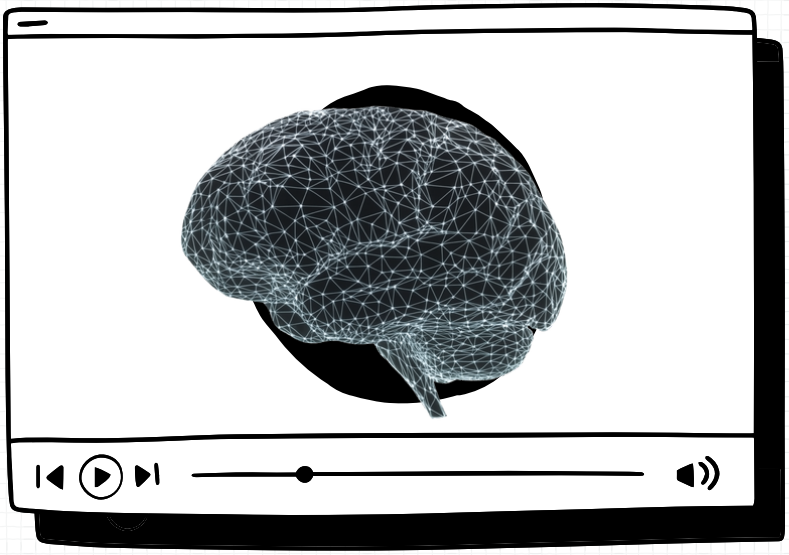
A-level

PSYCHOLOGY

A* REVISION GUIDE

Your roadmap to top grades —
backed by neuroscience



LEARNING PATH

At Learning Path, we bring together expertise from neuroscience graduates, psychology specialists, and former examiners to deliver proven strategies for success at A-level. Whether through our structured online courses or one-to-one tuition, we help students achieve top grades by combining scientific learning methods with exam board insight.

Ismail - MSC Cognitive Neuroscience and course lead

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✦ A* Example Answers

To get an A*, you need to be able to see examples of top-grade answers. Here are two to get your head in the zone for the type of work that merits that:

Note: This page might feel a little boring and text-heavy — and that's on purpose.

Neuroscience shows that plain, low-stimulation text is harder for the brain to pay attention to and transfer into long-term memory.

✨ It's a reminder that the way you present information matters just as much as the content itself.

A Top grade example

Outline the multi-store model of memory. (6 marks AO1 only)

The multi-store model of memory, proposed by Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), describes memory as a linear system with three stores. The sensory register briefly holds incoming information from the senses, most of which decays unless attention is paid. Information then passes to short-term memory (STM), which has a limited capacity of about 7 items. Capacity can be extended by chunking information, but without rehearsal, STM quickly loses information through decay or displacement. With rehearsal, information transfers into long-term memory (LTM), which is thought to have unlimited capacity and duration. Retrieval involves transferring information from LTM back into STM for conscious use

-Keywords needed for AO1

AO3 Evaluation question...

Outline One strength of the Multi store Model (2 marks)

One strength of the multi-store model is that it is supported by case study evidence. For example, research into patient HM showed that after damage to his hippocampus, he could not form new long-term memories but his short-term memory remained intact. This supports the MSM because it suggests that STM and LTM are separate stores, as the model proposes. Therefore, the case of HM provides strong empirical support, increasing the validity of the MSM.

Can you spot how this answer uses a point , evidence, explanation and link template?

⚠ The Hidden Problem

The easy thing is to produce work like this in class or just after homework with your notes in front of you. But doing this consistently across every topic is the real challenge — and it's where most students fall short. That's why the rest of this manual exists: to give you the proven tips and strategies used by A* students to stay consistent and push their grades higher.

2 UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOLOGY A-LEVEL

A-level Psychology is split into three exam papers, each testing different areas of the subject. At AS level, there are just two exam papers:

AS Psychology Paper 1

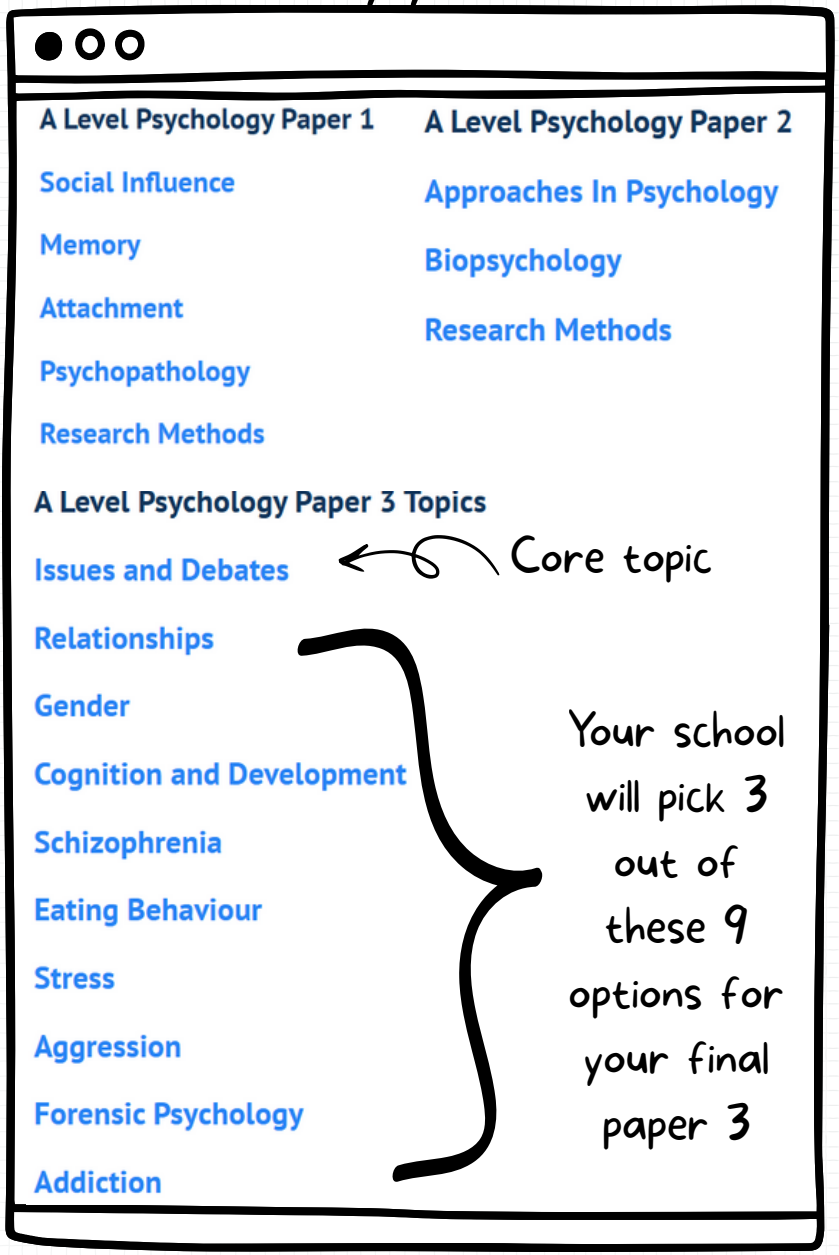
- Social Influence
- Memory
- Attachment

AS Psychology Paper 2

- Approaches In Psychology
- Biopsychology
- Psychopathology
- Research Methods

Research shows that organising information into schemas improves recall. In A-level Psychology, knowing which subtopics belong to each paper (e.g., Memory in Paper 1: MSM, WMM, EWT) creates a clear framework that makes retrieval in exams much easier.

Year 2 has three exams: Papers 1 & 2 on core topics, and Paper 3 with Issues & Debates + three options chosen by your school.



✦ Understanding AO1, AO2 & AO3

Every question is marked against three key skills:

- 🟦 AO1 (Knowledge & Understanding): Facts, theories, studies, and concepts.
- 🧩 AO2 (Application): Using psychology in real-life scenarios or examples.
- 🔍 AO3 (Evaluation & Analysis): Strengths, weaknesses, debates, comparisons, and research methods critique.

💡 Tip: AO1 gets you started, but AO3 is what pushes an essay into A/A* territory. The best answers balance knowledge with evaluation.

✦ How to Use the Subtopic Tracker

Here's a simple example tracker for Social Influence. Each subtopic is listed, and you can log:

✅ Notes? – Have you written or reviewed your notes for this subtopic?

🧠 AR* – Have you tested yourself with Active Recall? (e.g., blank page brain dump, flashcards).

✍️ Exam Q's – Have you attempted past-paper questions for this subtopic?

This simple format ensures that for every subtopic, you've done more than just "read" — you've actively tested and applied your knowledge.

Example Social Influence tracker

	Subtopic	Notes?	AR*	Exam Q's
1	Types of conformity: internalisation, identification and compliance. Explanations for conformity: informational social influence and normative social influence.			
2	Variables affecting conformity including group size, unanimity and task difficulty as investigated by Asch.			
3	Conformity to social roles as investigated by Zimbardo.			
4	Explanations for obedience: agentic state and legitimacy of authority.			
5	Situational variables affecting obedience including proximity and location, as investigated by Milgram, and uniform.			
6	Dispositional explanation for obedience: the Authoritarian Personality.			
7	Explanations of resistance to social influence, including social support and locus of control.			
8	Minority influence including reference to consistency, commitment and flexibility.			
9	The role of social influence processes in social change.			

I recommend creating a tracker before you start learning a topic - helps to organise content into schemas

You can customise this further by adding:

🧠 Multiple Active Recall sessions (e.g., AR1, AR2, AR3) to build spaced repetition.

📊 Confidence rating (Low / Medium / High) for each subtopic.

📂 Resource column – track whether you've made revision cards, a mind map, or summary notes.

Good resource types to make:

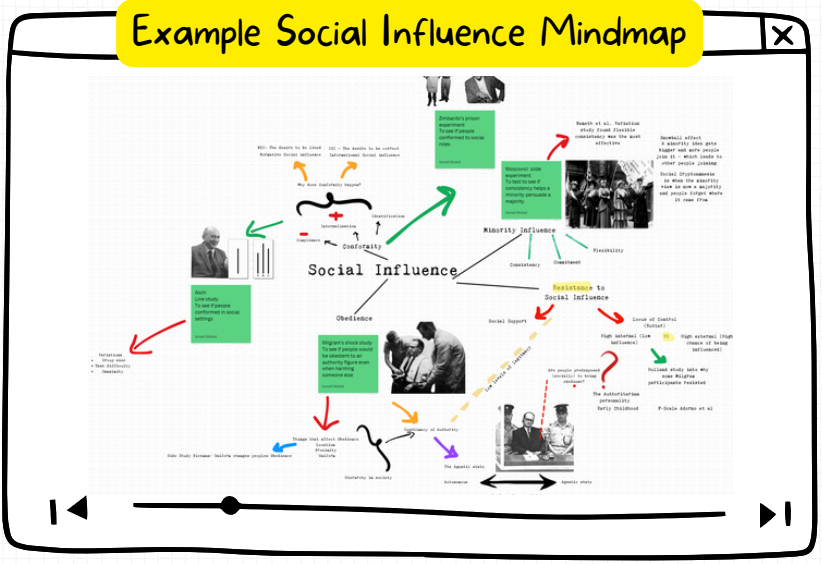
🎴 Flashcards (physical or Anki)

🗺️ Mind maps (big picture view of a topic)

📝 Summary sheets (1 page per subtopic)

✍️ Essay plans (AO1 + AO3 structure)

Example Social Influence Mindmap



A monthly schedule helps you see the bigger picture of your revision. By spreading topics across the month, you can balance new learning with reviews, past paper practice, and homework. This reduces stress, keeps you consistent, and ensures nothing gets left until the last minute.

💡 Tip: Students with a set revision routine show stronger activation in the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for planning and focus.

✨ You absolutely don't need to do all of these things. Remember — the key is to find a way that works best for you. Feel free to experiment, chop and change.

✅ What we do recommend is that every student has at least:

- 📂 One resource (flashcards, summary sheet, or mind map)
- ✍️ An essay plan
- 🧠 An active recall method
- 📝 Practice with past paper questions

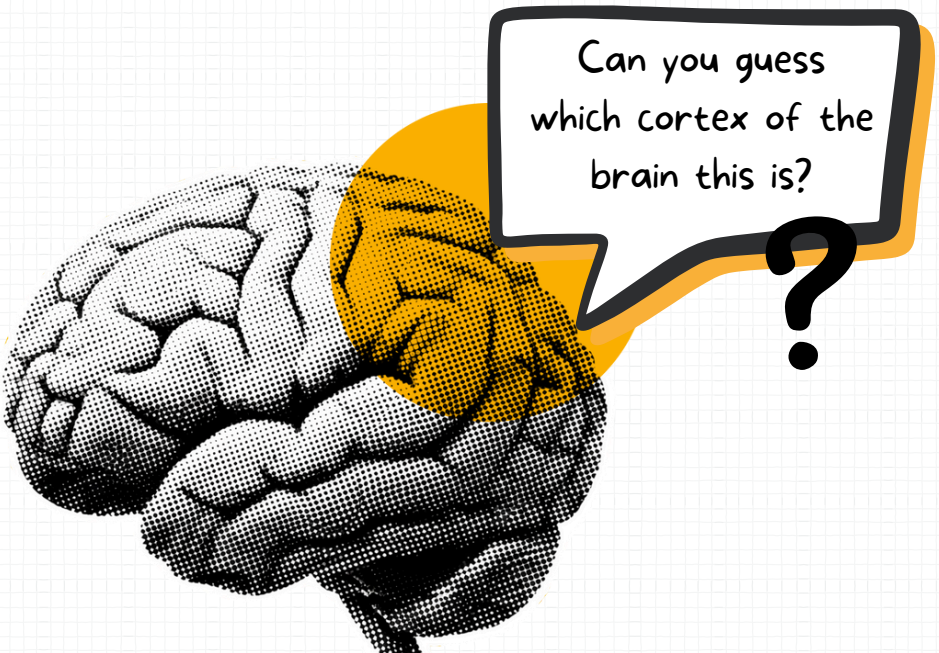
These core elements create a strong foundation for A* revision, no matter what your personal style is.

3 Neuroscience of Learning

Understanding how your brain learns is the secret weapon for A* revision. Instead of just working harder, you'll work smarter — using methods proven by cognitive psychology and neuroscience.

✦ Why It Works

Neuroscience shows that the following methods activate the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, which are central to deep learning and retrieval. That's why top students rely on them — they align with how memory actually works.



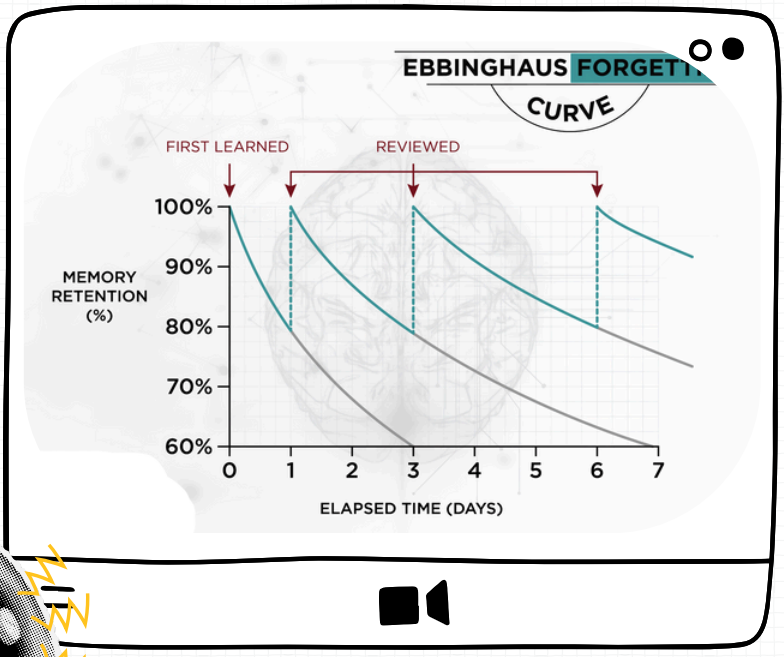
1 🧠 Spaced Repetition

Revisit topics at increasing intervals (Day 1 → Day 3 → Day 7 → Day 14).
Each time you review, your brain resists forgetting for longer.
Builds durable, long-term recall that lasts until exam day.

*See our monthly calendar as an example of how to track this! You could even add multiple columns on your topic tracker!
✨ Think of it as training your brain like a muscle — the right spacing creates lasting strength.

🧠 The Forgetting Curve

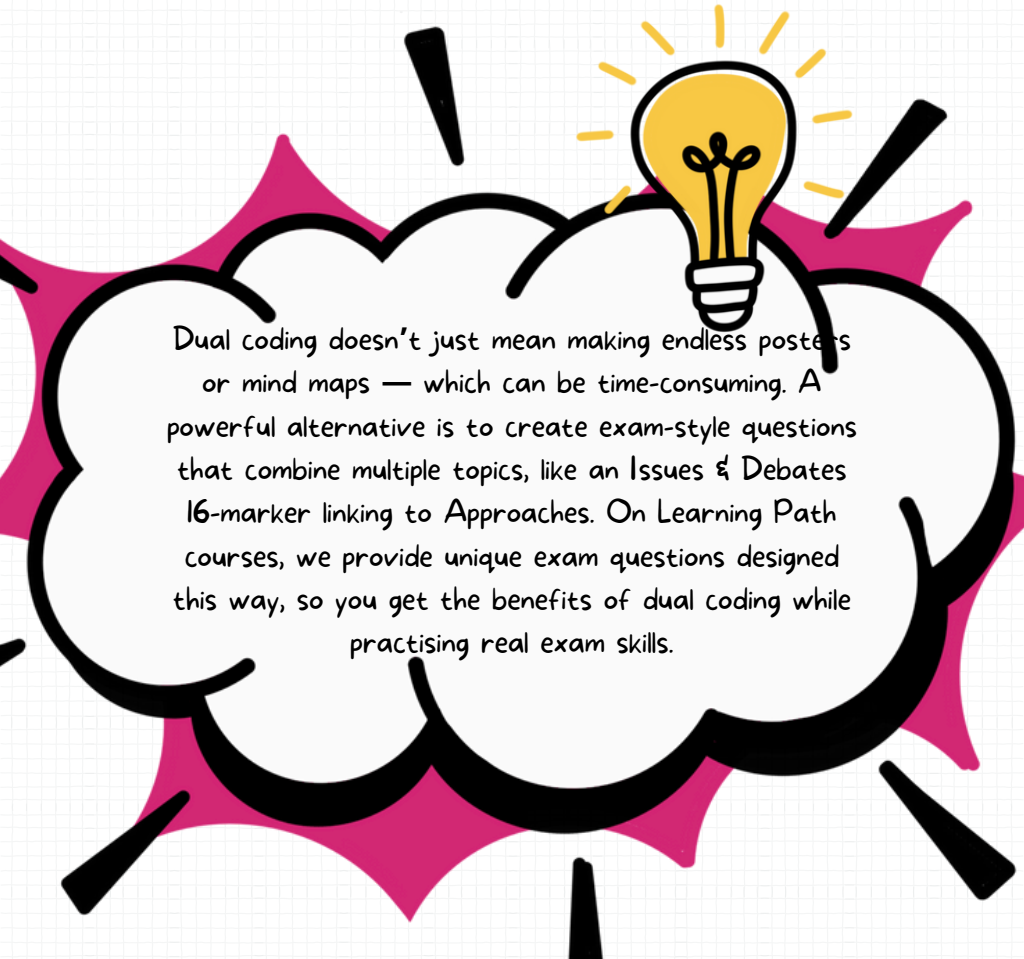
🔬 Research by Hermann Ebbinghaus showed that we forget around **70%** of new information within **24** hours unless we review it. In this section we will share some techniques so we can "fight the curve" and lock information into long-term memory.



Graphs like this can feel boring — but that's research methods for you! The key is to always ask: what's the story this graph is telling me? That way, it becomes less about numbers and more about meaning, which makes it far easier (and more interesting) to understand.

2 Interleaving & Dual Coding

- Mix topics during revision (e.g., alternate Memory and Social Influence) → boosts flexible problem-solving.
- Use both words and visuals (mind maps, diagrams, flowcharts) to engage different areas of the brain.



Dual coding doesn't just mean making endless posters or mind maps — which can be time-consuming. A powerful alternative is to create exam-style questions that combine multiple topics, like an Issues & Debates 16-marker linking to Approaches. On Learning Path courses, we provide unique exam questions designed this way, so you get the benefits of dual coding while practising real exam skills.

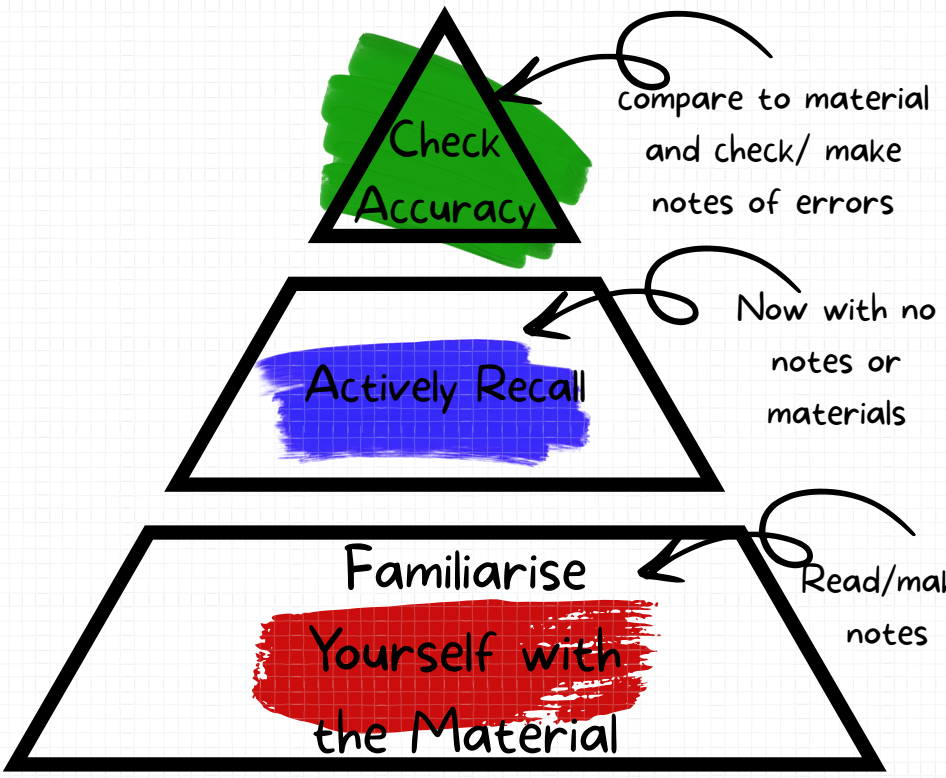
3 Active Recall

Instead of rereading notes, test yourself from memory.

This strengthens the neural pathways that store information in the hippocampus.

Use the three step method below to master active recall:

Active recall makes your brain work harder, and that effort = stronger memory.



✦ Why Tracking Matters

One of the biggest challenges in A-level Psychology is keeping track of what you've learned and how well you know it. Without a system, it's easy to:

🔴 Miss weaker subtopics

🔄 Repeat the same easy content instead of tackling gaps

❓ Underestimate how much you've actually revised

✅ Tracking creates a clear picture of your progress, making revision more focused and less overwhelming.

It also builds metacognition — knowing what you know, and what you don't yet know — which research shows is vital for high exam performance.

4 Preparing & Building a Routine

A* students don't just work hard — they work consistently. Having a routine means your brain knows when it's time to focus, making revision less stressful and more effective.

💡 Sleep and Success

Every year, I meet students who hit exam season sleep-deprived and stressed — all because they never had a set sleep routine.

🔬 Neuroscience shows that stable sleep:

- 📈 Boosts memory recall
- 🙂 Improves mood stability
- 🧠 Strengthens focus and learning

✨ One of the easiest and most powerful ways to set yourself up for A* success is to keep a consistent sleep schedule, even during exams.

🏃‍♂️ Exercise = Brain Power 💡

Exercise isn't just for physical health — it's a proven cognitive booster. Even short, regular workouts increase blood flow to the brain, releasing chemicals that improve focus, motivation, and memory.

🔬 Studies show that students who exercise consistently have:

- ⚡ Higher concentration levels
- 🧠 Better long-term recall
- 😌 Lower stress and anxiety

✨ Adding **20–30** minutes of activity to your day — a walk, gym session, or sport — can give your brain the edge it needs for A* performance.

🥗 Nutrition & Breaks = Fuel for Focus ⚡

Your brain uses around **20%** of your body's energy, so what you eat directly affects how well you study. Balanced meals with protein, complex carbs, and healthy fats keep energy stable and avoid the crashes from sugary snacks.

🔬 Research shows that regular study breaks also boost productivity. Short pauses give your hippocampus (memory centre) time to consolidate what you've just learned.

✨ The formula is simple: fuel well + rest well = study well.

✦ What's Next?

This guide has given you the core foundations for achieving an A* in Psychology — from understanding the exam structure to using neuroscience-backed learning methods.

But this is just the beginning. Over the next few days, we'll send you:

📅 Custom monthly schedules to help plan your revision

📊 Topic trackers to monitor progress

🗺️ Mind maps to simplify complex topics

These resources will help you put everything in this guide into action, so you start the academic year with confidence.

✦ Our Support for You

Whether you're aiming for top grades, university offers, or simply more confidence in psychology — we're here to guide you every step of the way.

✨ Your A journey starts now. Let's make this year your best yet.

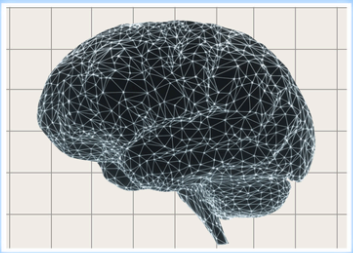
COURSES AT A GLANCE

1 LIVE LESSONS WITH EXPERTS

Interactive sessions led by experienced teachers and subject professionals.

TOP GRADES | BRAIN BASED REVISION | EXPERT TEACHERS | FEEDBACK

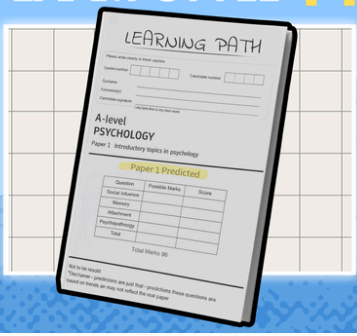
2 NEUROSCIENCE



Designed by neuroscientists to help remember more, learn faster, and actually retain what matters for top exam marks.

NEUROSCIENCE | EXAM BOAD ALIGNED | LIVE LESSONS | EXAM FOCUS

3 EXAM-STYLE PRACTISE



Practice with realistic predicted questions and mark schemes aligned to exam board standards.

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