

The humanistic perspective & key debates

This activity will help you to...

- Locate the humanistic and other perspectives on major theoretical debates
- Consider the similarities and differences between the humanistic and other perspectives

Major theoretical debates

The major theoretical debates cut across the different perspectives and traditions in psychology. Each approach makes assumptions that locate it in a particular position with reference to each debate. Identify where the humanistic perspective falls on the debates below, and identify other perspectives that are either similar or different.

Nature & nurture	This debate centres on whether the differences between people are caused by innate processes (e.g. genetic influences; the nature view) or the environment (e.g. through learning; the nurture view).	The humanistic view	A similar perspective
			A different perspective
Free will	This debate centres on whether people are able to choose their behaviour (the freedom view) or whether it is caused by forces that they do not control (the determinist view).	The humanistic view	A similar perspective
			A different perspective
Reductionism	This debate centres on whether the best way to understand things is to break them down into more fundamental processes (reductionism) or to approach them as complex wholes (holism).	The humanistic view	A similar perspective
			A different perspective

If you are asked to **discuss** one perspective in terms of another, or to **compare** and/or **contrast** two different perspectives, it is the similarities and differences you must highlight. Select a perspective to compare/contrast with the humanistic one. Write two paragraphs, one about a similarity between the perspectives and one about a difference between them. Start by pointing out the similarity/difference and then elaborate by linking each to the assumptions of each perspective.