The British Psychological Society publishes guidelines which prevent the misconduct of psychologists when carrying out research and in professional practice. These guidelines aim to ensure that practising psychologists are carrying out their work with the greatest possible respect for participants.

**Informed Consent**

*Psychologists carrying out investigations should always gain the valid consent of the participant, ensuring they make an informed decision about the nature of their contribution and its potential consequences*



**Psychologists should;**

* Give full information to participants, including any aspects which may affect their willingness to participate.
* Only withhold information when necessary to the objectivity of the investigation, and only after consultation with experienced colleagues.
* Seek permission from those with legal authority for those who cannot give consent for themselves (e.g. under 16’s, those in the care of an institution or detained by law).
* Only carry out observational research in situations where those being observed would expect to be seen by strangers, unless participants have given consent.

*The privacy of the individuals and organisations, and any information gained from them is kept confidential. The identity of the participants should never be revealed.*

**Confidentiality**



**Psychologists should:**

* Safeguard the security of records, including those held on a computer.
* Take steps to ensure that colleagues also respect the need for confidentiality.
* Communicate information without identifying individuals or organisations.

**Debriefing**

*Participants have to receive an explanation after participating in a study which ensures they understand the research and their role in it.*



**Psychologists should:**

* Debrief with enough information so the participants complete their understanding of the research.
* Be aware that debriefing is not a justification for unethical procedures.
* Discuss participant’s experience and monitor any unforeseen negative effects or misconceptions.

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*Researchers should ensure that from the outset participants are aware that they can withdraw from the experiment at any time.*

**Right to withdraw**

**Psychologists should;**

* Ensure participants know from the outset that they have the right to withdraw from the experiment at any time, irrespective of payment.
* Be aware children may indicate their desire to withdraw by avoidance of the situation.
* Allow that following a debriefing a participant may withdraw their consent and require their data is destroyed.

The British Psychological Society (BPS) has set up a Standing Advisory Committee on the Welfare of Animals in Psychology (SACWAP), to advise the Research Board and through it, the Society more generally, on the ethical issues involved in working with animals in psychology. The BPS has published guidelines which assist psychologists in the planning of their experiments when using animals, and ensure discomfort to animals is avoided or at least minimised

**Housing conditions**

*Caging conditions need to take into account the social behaviour of the species.*

![MCBD10665_0000[1]]()

**Psychologists should;**

* Ensure they are aware of the social behaviour of the type of animal they are using e.g. caging in isolation may be stressful to social animals.
* Be responsible for their animal’s conditions of care, and where possible incorporate the aspects of the natural living environment.

**Number of animals**

*Laboratory studies should use as few animals as possible.*



**Psychologists should;**

* Use a well thought out experimental design to ensure the least amount of animals are used.
* Ensure reliable measures of behaviour are used, to reduce number of animals needed.
* Plan the statistical analysis, as this can reduce the number of animals necessary in any given study.

**Choice of species**

*A species that is scientifically and ethically suitable for the intended use should be chosen.*

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**Psychologists should;**

* Choose a species which is suited to answer the research question.
* Be informed on the species natural history.
* Have some knowledge on the animals history e.g. whether it was bred in captivity.
* A species should be chosen (which in the opinion of the psychologist and other qualified colleagues) which is likely to suffer least.
* Wild animals (from endangered species) should only be used in

 conservation attempts.

**Minimise pain and** **suffering**

*Researchers have a duty to ensure that any suffering is minimised and is justified by the expected outcome.*

**Psychologists should;**

* Not cause pain or distress to animals (this is illegal in the UK), unless the experimenter holds an appropriate Home Office licence.
* Consider using options to motivate the animal other than aversive stimuli.
* If depriving the animals the experimenter should consider the animal’s normal drinking and eating patterns; what may be a short period of deprivation for one species, may be unacceptably long for another.

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* Animals offer the opportunity for greater control and objectivity in research procedures. For example much of the behaviourist theory was based on objective animal studies e.g. Skinner box and Pavlov’s dogs.

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* Sometimes we cannot use humans for research, animals can then be used instead so that the research is still carried out. Animals are able to be exposed to various procedures that would not be possible with humans e.g. Harlow’s monkeys.

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* There are basic similarities in physiological structure & functioning between humans and animals, and even some behavioural similarities with some species (e.g. primates). Animal research therefore gives valid information about human processes

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* There is an issue of ecological validity when using animals for psychological research. This questions the value of the data obtained from animal studies, as laboratory based animal studies produce unnatural behaviour (e.g. drug addiction studies) from the animals. Whereas field studies disturb the environment & consequently, behavior. This means the behavior shown may not be applicable to how the animals would usually respond.

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* There are problems with generalisability, which suggests that even when data are valid, they can’t be applied to humans. This is because of the differences in human and animals in terms of evolution & genes. There are structural differences in the nervous system (e.g. cerebral cortex), and humans also have the influence of language, culture and higher cognitive processes on behaviour.

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* Regan (1984) argues that there are no circumstances under which animal research is acceptable. Regan claims that animals have a right to be treated with respect, and should never be used in research.