

Understanding Behavior

The Scope and Breadth of Psychology

Psychology is the study of the mind and behavior. The discipline embraces all aspects of the human experience — from the functions of the brain to the actions of nations, from child development to care for the aged. In every conceivable setting, "the understanding of behavior" is the enterprise of psychologists.

Psychology provides the most comprehensive approach to understanding human behavior and mental experience of any field. The measurement and explication of behavior has been a fundamental contribution of the discipline. Because psychology is so comprehensive, it overlaps with many areas of study. Psychology incorporates tools and knowledge from other fields to help understand behavior and mental processes; at the same time, it contributes tools and knowledge to these same fields.

This chart depicts the various levels of study within the field of psychology — from the macroscopic (largest, broadest) level through the microscopic (smallest, most precise detail) level. It explains the focus of study within each level, and lists some of the fields that overlap with each level of study.

| Focus of Study in Psychology | Macroscopic Level | Related Fields* to Psychology | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| CULTURAL AND SOCIAL INFLUENCES | SOIOCULTURAL | Sociology Anthropology Economics | Political Science Communications |
| TRAITS, PERSONAL GROWTH, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT | PERSONALITY | Management Medicine Religion | Counseling Marketing |
| THOUGHT, EMOTION, AND ATTENTION | COGNITIVE | Education Engineering Computer Science | Philosophy Linguistics Law |
| LEARNING AND MOTIVATION | BEHAVIORAL | Education Advertising | Exercise Science Ethnology |
| PERCEPTUAL SYSTEMS | SENSATION AND PERCEPTION | Physics Anatomy Robotics | Interior Design Art and Music |
| NEURON, BRAIN, AND GENETICS | PHYSIOLOGICAL | Neuroscience Physiology Medicine | Genetics Pharmacology |
| | Microscopic Level | *This list is not meant to be inclusive of all related fields to psychology. | |