrong line. It is clear to you that they are wrong, but they have all given the same answer.

What would you do? Would you go along with the majority opinion, or would you trust your own eyes?

In 1951, the social psychologist Asch used this experiment to examine how the pressure from other people could affect one's perceptions. In total, about one third of the subjects who were placed in this situation agree with the majority.

Some of the subjects indicated after the experiment that they assumed the rest of the people were correct and that their own perceptions were wrong. Others knew they were correct but didn't want to be different from the rest of the group. Some even insisted they saw the line lengths as the majority did.

Asch concluded that it is difficult to maintain that you see something when no one else does. Pressure from other people can make you see almost anything.