

# Types of Research

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the different types of research, including why and how they are being used. Our discussion breaks down as follows:

1. Basic Research
2. Applied Research
3. Animal Research

## 1. Basic Research

**Basic research** is study and research that is meant to increase our knowledge of psychological phenomena and the world around us in general. This also applies to general scientific research. Basic research is more theoretical and is driven by curiosity and a desire to understand the things around us. The majority of psychological research is basic research.

➦ **EXAMPLE** For example, trying to understand how memory works or what the effects of culture are on individual psychology are both things that would fall under basic research.

Basic research generally takes place in universities, but also in research institutions that are specific to psychological research. Generally, basic research is funded by the government, because it doesn't have any commercial value in and of itself. Now, that isn't to say that it isn't valuable; it is simply that there isn't anything that it can be applied to that would make money from the outset.

Basic research lays the foundation for applied research, covered in the next section, which does have useful applications based off of it. For instance, knowing how memory works might lead to the development of techniques that help people who are losing their memories or getting older.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### **Basic Research**

Study and research meant to increase our knowledge of psychological phenomena and the world around us

## 2. Applied Research

**Applied research**, on the other hand, is practical research that is based on real world, or explicit, problems that people are having. Applied research builds on previous theories, like those put forth by basic research. Now, this doesn't mean that basic research and applied research are competitive, or that one is better than the other. Rather, they contribute to and build off of each other.

Applied research is more commercially-driven. In other words, there is some funding behind it that is important to either organizations or specific companies. In some cases, businesses have psychological experts that assist them with applied research devoted to their company.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Autism Speaks is an example of an organization dedicated to a psychological cause, that funds applied research.

Applied research also generally has more specific areas of research.

➦ **EXAMPLE** For example, industrial organizational psychology studies and assesses people within organizations. They seek specific solutions to problems like how to best train somebody or how to evaluate employees, versus focusing on big, general psychological concepts.

There can also be applied research in fields like education, forensics, or even sports. Many different areas of business--and of the world in general--have psychological applied research devoted specifically to them.



#### TERM TO KNOW

#### **Applied Research**

Practical, real-world research meant to address explicit problems people are having

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## 3. Animal Research

Now, while psychology studies the human mind and behavior, sometimes the study of non-human subjects is also used. This is what is called the **animal method** of psychological research or scientific research.

The animal method uses animals whose behavior and processes within their minds are similar to or very different from those of humans. Those similarities and differences can help to explain human psychological phenomena. There's an area of psychology devoted specifically to this called comparative psychology, but there are other fields of psychology that make use of animal research as well.

Now, under animal research using similar behavior and processes, the behavior is more simply understood in the animals.

➦ **EXAMPLE** For example, the development of language can be more easily understood in animals like chimpanzees, because their language is a little bit more simplistic.

Conversely, when the animal processes and behaviors are unique or very different from those of humans, they can highlight something that is new or different within human development.

➦ **EXAMPLE** For example, learning about the emotional processes of elephants is something that is not necessarily similar to humans, but can help us to understand emotions in humans better.

Animals can sometimes be used in processes that are too dangerous or unhealthy for people to undertake.

For example, animal research might involve using electrodes within the brain or testing new drugs on animals. This is definitely questionable for different types of people, as to whether this is necessarily ethical. However, it is important to note that there are ethical research guidelines--specifically those given by the American Psychological Association, or the APA--that prevent any kind of severe or unethical mistreatment of animals. These guidelines apply to human research as well as animal research.



#### TERM TO KNOW

##### Animal Method

Research method that uses animals to compare or contrast with humans to try to understand psychological phenomena



#### SUMMARY

Today we learned about the different types of psychological research and their application. **Basic research**, which comprises the majority of psychological research, is more theoretical in nature, and is meant to increase our knowledge of psychological phenomena and the world around us. Basic research lays the foundation for **applied research**, which is practical, real-world research meant to address explicit problems people are having. Applied research is also more commercially-driven.

**Animal research** involves the study of non-human subjects, using animals whose behavior and processes within their minds are similar to or very different from those of humans to explain human psychological phenomena. Animal research methods can be questionable for many people, from an ethical standpoint, though there are guidelines in place to prevent severe or unethical mistreatment of animals.

Good luck!

Source: THIS WORK IS ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA AUTHOR ERICK TAGGART.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### Animal Method

Research method that uses animals to compare or contrast with humans to try to understand psychological phenomena

##### Applied Research

Practical, real-world research meant to address explicit problems people are having

##### Basic Research

Study and research meant to increase our knowledge of psychological phenomena and the world around us