

# Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

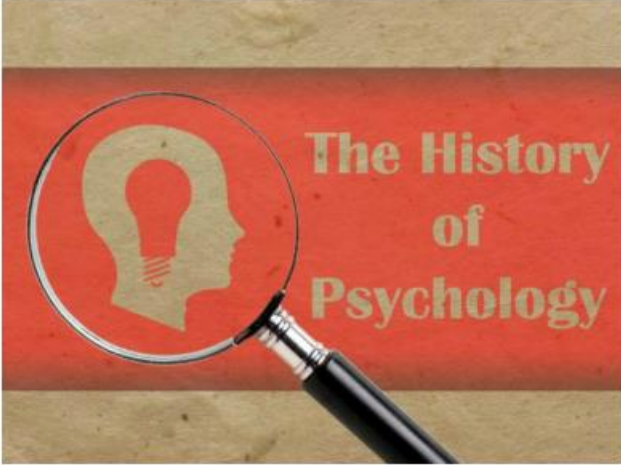
## Topic 1 Content: The History of Psychology

### Introduction

#### The History of Psychology

##### Introduction

Use the **NEXT** button or the numbered tabs at the bottom to explore the history of psychology and several influential psychologists.



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# Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

## Topic 1 Content: The History of Psychology

### Ancient Greek Philosophers

#### The History of Psychology

#### Ancient Greek Philosophers

Man has always attempted to explain human behavior. Early man knew little and had superstitious beliefs about abnormal behavior. The Greeks' emphasis on reason rejected these ideas and attempted to find better explanations. Socrates encouraged self-examination and was known for his famous saying "Know thyself." Hippocrates rejected superstition and taught that bizarre behavior is caused not by supernatural events but by illness. Despite many inaccurate conclusions, the ancient Greek scholars offered the best explanations up to that point in history.

*Image caption: Socrates (left) and Hippocrates (right) were Greek philosophers.*



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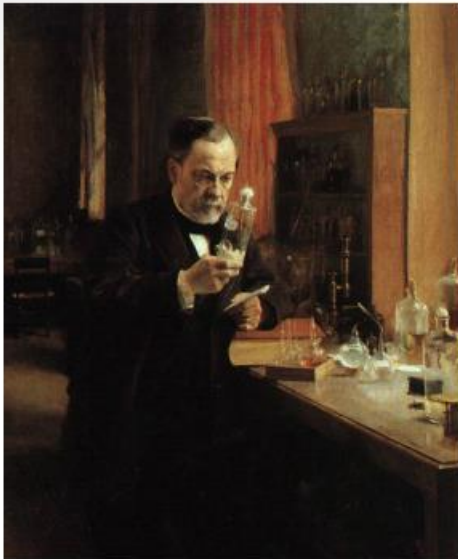
### The Scientific Revolution

#### The History of Psychology

#### The Scientific Revolution

Despite the Greek emphasis on using reason for explaining human behavior, superstitions returned during the Middle Ages. During that time, mentally ill behavior was explained as demon possession. Progress toward more accurate ideas was made as the Scientific Revolution saw many advances in scientific thought and research. Developments in biology and chemistry, such as the discovery of how cells and chemicals work and interact, helped pave the way for psychology to approach the study of the mind in a fashion similar to other scientific fields.

*Image Caption: A 19<sup>th</sup> century portrait of scientist Louis Pasteur working in his laboratory*



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# Module 1: Introduction to Psychology


## Topic 1 Content: The History of Psychology

### Wilhelm Wundt and Structuralism

#### The History of Psychology

##### Wilhelm Wundt and Structuralism

The year was 1879. In Leipzig, Germany, a psychologist named Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) set up the first lab to study mental experiences, for which he is often called the "Father of Psychology." His goal was to identify the basic components of thought and experiences. Wundt used a method called **introspection**, which is a careful self-examination or reporting of one's thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Exposing all subjects to the same stimulus like a light or sound, he would have them report their conscious reactions. His goal was to then look at the reactions and see if he could find a pattern or structure to them. Therefore, his school of psychology was called **structuralism**. If you and other volunteers were to listen to a piece of classical music for five minutes, would you all have the same reaction or perceptions? Probably not. Thus, the idea of structuralism was not successful.



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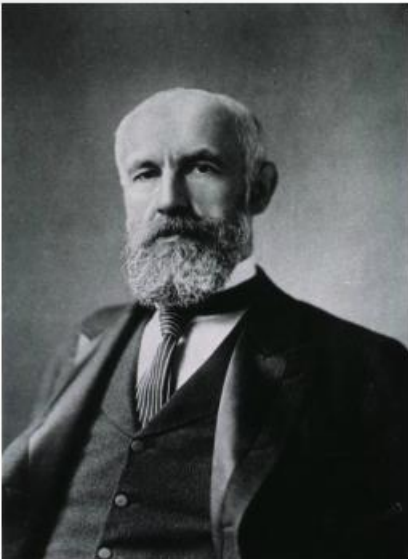
## Topic 1 Content: The History of Psychology

### G. Stanley Hall

#### The History of Psychology

##### G. Stanley Hall

The first American to work in Wundt's lab was the psychologist G. Stanley Hall (1844-1924). He is known as the founder and former long-time president of the **American Psychological Association**, or APA, now the largest association of American psychologists. Established in 1892, the APA determines the regulations for psychological practice, ethics, and research by accredited psychologists in the United States. Hall was also instrumental in the development of educational psychology and attempted to determine what was most important educationally for adolescents.



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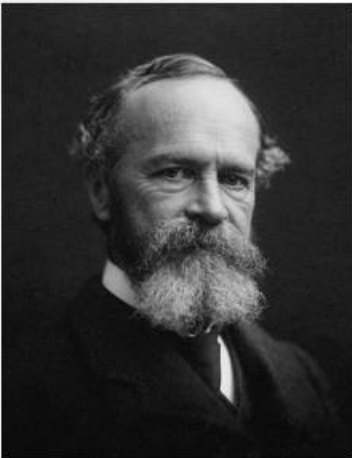
## Topic 1 Content: The History of Psychology

### William James and Functionalism

#### The History of Psychology

#### William James and Functionalism

Harvard professor William James (1842-1910) was another important thinker during psychology's early history. He preferred to focus on how behavior and thoughts help people adapt to the demands of daily life. He was heavily influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which says that life evolved by adapting to the environment and its demands. Applying this idea to the mind, he helped to found the school of **functionalism**, believing that ways of thinking which help one to adapt and survive can explain much about behaviors. For example, people who developed a fear of heights survived to pass on that characteristic to the next generation. The ones who did not fear heights were perhaps too careless around dangerous cliffs from which a fall would surely have ended in death. James's views were described in his book *The Principles of Psychology*, considered the first psychology textbook.



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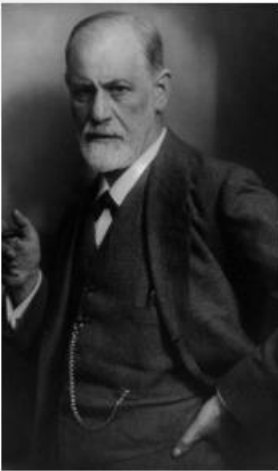
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### Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalysis

#### The History of Psychology

##### Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalysis

Perhaps the most groundbreaking of the early psychologists was Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), a physician from Vienna, Austria who founded the school of **psychoanalysis**. Many of Freud's ideas have been dismissed over the years, but they were earth-shattering in his time. Freud was the first to propose that people are driven by a force called the unconscious mind, which is a deeply hidden reservoir of primitive sexual and aggressive impulses in addition to one's childhood experiences. This reservoir was truly responsible for most conscious behavior, but he believed that people are unaware of its influence. The clues to this part of the mind come from things such as dreams, slips of the tongue, and hypnosis. Freud's ideas about the role of sexuality caused some controversy, as you can imagine, during the Victorian era of his day. Regardless, people were intrigued by his writings. Before Freud, psychologists did not emphasize the connections between one's childhood and one's current state of mind or consider dreams as significant.



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### John B. Watson, B. F. Skinner, and Behaviorism

#### The History of Psychology

##### John B. Watson, B. F. Skinner, and Behaviorism

Many people criticized Freud for ruining the reputation of psychology as a science. His concepts could not yet be scientifically studied in a lab and were based on his interpretations of human nature. **Behaviorism** was born out of a desire to limit psychology to a science of observable behavior. Because behaviorists, such as John Watson (1878-1958) and B. F. Skinner (1904-1990), felt that it is impossible to observe another's mental processes like thoughts, feelings, or consciousness, they proposed that psychologists must study things that can be observed: responses, behavior patterns, reflexes, etc. Watson became the founder of this new movement called behaviorism. Skinner later expanded the study of behavior by studying how rewards and punishments, or reinforcers, shape behavior. Did you have a sticker chart for good behavior in elementary school? Ideas like this were a result of Skinner's research.



*Image Caption: John B. Watson*

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### Gestalt Psychology

**The History of Psychology**

#### Gestalt Psychology

Gestalt is a German word for *pattern* or *form*. Gestalt psychologists believed that the brain organizes perception into a unified whole, not individual bits of sensory experiences. Their saying was "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts." For example, when you look at a group of shapes, you do not perceive individual items but the figure formed by the whole group. If you see a mother duck with her ducklings moving across a pond, you perceive the group, not each individual duck. What do you see in the image to the right? Although it is made up of individual black shapes, you can probably perceive the image of a dalmatian dog sniffing the ground. The concept of perceiving the whole (the dog) rather than the parts (black shapes) is described in **Gestalt psychology**.



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