



Coventry  
University



# Getting that A Grade



Dr Kate Eames

A Level Conference Organiser:  
Coventry University AS Level  
Psychology Conference

# You are Psychologists and already have the knowledge!

- Motivation
- Performance and test anxiety
- Attention Span
- Of Larks and Owls
- Verbal and Visual Thinkers
- Depth of Processing
- Using your revision to get the A



# Revising and Preparing for the Big Day

- Get **motivated** – this must mean something to you.
- No pain, no gain.
- The nature of success. Thomas Edison said genius is 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration.
- Identify and know your strengths & weaknesses
- Think of exam performance as a SKILL.
- This skill can be learned:

- IDENTIFY/
- PRACTICE/
- ACT ON FEEDBACK.

never  
never  
never  
give  
up

(winston churchill)

# Use *Psychology!* Evaluate your strengths and know your weaknesses

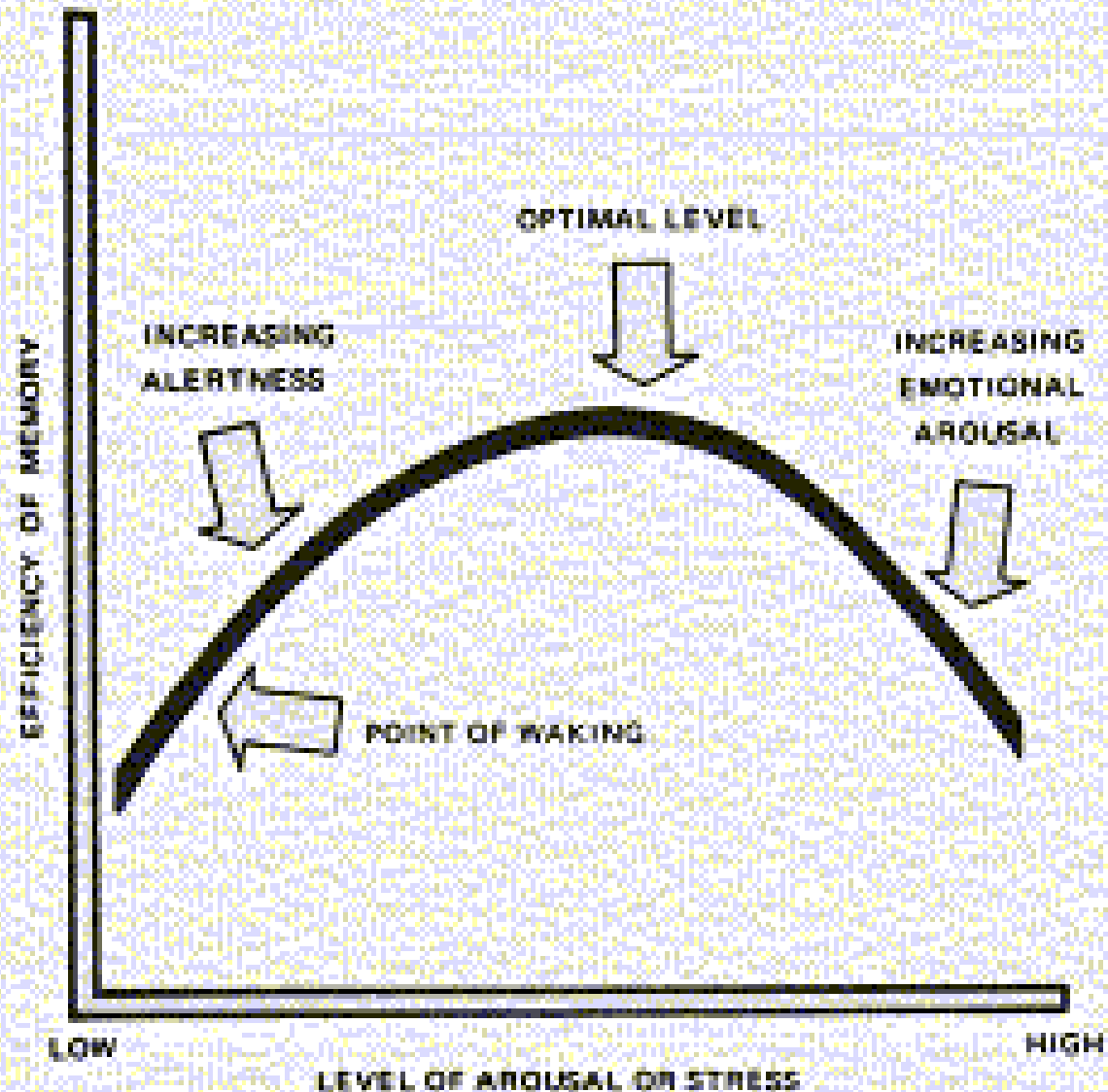
I don't have a

short attention span, I just...

Oh, look a Kitty!



ironydesign.com



# Of Owls and Larks

I DON'T DO  
MORNINGS



Dr. Ferber separates us into two groups: owls and larks. Here's what he says about owls: "[these] are people who get energized at night. Their second wind is strong, and the late night is often the most pleasant time of their whole day.

- Owls feel most alert at that time; they can think clearly, study effectively, and play well. Staying up late is easy for them. But owls have a problem in the morning: waking up and starting the day, even after a full night's sleep, is painful and difficult, like climbing out of a deep hole. Owls don't like to get up, and they avoid early-morning activities whenever they can."



- "For larks, the second wind is less forceful. As night falls, larks feel as if they are sliding into the same deep hole that owls wake up from each morning. Finding it unpleasant to stay up late, larks may pass up evening activities or leave them early. But they wake up without any trouble early in the morning, usually feeling great. They want to get right up and start doing things. For larks, morning is the best time of day and evening is the worst."

Dr. Ferber goes on to explain that not everyone necessarily falls into either of these categories. Some are Lowls (or Arks!)



**TABLE 2**

**ABBREVIATED PATIENT REPORT MEASURES OF SLEEP HABITS AND LIFESTYLE REGULARITY<sup>11,12</sup>**

***Sleep Timing***

If “good night time” is the time when you finally go to bed to sleep, then:

- On weeknights what is your earliest, latest, and usual good night time? \_\_\_:\_\_\_ \_\_\_:\_\_\_ \_\_\_:\_\_\_
- On weekends what is your earliest, latest, and usual good night time? \_\_\_:\_\_\_ \_\_\_:\_\_\_ \_\_\_:\_\_\_

If “good morning time” is the time when you get of bed to start your day then:

- On weeknights what is your earliest, latest, and usual good morning time? \_\_\_:\_\_\_ \_\_\_:\_\_\_ \_\_\_:\_\_\_
- On weekends what is your earliest, latest, and usual good morning time? \_\_\_:\_\_\_ \_\_\_:\_\_\_ \_\_\_:\_\_\_

On average, how long in minutes does it take you to fall asleep once you start trying? \_\_\_\_\_ Minutes

On average, how much sleep in minutes do you lose from waking up at night? \_\_\_\_\_ Minutes

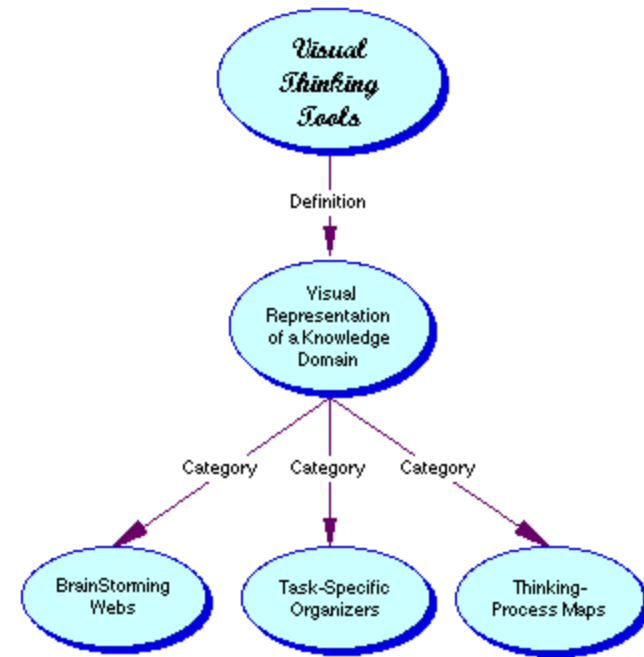
***Social Rhythms or Lifestyle Regularity***

*Please record the following*

	<b><i>Time Up and Out of Bed</i></b>	<b><i>Time of First Personal Contact</i></b>	<b><i>Start Daily Activities (eg, Work, Care Giving, Volunteering)</i></b>	<b><i>Dinner Time</i></b>	<b><i>Bedtime</i></b>
Monday	:	:	:	:	:
Tuesday	:	:	:	:	:
Wednesday	:	:	:	:	:
Thursday	:	:	:	:	:
Friday	:	:	:	:	:
Saturday	:	:	:	:	:
Sunday	:	:	:	:	:

# Verbal and visual thinkers

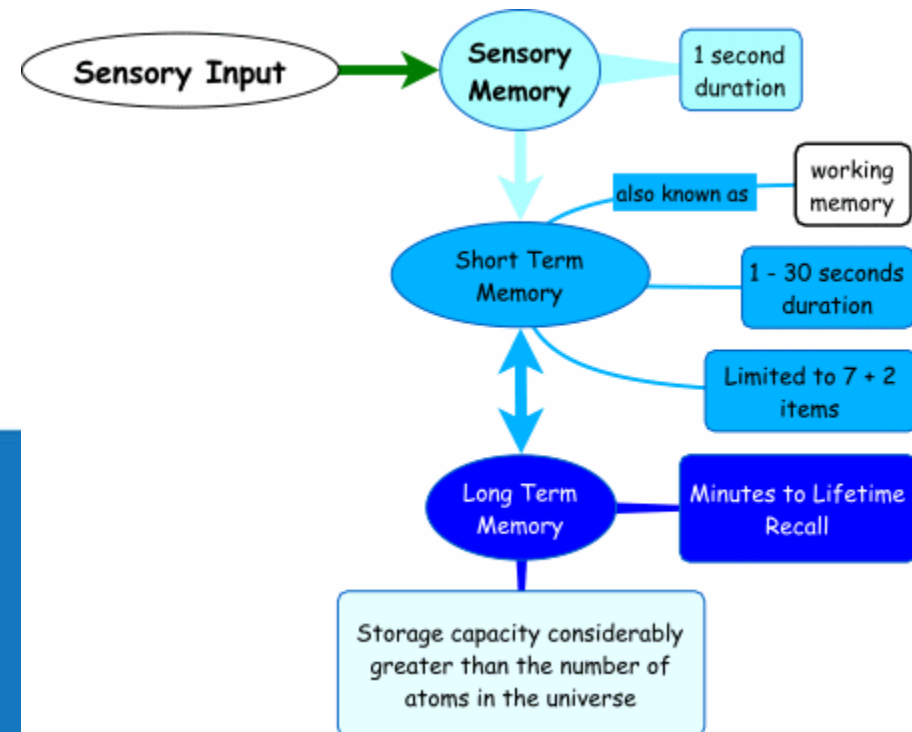
## Which are you?



# Craig & Lockhart Levels of Processing

- Always try to make your revision active. Don't just try to 'jump-lead' things into your brain.
- Always try to make your revision active.

Always be questioning  
What if??!



# Psychological terms

- Method of Loci (imagine places and post-it notes)
- Mnemonics (Id, Ego, Superego – I Evolved Superior)



# Resources

- Try to make the optimum use of your materials (e.g. class notes, teachers wisdom).
- BUT obtain more too (e.g. web searches, re-worked chapters/sections). Depths of processing again.
- Mock exams – what did you learn from this valuable exercise? Do another yourself
- Look at the specific feedback points
- E.g. Are you directly answering the question – too much irrelevance, shaky knowledge,

- Outline a calendar where you do the difficult stuff when you are at your best
- E.g. such as understanding difficult theories of abnormality such as psychodynamic,
- memorising new psychological terms, e.g. hypothalamus or
- considering strengths and weaknesses of research, such as Milgram
- The stuff that takes **depth** of processing

# Plan your revision

- Use the other times where you are most weary to review and condense notes

# The AS A(2180)

- 72 marks 1½ hours
- Syllabus
- Stress as a bodily response. Everyday stress
- Social Influence and social influence in everyday life.
- Psychopathology. Definitions and explanations. Treatment of abnormality.
- Bio (24) Limbic system (e.g. hypothalamus)
- Stress and mediating factors
- Drugs and stress
- Social (24) Obedience and theory
- Conformity and individual differences in conformity
- IndDiff (24) Definition of abnormality – perspectives, e.g. bio, psychodynamic, cog-beh and treatment

# AS Marks

- **Typically, E/N boundary around 22-22 out of 72: 3 sections 9/24 per question**
- **A/B boundary around 42-47 out of 72: approx. 3 sections, so 15 per section**
- **Roughly 5 marks per grade boundary**

## **Example Individual Difference: Outline the 'deviation from social norms' definition of abnormality (6 marks)**

- **One way of defining abnormality is 'deviation from social norms'. Social norms are where you act like everyone else and deviation from these can be seen as abnormal. An example would be someone who walks down a high street naked. Not all cultures mind this, though.**

***Repetition of the question without directly answering it, e.g. what does 'act' mean? Example not explained or given sufficient detail to be relevant. Lack of psychological terms (e.g. 'act' rather than 'behave', 'mind' rather than 'tolerate') and poor written communication - 1/6***

## **Example Individual Difference: Outline the 'deviation from social norms' definition of abnormality (6 marks)**

- **One approach to defining abnormality is 'deviation from social norms'. Social norms are generally accepted standards of behaviour in a particular society, and deviation from these can be seen as abnormal. An example would be someone who walks down a high street naked. This definition is affected by cultural relativity, as social norms are different across different cultures.**

***Last sentence irrelevant, good example but with slight lack of detail, good written communication and use of appropriate psychological terminology; good e, 5/6***

# Quality of Written Communication

- **2 marks – can be critical**
- **Minor errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling allowable for 2 marks**
- **Use of specialist terms also assessed as part of QoWC**
- **WHY**
- **QWC conveys to the reader that the writer has superior knowledge**
- **Is QWC related to motivation – Yes**
- **To improve – read good quality communication and practice your own**

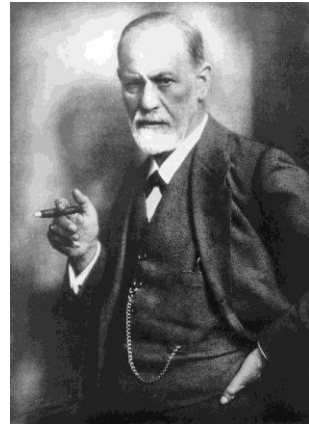
# Who do you give the marks to?

- Attempt 1: Freud outlined a comprehensive and coherent theory as to why and how the unconscious can guide waking behaviour and shape our personality. He put forward the evidence of slips of the tongue for its existence and power.

- Attempt 2: Freud says our unconscious is behind what we say, like slips of the tongue being what we really meant.

- A few errors are allowable, but more indicated shaky understanding

- Those of you with dyslexia, understand your particular problem and develop a strategy to help



# Recap – at the Exam



- Read the question CAREFULLY
- In general – know all your psychological terms and use appropriately
- If strengths and weaknesses are asked for, detail these and give the context in which they are strengths and weaknesses (e.g. in conformity studies)
- If real life examples are asked for, relate them to the theory to give validity
- If you are asked for factors that can affect – evaluate the possible outcomes
- Be clear and coherent



# Summary

Get a friend and work collaboratively. Remember there is no fixed amount of Grade As to go around.

Practice the skill!

Be specific - Set yourself learning objectives.

Draw up a good (and do-able – and with breaks!) study timetable

Be professional – it's a 9-5 job  
Be realistic – you can only fit in so much (see kitty in the box!!)



# FINAL THOUGHT:

We DO understand – honest. “We are over tested by our education system to the point at which there is a generation of kids growing up that only knows how to pass exams. Most people could not tell you about history, but if you asked them ‘Why did Mussolini invade Abyssinia?’ there would be a *hurried scribbling of pounded-in-your-head facts*”.

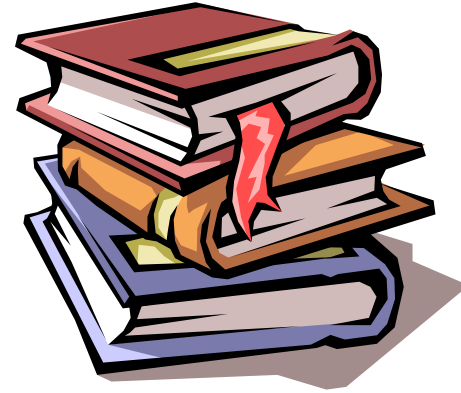
(Matt, 16, Hinkley. The Time of Our Lives? Times T2, October 2003)

A final motivator – examiners instructed to look for what you DO know and not what you don't

A faint, light blue graphic of stylized leaves or branches is positioned on the left side of the slide, extending from the top left towards the center.

Any Questions?

# Sources of Information



- Practice - <http://store.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/pdf/AQA-PSYA2-W-SQP-07.PDF>
- On transforming your Bs to As and your fails to passes - [http://www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_7554.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_7554.aspx)
- One fuller essay writing (e.g. AQA A2)  
<http://alevelpsychology.co.uk/news/discussion/how-to-discus-a-theory-in-a2-psychology.html>
- For Psychology 'stuff'  
[http://www.coolpsychologystuff.co.uk/?gclid=CM\\_O9v3oxZkCFQwNGgod6W3UuQ](http://www.coolpsychologystuff.co.uk/?gclid=CM_O9v3oxZkCFQwNGgod6W3UuQ)