

Pursuing a Career in Experimental Psychology

ALL ABOUT EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Why do we behave in certain ways? What influences our behavior? How can our behavior shape our experiences throughout our lives?

These are just a few examples of the types of questions that experimental psychologists seek to answer through basic and applied research. In a sense, all psychologists are experimental psychologists because of the discipline's focus on a research base for all their work. However, experimental psychologists often devote their full-time professional lives to conducting and publishing research — often spending years on a specific research question. These psychologists have a passion for solving problems and exploring theoretical questions. They study a wide range of behavioral topics among humans and animals, including sensation, perception, attention, memory, cognition, emotion and more.

Experimental psychologists use scientific methods to explore behavior in humans and animals.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Experimental psychologists use scientific methods to collect data and perform research. They can work in varied settings, including universities, research centers, the government and private businesses. The exact type of research an experimental psychologist performs may depend on a number of factors, including his or her educational background, interests and area of employment. Often, psychologists with training in experimental psychology contribute across subfields, using scientific research to provide insights that improve teaching and learning, create safer workplaces, and promote healthy child development, to list a few examples.

Those who work in academia often teach psychology courses in addition to performing research and publishing their findings in psychological journals.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

A career as an experimental psychologist starts out with a bachelor's degree in psychology. Math skills and a strong grounding in how to collect and analyze data are critical to becoming an experimental psychologist.

Some people choose to work in a lab or on other research teams after earning their master's degree. After a few years of first-hand experience, many return to school to earn a doctoral degree.

In addition, specialty areas such as human factors psychology and industrial and organizational (IO) psychology often have a very strong research focus, and professionals who work in these areas often make experimentation and research the major focus of their careers.

WHAT YOU CAN EARN

According to APA's 2009 salary survey, annual salaries for doctoral-level experimental psychologists ranged from \$76,090 to \$116,343 depending on the psychologist's position. The survey captured salary data for experimental psychologists working in faculty positions, research positions, research administration and applied psychology.

Find out where psychology can take you at **WWW.PSYCHSCIENCEACTION.ORG**.