

# Research questions & aims

You are learning how to...	In the context of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distinguish between research questions and aims and between different types of research question</li> <li>Formulate research questions and aims</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research studies you have learned about previously</li> </ul>

## How do researchers formulate questions?

Research is always motivated by questions to which the researchers want answers. In psychology, the **research questions** relate to human (or animal) psychological and/or behavioural processes. We can distinguish between several types of research question: **descriptive** (e.g. how many psychology students do their homework regularly?), **relational** (e.g. are psychology students more likely to complete social than cognitive homework tasks?) and **causal** (e.g. if psychology homework tasks are made shorter, will more students complete them?). Research questions can be quite general.

**Research aims** are more specific and reflect more precisely what the research wants to find out. Below are some examples of each.

Research question	Aim of study
Do children learn gender stereotypes from watching television?	To investigate the relationship between television viewing time and gender stereotyped attitudes in children.
Is drug therapy the best way of treating anxiety disorders?	To compare the success rates of drug therapy with behavioural, cognitive and psychodynamic therapies in the treatment of OCD.
How are students in this school/college taught?	To investigate the range of different teaching and learning strategies used in classes in this school/college.
Re there better ways of teaching the students in this school or college?	To investigate the effect of switching from passive to active teaching and learning strategies on student achievement.

### Work out and state the aims of these studies from a description of how the study was carried out.

- PPs were tested on their ability to avoid obstacles in a computer driving simulation. Half of them were asked to respond verbally to a series of questions during the simulation. The other half completed the same task but without questions.
- PPs were given a series of words to learn. Half of the participants were given the words arranged into categories (e.g. items of furniture, means of transport). The other half were given the same words but randomly arranged. They were later tested on recall of the words.
- Researchers asked AS Level student PPs, , to complete a questionnaire about how long they spent studying each week. After the exams, the researchers compared their responses with their exam marks.

### Work out and state a research aim from the following research questions.

- Does listening to music help people study?
- Are psychology students more attractive than other students?
- Can PE be made attractive to students?