

Psychology A-level Masterclass

Revision in Research Methods

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Nick Savva, author, examiner and a very experienced and qualified psychology teacher and tutor with 30 years of teaching

This masterclass focuses on **Research Methods exam questions**, using practice papers and a **Layered Learning** recap approach. Research Methods is **around 30% of the A-Level** and appears in **every exam**, so being strong in this area is essential for achieving **B/A/A*** grades.

Most marks in Research Methods come from the **detail (elaboration)** in your answers. Many students **know the correct points**, but **do not explain them fully**, which leads to **lost marks**.

11/12-Week Research Methods Course (AQA Psychology)

Week 1 — Aims, Hypotheses & Variables

- Difference between aims vs. hypotheses
- Directional, non-directional hypotheses, alternative hypothesis, null hypothesis.
- Difference between a correlational and experimental hypothesis
- IV / DV / operationalisation
- Extraneous & confounding variables

Week 2 — Experimental Methods & Designs

- Lab, field, natural, quasi experiments
- Repeated measures, independent groups, matched pairs
- Strengths & weaknesses

Week 3 — Control, Standardisation & Investigator Effects

- Randomisation & standardisation
- Random allocation
- Counterbalancing
- Demand characteristics & investigator effects

Week 4 — Observations & Self-Report Techniques

- Naturalistic vs controlled observations
- Overt vs Covert; participant vs non-participant
- Behavioural categories, time/event sampling
- Questionnaires (open/closed questions)
- Structured vs unstructured interviews

Week 5 — Correlations, Case Studies & Sampling

- Case studies
- correlations vs experiments
- Correlation coefficients
- Population vs sample
- Sampling methods: random, stratified, volunteer, systematic, opportunity



Week 6 — Ethics & Pilot Studies

- Ethical issues & BPS ethical code
- Ways to manage issues (debrief, consent, confidentiality, right to withdraw)
- Role and purpose of pilot studies

Week 7 — Reliability, Validity & Features of Science

- Reliability: assessing and improving reliability
- Validity: assessing and improving reliability
- How psychology meets (or fails) criteria of science

Replicability, falsification, paradigms

Week 8 — Writing Up Research & Peer Review

- Structure: Abstract → Introduction → Method → Results → Discussion → Referencing
- Purpose of peer review, bias issues

Week 9 — Data Types, Descriptive Statistics & Data Display

- Mean, Median, Mode, Range, Standard Deviation
- Bar charts, Scattergrams, Tables
- Distributions: Normal vs Skewed
- Levels of Measurement: Nominal, Ordinal, Interval

Week 10 — Inferential Statistics & Choosing Statistical Tests

- Sign Test introduction
- Probability & Significance
- Type I & Type II errors
- Choosing the correct statistical tests (e.g. Spearman's rho)

Week 11 — Design a study (12 marker question)

This includes choosing and justifying:

- **Aim**
- **Hypothesis** (directional or non-directional)
- **Variables** + Operationalisation
- **Procedure** (step-by-step — MUST be replicable)
- **Sampling method** and why
- **Ethical considerations** and how to deal with them
- **Data type** and **how to analyse it** (e.g., descriptive stats or correlation)

Important information



Online Zoom



6 pm – 7 pm



10-12 week
course



£30 per lesson

Choose start date

Option A start:

14 January 2026 (10 week course)

Every Wednesday 6 pm – 7 pm

Option B start:

25 March 2026 (10 week course)

Every Wednesday 6 pm – 7 pm

More information can be found on the
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