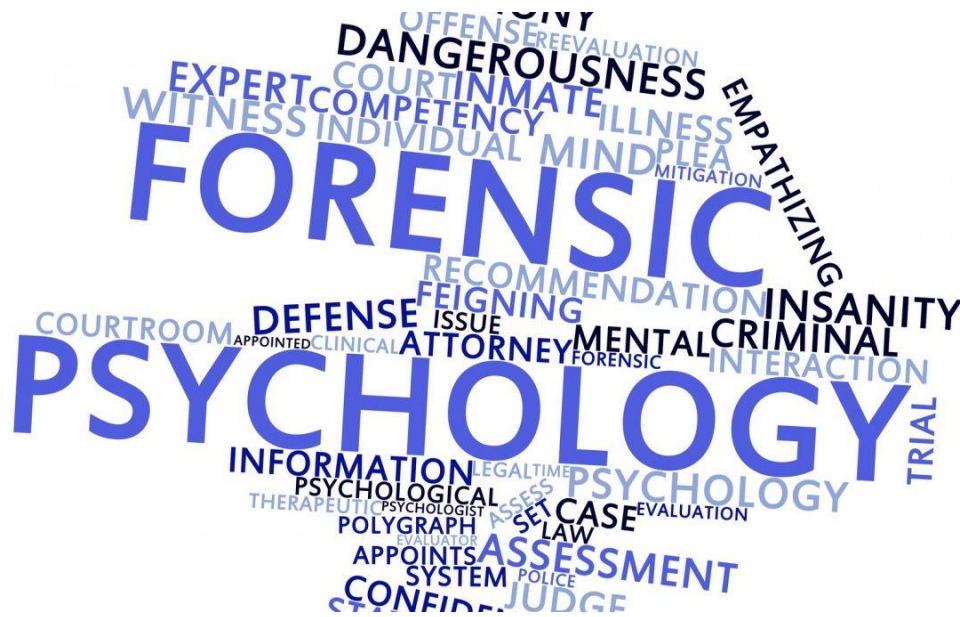


# Psychology study

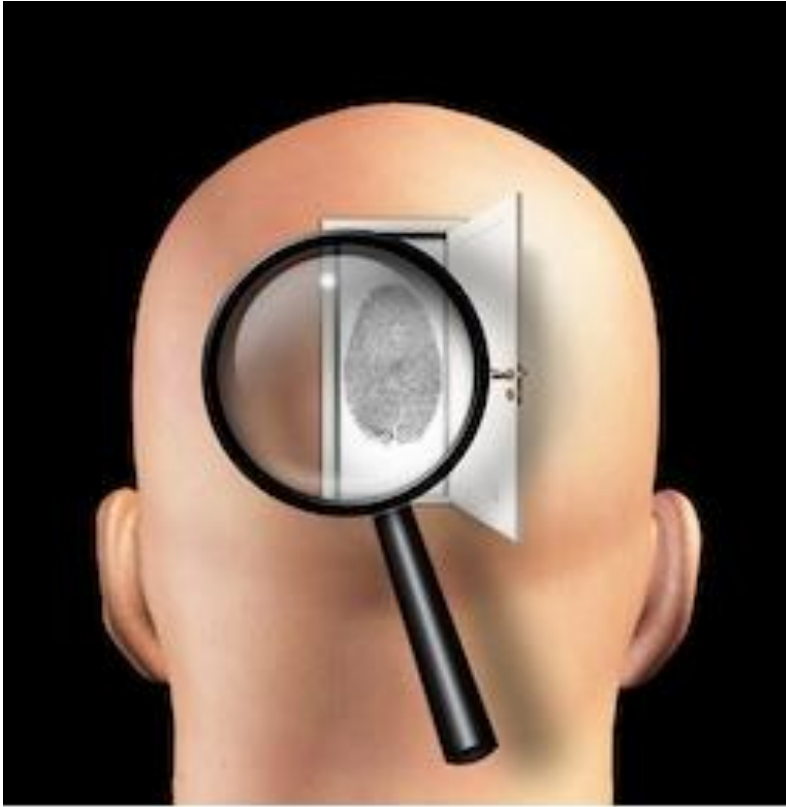


Crime is a major problem in many areas, particularly densely populated areas. As much as we may wish for peaceful, crime-free lives, this is most likely not going to happen anytime soon. Punishing criminals or preventing them from committing crimes in the first place is typically necessary for protecting ordinary citizens from crime.

Forensic psychology often plays a role in punishing and preventing crimes. The word forensic is defined as "the scientific method for investigation of crime". Forensic psychology is often described as the merger of law and psychology.

This field of psychology is often focused on the criminals themselves. Professionals in this field are often given the ominous responsibilities of trying to figure out why certain types of people commit crimes; what type of person committed a crime; and how to prevent people from committing crimes.

Before 1940, psychologists weren't revered as expert witnesses in a courtroom and medical doctors were preferred. In 1940, however, the court case *People v. Hawthorne* ruled that an expert witness's title was less important than the breadth of his knowledge. Another court case in 1962, *Jenkins v. United States*, ruled that psychologists were acceptable expert witnesses in a courtroom.



### **What Does a Forensic Psychologist Do?**

Research is often a big part of a forensic psychology career. Forensic psychologists will often study and analyze research from other professionals, as well as conduct their own research. They might study criminals and their crimes, for instance, to determine what traits certain types of criminals have. These tasks may involve interviewing criminals, along with their loved ones and victims.

A forensic psychologist will also often study crime scenes. Evidence, or even the lack of evidence, at a crime scene can often be used to develop a criminal profile. This can then be used to narrow down a list of suspects.

Many forensic psychologists also act as expert witnesses during criminal trials. They will often give testimonies about why a crime may have occurred, or whether or not they believe a defendant was likely to have committed the crimes in question. A forensic psychologist might also have an influence on a criminal's sentencing.

### **Where Does a Forensic Psychologist Work?**

Those pursuing forensic psychology careers will often be able to find employment in police stations, courthouses, and law firms. Prisons, jails, and juvenile detention centers also hire forensic psychologists.

Individuals pursuing forensic psychology careers might also have opportunities to be self-employed. Some may work as consultants, for instance, or they may choose to receive compensation for testifying as expert witnesses.

## Types of Nonverbal Communication

Whether going out on a date, traveling through a foreign country, or interrogating a suspect in a crime, forensic psychology offers a wealth of tools to help decode people's nonverbal behavior. These cues include gestures, vocal tones, body positioning, micro-expressions of the face, and a number of often subconscious indicators of people's internal states.

### *9 Types of Nonverbal Communication*



## Facial Expressions

Facial expressions are responsible for a huge proportion of nonverbal communication.<sup>1</sup> Consider how much information can be conveyed with a smile or a frown. The look on a person's face is often the first thing we see, even before we hear what they have to say.

While nonverbal communication and behavior can vary dramatically between cultures, the facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, and fear are similar throughout the world.

## Gestures

Deliberate movements and signals are an important way to communicate meaning without words.<sup>2</sup> Common gestures include waving, pointing, and using fingers to indicate numeric amounts. Other gestures are arbitrary and related to culture.

In courtroom settings, lawyers have been known to utilize different nonverbal signals to attempt to sway juror opinions. An attorney might glance at his watch to suggest that the opposing lawyer's argument is tedious or might even roll his eyes at the testimony offered by a witness in an attempt to undermine his or her credibility.

These nonverbal signals are seen as being so powerful and influential that some judges even place limits on what type of nonverbal behaviors are allowed in the courtroom.

# Paralinguistics

Paralinguistics refers to vocal communication that is separate from actual language.<sup>3</sup> This includes factors such as tone of voice, loudness, inflection, and pitch.

Consider the powerful effect that tone of voice can have on the meaning of a sentence. When said in a strong tone of voice, listeners might interpret approval and enthusiasm. The same words said in a hesitant tone of voice might convey disapproval and a lack of interest.

Consider all the different ways that simply changing your tone of voice might change the meaning of a sentence. A friend might ask you how you are doing, and you might respond with the standard "I'm fine," but how you actually say those words might reveal a tremendous amount of how you are really feeling.

A cold tone of voice might suggest that you are actually not fine, but you don't wish to discuss it. A bright, happy tone of voice will reveal that you are actually doing quite well. A somber, downcast tone would indicate that you are the opposite of fine and that perhaps your friend should inquire further.

# Body Language and Posture

Posture and movement can also convey a great deal of information.<sup>4</sup> Research on body language has grown significantly since the 1970s, but popular media have focused on the over-interpretation of defensive postures, arm-crossing, and leg-crossing, especially after publishing Julius Fast's book *Body Language*.

While these nonverbal behaviors can indicate feelings and attitudes, research suggests that body language is far more subtle and less definitive than previously believed.

# Proxemics

People often refer to their need for "personal space," which is also an important type of nonverbal communication.<sup>5</sup> The amount of distance we need and the amount of space we perceive as belonging to us is influenced by a number of factors including social norms, cultural expectations, situational factors, personality characteristics, and level of familiarity.

The amount of personal space needed when having a casual conversation with another person usually varies between 18 inches to four feet. On the other hand, the personal distance needed when speaking to a crowd of people is around 10 to 12 feet.

# Eye Gaze

The eyes play an important role in nonverbal communication and such things as looking, staring and blinking are important nonverbal behaviors. When people encounter people or things that they like, the rate of blinking increases and pupils dilate. Looking at

another person can indicate a range of emotions including hostility, interest, and attraction.

People also utilize eye gaze as a means to determine if someone is being honest.<sup>6</sup> Normal, steady eye contact is often taken as a sign that a person is telling the truth and is trustworthy. Shifty eyes and an inability to maintain eye contact, on the other hand, is frequently seen as an indicator that someone is lying or being deceptive.

## Haptics

Communicating through touch is another important nonverbal behavior. There has been a substantial amount of research on the importance of touch in infancy and early childhood.

Harry Harlow's classic monkey study demonstrated how deprived touch and contact impedes development. Baby monkeys raised by wire mothers experienced permanent deficits in behavior and social interaction. Touch can be used to communicate affection, familiarity, sympathy, and other emotions.

In her book *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters*, author Julia Wood writes that touch is also often used as a way to communicate both status and power.<sup>7</sup>

Researchers have found that high-status individuals tend to invade other people's personal space with greater frequency and intensity than lower-status individuals. Sex differences also play a role in how people utilize touch to communicate meaning.

Women tend to use touch to convey care, concern, and nurturance. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to use touch to assert power or control over others.

## Appearance

Our choice of color, clothing, hairstyles, and other factors affecting appearance are also considered a means of nonverbal communication.<sup>8</sup>

Research on color psychology has demonstrated that different colors can evoke different moods. Appearance can also alter physiological reactions, judgments, and interpretations.

Just think of all the subtle judgments you quickly make about someone based on his or her appearance. These first impressions are important, which is why experts suggest that job seekers dress appropriately for interviews with potential employers.

Researchers have found that appearance can play a role in how people are perceived and even how much they earn. One 1996 study found that attorneys who were rated as more attractive than their peers earned nearly 15 percent more than those ranked as less attractive.

Culture is an important influence on how appearances are judged. While thinness tends to be valued in Western cultures, some African cultures relate full-figured bodies to better health, wealth, and social status.

## Artifacts

Objects and images are also tools that can be used to communicate nonverbally. On an online forum, for example, you might select an avatar to represent your identity online and to communicate information about who you are and the things you like.

People often spend a great deal of time developing a particular image and surrounding themselves with objects designed to convey information about the things that are important to them.

Uniforms, for example, can be used to transmit a tremendous amount of information about a person. A soldier will don fatigues, a police officer will wear a uniform, and a doctor will wear a white lab coat. At a mere glance, these outfits tell people what a person does for a living.

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