

What Is Psychology?

CBSE Class 11 Psychology | Chapter 1

"The growth of the human mind is still high adventure, in many ways the highest adventure on earth." – Norman Cousins

📄 🤔 **Opening Question:** Why do two people react completely differently to the same situation?



Start With You

Which of these have you wondered about?

 Procrastination

Why do you procrastinate even when you *know* you have work?

 Context Changes You

Why do you behave differently with friends vs. teachers?

 Solitude vs. Company

Why do some people love being alone while others can't stand it?

 Emotions vs. Logic

Why do emotions affect your decisions — even when you know better?

👉 *These are not random questions. They are exactly what Psychology investigates — **scientifically**.*

★ CBSE IMPORTANT

What Is Psychology?

- **Origin:** From Greek — **Psyche** (soul/mind) + **Logos** (science/study of)
- **Early meaning:** Study of the soul or mind
- Uses methods of **biological and social sciences** to obtain data systematically

📌 **Example:** "Studying for an exam" involves *behaviour* (sitting, reading), *mental processes* (thinking, memorising), and *experience* (anxiety, motivation).

📖 NCERT Definition

Psychology is formally defined as **a science which studies mental processes, experiences and behaviour in different contexts** — systematically and objectively.

Behaviour, Experience & Mental Processes

Behaviour

Overt (visible): Running, speaking, writing — can be directly observed.

Covert (hidden): Thinking, feeling, remembering — internal, must be inferred.

Mental Processes

Remembering, learning, perceiving, feeling, thinking.

Unlike the brain, the **mind has no physical location** — it emerges from experience.

Experience

Subjective — only the experiencing person can be aware of it.

Embedded in **consciousness and awareness**.

Psychology as a Science

The Scientific Approach

- Uses **systematic observation, evidence, and objectivity**
- Follows the **hypothetico-deductive model**: theory → hypothesis → empirical testing
- Psychologists minimise personal bias in explaining behaviour

Common Sense vs. Scientific Psychology

Common sense said: "Give struggling students easy problems to build confidence."

Dweck's research found: Children given *only* easy problems gave up faster when faced with difficulty – the **opposite** of what common sense predicted!

  **Class Question:** If 5 students say music helps them study, is that enough to call it a scientific fact? Why or why not?



Psychology as a Discipline: Two Streams



Psychology as a Natural Science

- Focuses on **biological principles** to explain behaviour
- Collects data under **controlled conditions** to find cause-and-effect
- Goal: **predict and control** behaviour



Psychology as a Social Science

- Studies behaviour in **socio-cultural contexts**
- Humans not only influenced by culture — they also **create** it
- Each behaviour may have **multiple causes**

 *Psychology is generally categorised as a social science, but is also taught in science faculties in India and worldwide.*

Popular Notions About Psychology

 Myth or Psychology? — Vote before we reveal!

“

"Psychology is only about mental illness."

”

“

"Psychologists can read people's minds."

”

“

"Common sense is always enough to understand behaviour."

”

“

"Everyone responds to the same situation in the same way."

”

Think about your answer — we'll discuss each one now!

Myth-Busting: The Answers

→ ❌ "Only about mental illness"

Psychology studies **all behaviour**: learning, memory, motivation, relationships, sports, work, and more.

→ ❌ "Psychologists read minds"

They study behaviour and mental processes **scientifically**; they cannot read thoughts.

→ ❌ "Common sense is enough"

Dweck's study showed common sense can be **wrong**. Scientific investigation is needed.

→ ❌ "Everyone responds the same"

Individual differences in personality, culture, and experience mean responses **vary widely**.



★ **CBSE Important:** Psychology is distinct from common sense because it uses **systematic, empirical, and objective methods**.



Evolution of Psychology

Psychology has a short history but a long past — it grew out of ancient philosophy and evolved through **7 major schools of thought**.

1

Structuralism

Wundt | 1879

First psychology lab in Leipzig.
Studied the **structure of conscious experience** using introspection — breaking experience into its basic elements.

2

Functionalism

William James | 1890s

Focused on the **function and purpose of consciousness**. What does the mind *do* to help us adapt to the environment?

3

Behaviourism

Watson | 1913

Rejected the study of the mind entirely. Psychology = science of **observable behaviour only**. Stimulus → Response (S-R).

4

Gestalt Psychology

Wertheimer, Köhler, Koffka | 1920s

"The **whole is more than the sum of its parts**." Perception and experience cannot be broken into isolated elements.

5

Psychoanalysis

Freud | Early 1900s

Unconscious desires, conflicts, and early childhood experiences drive behaviour. Introduced the concept of the unconscious mind.

6

Humanism

Rogers & Maslow | 1950s

Emphasised **free will, self-actualisation**, and inner potential.
Took a positive and optimistic view of human nature.

7

Cognitive Perspective

Piaget, Vygotsky | 1960s+

Views the mind as an **information-processing system**. Focuses on thinking, memory, perception, and problem-solving.

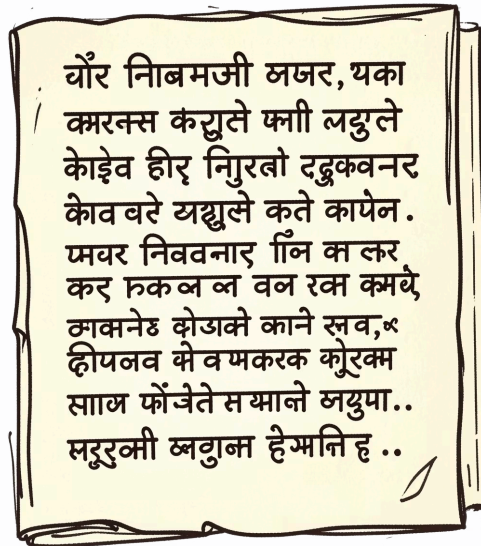
Roots of Psychology: Philosophy + Science

- Psychology has its roots in **philosophy** — ancient questions about the nature of mind, soul, and human behaviour
- Modern psychology developed through the **application of scientific methods** to psychological phenomena
- Influenced by **Descartes** and later by developments in physics and biology
- In the **Indian tradition**, self-reflection and analysis of conscious experience have long been major sources of psychological understanding

🗣️ **Think About This:** Why do you think Psychology needed *both* philosophical questions AND scientific methods to develop as a discipline?



Development of Psychology in India



- Indian philosophical traditions have long engaged with questions about **mind, behaviour, and consciousness**
- Questions like: *Why are people unhappy? What changes lead to happiness?* – central to Indian thought
- Self-reflection and introspection are valued as sources of psychological understanding in Indian tradition
- Modern psychology in India developed alongside western psychology, with growing recognition of **indigenous perspectives**
- Psychology is offered in both **Arts and Science faculties** in Indian universities (B.A./B.Sc., M.A./M.Sc.)



Did You Know? The NCERT textbook itself reflects an effort to connect Indian cultural contexts with modern psychological science.

Goals of Psychology

🧠 **Mnemonic: D-E-P-C** — *"Describe → Explain → Predict → Control/Change"*



1. Description

What is happening?

"Riya checks her phone 40 times a day."



2. Explanation

Why is it happening?

"She feels anxious when she doesn't check for notifications."



3. Prediction

What will happen next?

"If her anxiety increases, phone-checking will increase too."



4. Control/Modification

How can we help?

"Cognitive techniques can reduce her anxiety and phone dependency."

Apply the 4 Goals — Class Activity!



"Arjun is extremely anxious before every examination. He can't sleep the night before, his hands shake, and he often goes blank during the paper — even when he has studied well."

🤔 Can you identify the 4 goals in this situation?

- 1 Description
What would description look like here?
- 2 Explanation
What would explanation involve?
- 3 Prediction
What could prediction mean?
- 4 Control/Modification
How could his behaviour be modified?

Discuss in pairs — answers on the next slide!

Apply the 4 Goals — Answers

1

Description

Arjun shows **sleeplessness, shaking hands, and going blank** during exams — these are observable symptoms of exam anxiety.

2

Explanation

Possible causes — **fear of failure, high parental expectations, negative self-talk**, or past bad experiences with exams.

3

Prediction

If anxiety is not addressed, performance will likely **worsen in high-stakes exams**; anxiety may generalise to other situations.

4

Control/Modification

Relaxation techniques, cognitive restructuring, systematic study schedules, and counselling can reduce anxiety and improve performance.



★ **CBSE Tip:** In scenario-based questions, always **name the goal first**, then apply it to the situation.

Branches of Psychology

Psychology has grown into many specialised fields. Key branches include:

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
|  | Cognitive Psychology
Thinking, memory, perception, problem-solving |  | Developmental Psychology
Human growth across the lifespan |
|  | Social Psychology
How individuals are influenced by others and social contexts |  | Clinical Psychology
Assessment and treatment of psychological disorders |
|  | Health Psychology
Psychological factors in physical health and illness |  | Educational Psychology
Learning, motivation, and teaching |
|  | Sports Psychology
Mental factors in athletic performance |  | Organisational Psychology
Behaviour in workplace settings |

Psychology and Other Disciplines

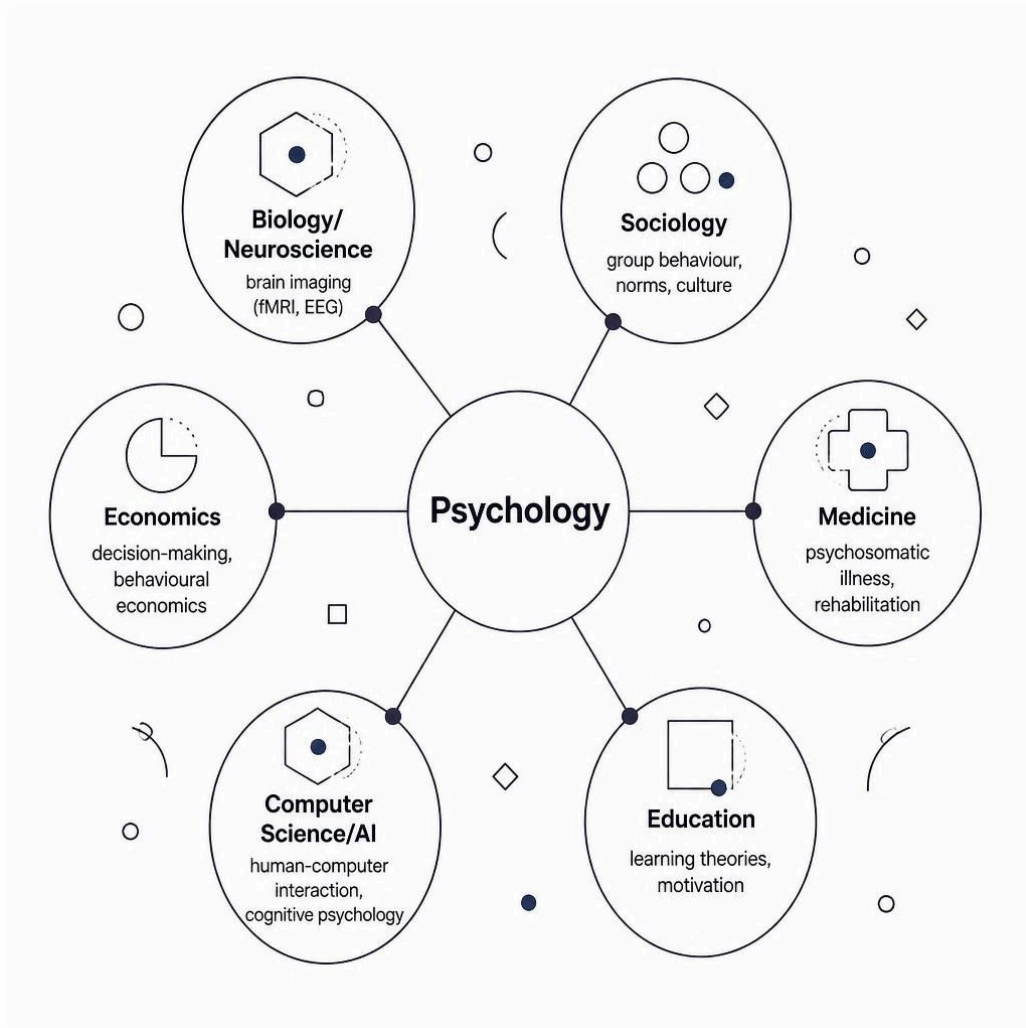
Psychology is located at the **intersection of many fields**. It both contributes to and draws from other disciplines.

Key Connections

- **Biology/Neuroscience:** Brain imaging (fMRI, EEG) helps study mental processes in real time
- **Sociology:** Understanding group behaviour, social norms, and cultural influences
- **Medicine/Health:** Psychosomatic illness, patient behaviour, rehabilitation
- **Education:** Learning theories, motivation, classroom behaviour
- **Computer Science/AI:** AI cannot grow without cognitive psychology
- **Economics:** Decision-making, consumer behaviour, behavioural economics



★ **CBSE Important:** Psychology shares knowledge with neurology, physiology, biology, medicine, anthropology, sociology, and computer science.



Psychology in Everyday Life

— Mini Scenarios

🤔 What psychological factors might be involved?

📖 Scenario 1

You studied for 3 hours but remember very little the next morning.
(*Memory, sleep, encoding*)

😞 Scenario 2

You feel nervous before speaking in class but perfectly fine with friends.
(*Social anxiety, context, self-perception*)

📱 Scenario 3

You keep scrolling social media even though you planned to study.
(*Motivation, self-regulation, habit*)

😭 Scenario 4

After a fight with a friend, everything seems to go wrong that day.
(*Mood, perception, attribution*)



❓ **Class Discussion:** What is one behaviour you would like to understand better about yourself?

★ QUICK QUIZ

Quick Classroom Quiz ★

MCQs

1. The term 'Psychology' is derived from Greek words meaning:
(a) Mind and body (b) Soul and science (c) Brain and study
(d) Thought and logic
2. Which of the following is an example of *covert* behaviour?
(a) Running (b) Speaking (c) Remembering (d) Writing

Scenario-Based & Short Answer

3. A psychologist notices that students who sleep less than 6 hours score lower on tests. She predicts that improving sleep will improve scores and designs an intervention. Which goals of psychology are illustrated here?
4. Distinguish between overt and covert behaviour with one example each.



Answers and explanations on the next slide!

Quiz Answers & Explanations

1

(b) Soul and science

Psyche = soul/mind; Logos = science/study of a subject.

2

(c) Remembering

Covert behaviour is internal and cannot be directly observed; remembering is a mental process.

3

All Four Goals Illustrated

Description (observing sleep patterns and scores),

Explanation (linking sleep to performance), **Prediction** (predicting improvement), and **Control/Modification** (designing an intervention).

4

Overt vs. Covert Behaviour

Overt: Can be directly observed — e.g., a student raising her hand in class. **Covert:** Internal, must be inferred — e.g., thinking about the answer before raising her hand.

 ★ **CBSE Tip:** In long-answer questions, always **define** the term, then give an **example**. In scenario questions, **name the concept before applying it**.

Chapter Memory Map

Central Idea: PSYCHOLOGY – Use this map to revise the full chapter!



Exit Ticket + Final Recap

Before You Leave — Answer These 3:

01

What is Psychology?

Use the NCERT definition.

02

What are the four major goals of Psychology?

Use D-E-P-C.

03

How is Psychology different from common sense?

Think about Dweck's study.

 **★ One Thing to Remember:** Psychology is not about reading minds or diagnosing disorders. It is a scientific discipline that studies mental processes, experiences, and behaviour — systematically, objectively, and with evidence — to help us understand ourselves and others better.

"The doorway to psychology is open — make the best of it." — NCERT