AP Psychology Survival Guide

Congratulations on accepting the AP Psychology challenge!

Because this is an Advanced Placement course, you will probably find it more difficult to earn top grades in this class compared to other classes you have taken. In general, students have found the course difficult at first but have done better as the year progresses. This information will help you be successful!

Questions to Think About Before We Begin

1. Why are you taking this class? Do you want to learn about psychology? Are you ready for a “college level” class? Are you serious about preparing for & taking the AP Exam in May? Would the regular psychology class better suit your goals?

2. What are your priorities? Are academics near the top of the list, or are you more concerned with athletics, social life, a part-time job, television, & so on?

3. How much time will you need to devote to this class? This will depend on your own strengths & weaknesses. A rule of thumb suggested by many colleges is to spend two to three hours a week working outside of class for every hour you spend in class. Since most college courses meet three hours a week, this translates to about six to nine out of class hours per week. Are you willing to make this commitment?

4. Are you a strong reader? In terms of course assignments, nothing will occupy more of your time than reading & studying the text. Research has shown that the strongest prediction of success in high school AP classes is reading ability. If you are a good reader, you have a distinct advantage. If you are not a good reader, know that it is going to require extra time & effort to compensate for that weakness.

5. What is your motivation level? Your level of motivation is much more important than your ability level. If you want to succeed in AP Psychology & you are willing to put in the necessary effort, you will succeed. Attitude, study skills, determination, & discipline count for more than intelligence toward your success in this class.

After considering the above, if you have any questions, concerns, etc. as to whether AP Psychology is the course for you, please see me ASAP, preferably today!

Helpful hints for textbook reading:

1. Keep up with the reading assignments! Don’t fall behind! Set a schedule for yourself & be disciplined enough to stick to it. Be prepared in class to discuss the reading assigned for that day &/or take a quiz on the material.

2. Learn to read more effectively.
   a. Read actively; don’t just look at the words. If you spend a half hour “reading” but are unable to recall anything when you are done, you have wasted your time. Reading a college level text requires a great deal more effort & concentration than the latest novel does.
   b. Do not try to read the entire chapter at once. Each chapter of your text is divided into several major sections. Limit your reading to one of these sections at a sitting.
   c. Do NOT ignore pictures, diagrams, tables, sidebars, etc. in your textbook. These features were added to your text for a reason. They make the text more interesting & usually provide important information.
   d. Preview the chapter before you start reading. Read the chapter summary when you finish.
e. Take notes as you read. If you can condense a 30 page chapter to a few pages of good notes, it’s going to be much easier to review. You also may be allowed to use notes on certain quizzes over the assigned readings.

3. Students who fulfill the requirements for textbook reading & notes will be eligible for an “AP curve” on their Unit tests.

**Helpful hints for note-taking:**

1. Take complete, dated class notes.
2. Your notes should include more than just what items are listed on the whiteboard or screen.
3. Put the notes in your own words. Don’t write down something you don’t understand without asking about it. Relate information to your own personal experience as often as possible.
4. Include visual organizers & diagrams if they seem helpful.
5. Leave some blank spaces on each page to make additions &/or clarifications.
6. Review your class notes each day while they are fresh in your mind. Expand them, clarify them, & add examples so they will make sense when you go back to study them later. Note anything that doesn’t make sense & ask questions in class the following day.
7. Before class, look over the notes from the preceding class. This is especially important if a topic is presented over multiple days.
8. If you are absent on class note days, you are responsible for obtaining the notes from other students. It would be wise to find a notes-buddy for this purpose. You may also compare your notes with theirs on a regular basis.

**Getting Help**

Please don’t be afraid to get help if you do not understand something. The ultimate responsibility to learn psychology is yours but I am willing to help you in any way I can. To get help you can:

1. Ask questions before, during, &/or after class.
2. See me before or after school. On most days, I am in the school building by 7:00am & usually leave around 3:00pm. If you need specific help from me, I offer Academic Assistance on Thursdays after school until 4:00pm. Academic Assistance may also be arranged on Tuesdays prior to school. If possible, always try to coordinate a time with me so I can make sure I’m available.
3. Arrange to meet with me during my preparation period.
Other Helpful Hints to Succeed in AP Psychology

These are ideas to help you succeed in the course other than those already stated.

1. A large portion of psychology is learning various terms & concepts. One way to help learn the items is to create vocabulary flashcards on 3X5 index cards. On one side, write the term, name, or concept, & on the other, write the definition or explanation/ The flashcards will help you in the following ways:
   a. Making the cards helps you learn the vocabulary.
   b. You can easily separate the terms you know from those you need to work on. This makes for efficient studying.
   c. You can look at the names & practice the definitions, or you can look at the definitions & practice the terms.
   d. The cards provide an excellent review, which will be very useful for the cumulative tests & the AP Exam in May.

2. Form a study group with other students. This is an excellent way to help each other. Beware that working in groups does have some disadvantages. Before forming a group, make sure each member is willing to put in their fair share of the work.

3. If you’re having trouble understanding the Myers textbook, you might want to borrow a different introductory psychology text. Sometimes students find reading a different author’s explanations of a concept helps them better understand our text. DO NOT substitute for reading the Myers textbook by reading a different text. Each author does not necessarily cover the same material, or in the same order. For the class tests, you are responsible for the material in the Myers text.

4. If you have internet access, there are various sites which are designed to help students who are learning psychology. Some sites include explanations of concepts & even practice tests you may take. I will be happy to give you URLs for the sites I am aware of. Many of them will be posted on my teacher webpage at [http://www.waynesville.k12.mo.us/Domain/763](http://www.waynesville.k12.mo.us/Domain/763)

5. In your reading, studying for tests, taking notes, etc. always remember you will be tested on the material not only in the test at the end of that particular unit, but the cumulative tests at the end of each quarter & the AP Exam in May. At the end of each unit look over the material & organize it in your binder for later review.

It is my sincere hope that years from now, you will remember this course as one of the best you ever took; a course that challenged you & encouraged you to learn all you could about a most fascinating subject – psychology. I look forward to working with you this year. Good Luck!!!