

1.1 THE SCIENCE OF PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology—The scientific study of behavior, thought, and experience, and how they can be affected by physical, mental, social and environmental factors.

The Scientific Method

Scientific Method—A way of learning about the world through collecting observations, developing theories to explain them, and using the theories to make predictions.

- The scientific method involves a dynamic interaction between hypothesis testing and the construction of theories.

Hypothesis: Making Predictions

Hypothesis (Plural: Hypotheses)—A testable prediction about processes that can be observed or measured.

- Hypothesis can be supported or rejected (you do not *prove* a hypothesis), and scientific hypothesis *must* be testable.

Pseudoscience—An idea that is presented as science but does not actually utilize basic principles of scientific thinking or procedure.

Theories: Explaining Phenomena

Theory—An explanation for a broad range of observations that also generates new hypotheses and integrates numerous findings into a coherent whole.

- In other words, theories are general principles or explanations of some aspect of the world (including human behavior), whereas hypotheses are specific predictions that can test the theory or, more realistically, specific parts of that theory.
- Theories are built from hypotheses that are repeatedly tested and confirmed.
- An essential quality of scientific theories is that they can be proved false with new evidence. In fact, any scientific theory must be proven *falsifiable*; just as researchers can discover evidence that is in support of the theory, they can also discover evidence that challenges the theory.

A few common issues that have occurred about scientific theories:

- I. Theories are not the same thing as opinions and beliefs.
- II. All theories are not equally plausible.
- III. A measure of a good theory is not the number of people who believe it to be true.

The Biophysical Model

Biopsychosocial Model—A means of explaining behavior as a product of biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors.

- *Biological influences* on our behavior involve brain structures and chemicals, hormones, and external substances such as drugs.

Introduction To Psychology Study Guide

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Table of Contents Introduction To Psychology Study Guide

1. Understanding the eBook Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Introduction To Psychology Study Guide User Reviews and Ratings
 - Introduction To Psychology Study Guide and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Introduction To Psychology Study Guide Free and Paid eBooks
 - Introduction To Psychology Study Guide Public Domain eBooks
 - Introduction To Psychology Study Guide eBook Subscription Services
 - Introduction To Psychology Study Guide Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating Introduction To Psychology Study Guide eBook Formats
 - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Introduction To Psychology Study Guide Compatibility with Devices
 - Introduction To Psychology Study Guide Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Interactive Elements Introduction To Psychology Study Guide

8. Staying Engaged with Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Setting Reading Goals Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Introduction To Psychology Study Guide
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements
 - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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