

## Dr. Alper's Guidelines to 'Acing' the AICE Psychology A-Level Exam

### Tips for the 8 & 10 for Paper 3

#### Leading Up to the Exam

1. Shut off your phones and the TV- Unlike Dr. Alper, will not get you college credit!
2. Remember every bit of knowledge that has been bestowed upon you for A-Level Psych
3. Paper 3 *PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE*- For Syllabus Topics 2 & 3 (explaining & treating) for each of the Units of Study for Abnormal & Health:
  - a. Type your 8 & 10 practice answers using your resources in creating exemplar 'study guides' for each topic
  - b. Practice writing the 8 & 10 pointers without notes and then go back and make the essays better with your notes
    - i. Yes, this is basically pre-writing your test answers to the 10pt eval for Paper 1 last year.
  - c. Work on the topics first that you feel that you need to the most reviewing for

#### Day of the Exam

1. Show up to the exam on time having listened to "Eye of the Tiger" on repeat the whole way here
2. Remember every bit of knowledge that has been bestowed upon you for A-Level Psych
3. Pace yourself for each topic and answer the questions that you feel most comfortable with first.
4. Remember that you will answer all questions for BOTH the Abnormal and Health sections
5. When the exams are over, walk out of the room while reenacting the final scene of *The Breakfast Club*

### How to successfully write 'the 8-pointer' for Paper 3

- The 8-pointer is the DESCRIBE prompt where you will simply inform the grader of all of your knowledge on the given topic- this is ONLY in explaining the topic, NOTHING with evaluation of the topic
  - By including the depth and detail of the syllabus aspects of the named topic, a thorough response to the 8-pointer should be 1 ½ pages
  - You need to cover a 'range of topics' to be considered for the '7-8 bandwidth'
  - The 8 pointer should be written in approximately 15-20 minutes
  - For each Unit of Study, Cambridge can ask about Explanations/Cause (Topic 2) or Treatments & Managing (Topic 3) from the Syllabus
    - In either case, you would discuss at least 3 'subtopics' pertaining to that idea
    - If they ask you to 'Describe what psychologists have learned about explaining phobias,' you would be expected to discuss 3; behavioral, psychodynamic, genetic, or cognitive explanations
- Topic 2: Explanations of Phobias
  - Behavioral (classical conditioning- Watson, 1920)
  - Psychoanalytic (Freud, 1909)
  - Biomedical/genetic (Ost, 1992)
  - Cognitive (DiNardo, 1988)
- Topic 3: Treatment & Management of Anxiety Disorders
  - Systematic Desensitization (Wolpe, 1958)
  - Applied Tension (Ost, 1989)
  - CBT (Ost & Westling, 1995)

- Writing style: Content needs to be ‘competently structured and organized’ to receive the highest marks (7-8)
- Each topic should be a separate paragraph (ideally skipping a line in between)
  - Though the topics are not required to be written in order as the syllabus is presented, it is advised to do so as this makes it easier for the grader to follow
  - Always provide a general definition of the topic in the first paragraph (such as “Anxiety disorders can be defined as...”) and provide brief examples/details of the topic
  - As applicable, make sure to identify (as best as possible) the main theorist/researcher associated with the topic that you are discussing.
    - For example, if discussing the Behavioral explanation of Anxiety Disorders, Watson (1920) should be mentioned. Though the research date(s) are not required, it is recommended to know the year for at least the major theorists
  - Make sure that you include at least one (1) researcher/study that supports the category of study being discussed. For example, in the Anxiety Disorder syllabus, though Cook & Mineka (1990) are not main theorists for the Behavioral explanation, providing this research example shows better understanding of the topic and helps add to the ‘details.’
  - It is highly recommended to use a writing style and grammar that clearly expresses the topics and ideas.
    - For example, when moving on to the second topic “Psychologists have further proposed various theories detailing possible explanations of anxiety disorders” as compared to “Another thing that psychologists have learned is that there are other things about explaining anxiety ...”

-Description is accurate, coherent and detailed and use of psychological terminology is <b>accurate and comprehensive</b> . -The answer demonstrates excellent understanding of the material and the answer is <b>competently organised</b> .	7-8
-Description is mainly accurate, reasonably coherent and reasonably detailed and use of psychological terminology is accurate but may not be comprehensive. -The answer demonstrates good understanding of the material and the answer has some organisation	5-6
-Description is sometimes accurate and coherent but lacks detail and use of psychological terminology is adequate. -The answer demonstrates reasonable (sufficient) understanding but is lacking in organisation.	3-4
-Description is largely inaccurate, lacks both detail and coherence and the use of psychological terminology is limited. -The answer demonstrates limited understanding of the material and there is little, if any, organisation.	1-2

## How to successfully write 'the 10-pointer' for Paper 3

- The 10-pointer is the EVALUATE prompt where you will simply inform the grader of all of your knowledge on the given topic- this is NOT repeating the descriptive content from the 8-pointer!
  - By including the depth and detail of the syllabus aspects of the named topic, the 10-pointer should be 1 ½ -2 pages.
  - You need to cover a 'range of topics' to be considered for the '9-10 bandwidth'
  - The 10-pointer should be written in approximately 15-20 minutes
  - Like before for the 8-pointer, for each Unit of Study, Cambridge can ask you to Evaluate about Explanations/Cause (Topic 2) or Treatments & Managing (Topic 3) from the Syllabus
    - In either case, you would evaluate 3 issues/debates/topics from the topic of the syllabus
    - If they ask you to 'Evaluate what psychologists have learned about explaining phobias,' you would be can talk about competing explanations, strengths/weakness of a single explanation, the usefulness of explanations, issues/debates, or the research methodology.
  
- Students need to cover three (3) aspects that EVALUATE topics of the syllabus (including named issue)
  - EVALUATION topics may include (taken from rubric):
    - Evaluation of theory:
      - internal strengths and weaknesses;
      - theoretical issues: reductionism, determinism, ethnocentrism.
      - supporting/contradicting evidence;
      - comparisons and contrasts with alternative theory
    - Evaluation of research:
      - strengths and weaknesses of methods, sample, controls, procedure.
      - evaluation of and comparisons and/or contrasts with alternative methodologies.
    - Evaluation of issues and debates:
      - Debates: Nature vs. Nurture, Situational vs. Dispositional, Reductionism vs. Holism, Freewill vs. Determinism, Quantitative vs. Qualitative data, Snapshot vs Longitudinal
      - Issues: Ethics, Usefulness, Ethnocentrism, Validity & Reliability, Use of Children
  - Topics evaluated need to discuss MULTIPLE ASPECTS OF THE TOPIC (both sides of discussing a debate)
    - For example, if discussing the Nature/Nurture debate on Anxiety, two (2) ways that support the side for Nature and two (2) ways that support the side for Nurture need to be discussed
    - Each topic being evaluated needs to have a "valid conclusion that effectively summarise issues and arguments," meaning that you would need to include a sentence addressing how one side of the issue/debate/topic has more weight than the other
      - Such as "Though there is evidence that points to anxiety being in part due to one's upbringing and environment (the nurture side of the debate), because of the overwhelming support by research by Ost, one can conclude that heredity and genetics (the nature side) is ultimately the biggest influence in one's anxiety."
  - The 10-pointer should include the named issue of the question and two (2) other topics being discussed
  - You need to cover a 'range of topics' and have 'valid conclusions throughout' to be considered for the '9-10 bandwidth'

- Writing style: Content is to have details, a wide range of topics discussed, competently structured and organized, and valid conclusions throughout to receive the highest marks (9-10)
- Each side of the evaluative topic should be a separate paragraph, such as a paragraph for the Nature side (including 2+ pieces of supporting evidence) and then (ideally skipping a line in between) a paragraph for the Nurture side (including 2+ pieces of supporting evidence)
  - Though it is not required, it is advised to first discuss the named issue of the question to make sure that it is discussed (if it is not discussed, you are limited to at most 5 points for the question)
  - For each of the topics being evaluated, it is recommended to first discuss the side that you think that there is less evidence for. Meaning, if you believe that the Holism side has less weight compared to the Reductionism side, it is better to discuss Holism first and then discuss the Reductionism side. This way you can use your support points in making your stance (conclusion) for Reductionism at the end of the paragraph.
  - Always provide a general definition of the topic in the opening paragraph for each topic
    - For example, “In looking at the nature/nurture debate concerning anxiety disorders, the nature side investigates the aspects that one is born with whereas the nurture side looks into the environment that one is raised in.”
  - Each issue/debate/topic should identify (as best as possible) a theorist and/or researchers associated with the topic that you are discussing.
    - For example, if discussing the Nature side of anxiety, citing research such as Ost (1992) for blood and injection phobia among relatives, could be mentioned.
    - If (and when) you cannot remember the researcher, writing “one researcher found” is suitable.
  - Do not use headers (like Nature/Nurture debate) before discussing each topic
    - Instead, start a new paragraph and underline the topic in the body of writing for each topic
  - It is highly recommended to use a writing style, grammar, and key terminology that clearly shows your understanding of the topics that you are evaluating.
    - For example, when moving on to the second topic “Psychologists have further debated the reductionism/holism issue when investigating anxiety disorders” as compared to “Another thing that psychologists look at is whether something is reductionist or holistic...”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation is comprehensive and the range of issues covered is highly relevant to the question.</li> <li>• The answer demonstrates evidence of careful planning, organisation and selection of material.</li> <li>• There is effective use of appropriate supporting examples which are explicitly related to the question.</li> <li>• Analysis (valid conclusions that effectively summarise issues and arguments) is evident throughout.</li> <li>• The answer demonstrates an excellent understanding of the material.</li> </ul>	9-10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation is good. There is a range of evaluative issues.</li> <li>• There is good organisation of evaluative issues (rather than ‘study by study’).</li> <li>• There is good use of supporting examples which are related to the question.</li> <li>• Analysis is often evident.</li> <li>• The answer demonstrates a good understanding of the material.</li> </ul>	7-8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation is mostly accurate but limited. Range of issues (which may or may not include the named issue) is limited.</li> <li>• The answer may only hint at issues but there is little organisation or clarity.</li> <li>• Supporting examples may not be entirely relevant to the question.</li> <li>• Analysis is limited.</li> <li>• The answer lacks detail and demonstrates a limited understanding of the material.</li> </ul>	4-6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation is basic and the range of issues included is sparse.</li> <li>• There is little organisation and little, if any, use of supporting examples.</li> <li>• Analysis is limited or absent.</li> <li>• The answer demonstrates little understanding of the material.</li> </ul>	1-3