

## Deciding What's in and What's Out in Teaching Intro Psych:

### What Topics/Chapters Do We Need to Cover?

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More than a million students across the U.S. take courses in introductory psychology annually. Instructors typically scramble to cover many, if not all, of the 14 to 16+ chapters in mainstream introductory psychology texts. Professional organizations in psychology, such as APA and APS, have focused much needed attention on coverage of topics in introductory psychology. The 2014 APA document, "Strengthening the Common Core of The Introductory Psychology Course," provides a blueprint for developing a curriculum in introductory psychology representing five pillars that constitute core areas of study, as shown in this table:

#### The Pillars of Psychology (APA, 2014)

Pillar	Examples of Topic Areas
1. BIOLOGICAL	Neuroscience, Sensation, Consciousness, Motivation
2. COGNITIVE	Cognition, Memory, Perception
3. DEVELOPMENT	Learning, Life Span Development, Language
4. SOCIAL AND PERSONALITY	Social, Personality, Intelligence, Emotion, Multicultural, Gender
5. MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH	Abnormal, Health, Therapies

Despite these efforts, little is known about how many chapters and the topical areas they represent are emphasized or covered in introductory psychology classes. There remains a lack of consensus among instructors regarding what they cover in class and the importance they place on various topics. So the questions before us are, what do you cover in intro psych, how much of the assigned textbook do you cover, and how do you cover it—class discussions, assigned readings, online activities, or a combination of methods? Or as they used to say about celluloid film, what gets left on the cutting room floor?

#### Reference

American Psychological Association. (2014). *Strengthening the common core of the introductory psychology course*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, Board of Educational Affairs. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/ed/governance/bea/intro-psych-report.pdf>