

Introductory Psychology: Unit 3 Research Paper Assignment

The point of this assignment is to research in detail some topic of interest related to the current unit. Choose one topic to research from those listed below. You have some liberty to modify the question or come up with your own, but get instructor approval in advance. It's often the case that students try to tackle a question that is way beyond the scope of these short papers, so I can help you narrow your focus. For these papers the major component will be the research, the information you find. Of particular interest will be new information or revised interpretations, cutting edge stuff. Don't simply rehash material from the text and lecture. I want to learn something from your paper. Grading will be based on three criteria. One will be the quality of your research. Did you uncover research that provides new information or a new interpretation of previous findings? Another will be the overall quality of your presentation, clarity being the most important aspect. And the last involves your use of logical arguments and supporting materials to explain the phenomenon you are describing. Overall, just try to write a clear and concise paper.

1. Extensively research a particular neurotransmitter. What aspects of mental function does it affect or control? How does it do so? Related to this is where it acts, what parts of the nervous system it affects? Note that some neurotransmitters may have different effects at different locations. Provide its chemical formula and note if any other neurotransmitters are chemically related to it. Finally, do any particular drugs impact upon the neurotransmitter's normal functioning? How do they do so and what are the results?
2. Extensively research a particular brain structure. What aspects of mental function does it affect or control? How does it do so? Describe its general form and location. What is the primary neurotransmitter utilized? Finally, do any particular drugs impact upon that brain structure's normal functioning? How do they do so and what are the results?
3. What happens when one is sleep deprived, what kind of deficits manifest themselves? Can long-term sleep deprivation result in permanent detrimental effects? Consider these questions both in terms of one instance of going without sleep for an extended period (several days or more) and sleeping less than one should on a regular basis (four hours a day for someone who really needs more than seven hours) over a period of time.
4. Compare the effects of sleep deprivation with that of alcohol intoxication (motor coordination, speed of reflexes, decision making, and judgment). How much of a difference is there between the two when it comes to driving a vehicle?
5. What effect do drugs, particularly hypnotics and hallucinogens, have on the content of one's dreams? For example, do people under the influence of such drugs have particularly vivid dreams, intense dreams or chaotic dreams?
6. Exactly what is the nature of the hypnotic state? What are the key factors required for one to be hypnotized? What is the current consensus on the utility of hypnosis for treating psychological disorders? What are the limitations of hypnosis?

7. Electronic cigarettes were originally marketed as a safer alternative to conventional cigarettes. Are they? What does the latest research on electronic cigarettes actually indicate? Discuss the amount of nicotine delivered, the frequency of nicotine intake, the addiction potential as well as the number and amount of carcinogens present.

8. Provide a drug profile of a psychoactive substance. It can be a therapeutic drug or a recreational drug, but it must have psychoactive effects (no papers on Rogaine, Viagra, or Preparation H). Here's a checklist of items to be included: The name of the drug, any 'street' names for the drug, its chemical formula, its method of action, its primary effect, other untoward effects (side effects), other drugs it may commonly be blended or used with, reactions with other drugs, and toxicity.

9. Various over-the-counter drugs contain psychoactive substances. Cold and cough medications, allergy medications and diet pills are prime examples. Choose one and discuss what psychoactive substances are present, in what amounts and how they affect the user. Is there a potential for abuse? How easy is it to obtain the medication? In other words, can minors easily obtain it?

10. The use of hallucinogens for the treatment of various mental disorders has been debated for quite some time. What does the latest research tell us about the potential effectiveness of these drugs for treating certain conditions such as chronic depression?

11. For decades programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous have been virtually the sole approach to problems of addiction. However, until recently little research has been done regarding the actual effectiveness of such programs. Do they actually work? Is total abstinence necessarily the best approach in all cases? Might not some individuals benefit more from a program aimed at moderate consumption? And might not employing drugs such as Naltrexone to reduce the desire and craving for alcohol or narcotics be more effective in some cases?