

BEHAVIORFACTS

50 Psychology Facts About Human Behavior

A simple guide to the psychology behind
everyday thoughts, choices and actions



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How to Use This Guide

Psychology becomes easier to understand when it is connected to ordinary life. Each fact in this guide gives you a simple idea, a short explanation, and an everyday example.

These concepts are educational and are not intended to diagnose or assess any individual.

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01

The Zeigarnik Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often remember unfinished tasks better than completed ones.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

An unfinished email or project can keep coming back to mind because the brain has not marked it as complete.

02

The Mere Exposure Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Familiar things can become more appealing simply because we encounter them repeatedly.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A song may sound ordinary at first but become more enjoyable after hearing it several times.

03

The Serial Position Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People tend to remember items near the beginning and end of a list better than items in the middle.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

In a long list of names, the first few and last few names may be easier to recall.

04

Choice Overload

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Having too many options can make decisions feel harder.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Choosing between three restaurants may feel easier than choosing between fifty.

05

The Primacy Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Information encountered early can have a strong influence on later judgments.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

The first few details you learn about a person can shape how you interpret later information.

06

The Recency Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Recent information is often easier to remember than older information.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

After a meeting, the final points discussed may be the easiest to recall.

07

Confirmation Bias

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often give more attention to information that fits what they already believe.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Someone who expects a product to be excellent may notice positive reviews more readily.

08

The Framing Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

The way information is presented can influence how people interpret a choice.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A product described as having a 90% success rate may feel different from one described as having a 10% failure rate.

09

Loss Aversion

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Losses often feel more significant than equivalent gains.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Losing \$20 can feel more painful than the pleasure of finding \$20.

10

The Anchoring Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

An initial number or piece of information can influence later judgments.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Seeing a high original price can make a discounted price seem especially attractive.

11

Social Proof

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often look at what others are doing when deciding what is appropriate or popular.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A busy café can make a nearby café seem less appealing by comparison.

12

The Bystander Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

When many people are present, individuals may sometimes be less likely to act because responsibility feels shared.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

In a crowded setting, people may assume someone else will respond first.

13

The Spotlight Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often overestimate how much other people notice their appearance or mistakes.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A small mistake during a presentation may feel huge to the speaker but barely register with the audience.

14

The Dunning-Kruger Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People with limited knowledge in an area can sometimes overestimate their understanding, while greater knowledge can reveal complexity.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A beginner may think a skill is easy until they learn how much there is to master.

15

The Pygmalion Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Expectations can influence behavior and performance.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

When a teacher communicates confidence in a student's ability, the student may become more engaged and persistent.

16

The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Expectations can sometimes influence actions in ways that help make those expectations come true.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Expecting a conversation to go badly may lead to guarded behavior that makes the conversation less comfortable.

17

The Halo Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

A positive impression in one area can influence judgments about other qualities.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Someone who appears confident may also be assumed to be more capable, even without evidence.

18

The Horn Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

A negative impression in one area can influence judgments about other qualities.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A single rude interaction can cause someone to be judged more negatively overall.

19

The IKEA Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People can place extra value on things they helped create.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A simple piece of furniture may feel more valuable when you assembled it yourself.

20

The Endowment Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People can value something more once they feel it belongs to them.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A person may demand more to give up an item than they would have paid to acquire it.

21

The Peak-End Rule

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often judge an experience based heavily on its most intense moment and how it ended.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A long trip may be remembered mainly for one exciting event and the final experience.

22

The Planning Fallacy

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often underestimate how much time a task will require.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A project expected to take one afternoon may take several days once unexpected steps appear.

23

Parkinson's Law

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Work can expand to fill the time available for completing it.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A task given one week may take most of the week, even if it could have been finished sooner.

24

Present Bias

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often give greater weight to immediate rewards than to larger rewards that arrive later.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Watching one more episode can feel more appealing than studying for a future exam.

25

Hyperbolic Discounting

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

The perceived value of a reward often falls as the wait becomes longer, especially when the wait is short.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A smaller reward today may feel more attractive than a larger reward several months from now.

26

Habit Loops

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Repeated behavior can become linked to cues and rewards, making the behavior easier to repeat.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Seeing a phone notification can become a cue to check the phone automatically.

27

Automaticity

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Repeated behaviors can require less conscious attention over time.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

After enough practice, familiar actions such as typing common words can feel almost automatic.

28

Attention Is Limited

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Human attention has a limited capacity, so focusing on one thing can reduce awareness of other things.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Someone deeply focused on a conversation may miss a notification appearing nearby.

29

Change Blindness

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People can sometimes fail to notice changes in a scene when attention is directed elsewhere.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A person may not notice that an object has moved while they are focused on another task.

30

Inattentional Blindness

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People can miss visible information when their attention is occupied by something else.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A person counting objects in a scene may overlook an unexpected event happening nearby.

31

Memory Is Reconstructive

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Memory is not a perfect recording and can be influenced by later information and context.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Two people can remember the same event differently without either person intentionally making up details.

32

Context-Dependent Memory

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Recall can sometimes improve when the context at retrieval resembles the context in which information was learned.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Studying in a quiet environment may make similar surroundings feel familiar during recall.

33

Mood-Congruent Recall

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People may find information that matches their current mood easier to bring to mind.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

When feeling cheerful, positive memories may come to mind more readily.

34

The Von Restorff Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

An unusual item can be easier to remember when it stands out from surrounding items.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A bright symbol in a page of plain text may attract attention and be remembered.

35

The Default Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often tend to accept a preselected option when it is convenient and requires no extra action.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A person may keep the default settings on an app instead of changing them.

36

Status Quo Bias

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often prefer to keep things as they are rather than make a change.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Someone may continue using a familiar service even after better alternatives appear.

37

Sunk Cost Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People can continue investing in something because they have already invested time, money, or effort in it.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A person may finish a book they dislike simply because they have already read half of it.

38

Effort Justification

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People can sometimes value an outcome more when they worked hard to obtain it.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A difficult-to-earn achievement may feel especially meaningful.

39

Reactance

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People may resist when they feel their freedom of choice is being restricted.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Being told that a choice is forbidden can make that option seem more attractive.

40

Reciprocity

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often feel a social pull to return favors or helpful actions.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Receiving a small favor can create a desire to help the other person later.

41

Mere Ownership and Identity

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Objects can become connected to personal identity and self-expression.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A favorite notebook, jacket, or workspace can feel meaningful because it represents part of a person's identity.

42

Self-Serving Bias

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People may be more likely to credit themselves for successes and external factors for failures.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Someone may attribute a successful project to skill but blame circumstances when a similar project goes poorly.

43

Fundamental Attribution Error

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People can sometimes explain others' behavior through personality while underestimating the role of circumstances.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A late person may be judged as careless even though traffic caused the delay.

44

Actor-Observer Difference

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People may explain their own behavior through circumstances while explaining another person's behavior through their character.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Someone may say they were late because of traffic but assume another late person is irresponsible.

45

In-Group Bias

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People can favor members of groups they identify with.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A person may trust or support someone more quickly when they share a team, school, hobby, or other group.

46

Group Polarization

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Group discussion can sometimes move members toward more extreme versions of their starting views.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

After discussing a preference with like-minded friends, a person may become more strongly committed to it.

47

Bystander Responsibility Diffusion

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

When responsibility is shared across many people, each individual may feel less personally responsible to act.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

In a group project, everyone may assume another person will take care of an unfinished task.

48

Mere Urgency

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

Urgent tasks can attract attention even when they are less important than longer-term goals.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A constant stream of notifications can pull attention away from meaningful work.

49

Goal Gradient Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often become more motivated as they feel closer to completing a goal.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Progress toward a reward can make the final steps feel especially motivating.

50

Fresh Start Effect

PSYCHOLOGY FACT

People often feel more motivated to pursue goals at meaningful time boundaries.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A new month, birthday, semester, or year can create a psychological sense of a fresh beginning.

Keep Exploring Human Behavior

These 50 facts are only a starting point. Human behavior is shaped by attention, memory, learning, motivation, social influence, decision-making, and many other psychological processes.

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