Preparing for Sixth Form: A-Level Sociology

**Aim:** The aim of the tasks detailed below are to help you develop some of the skills you need to succeed in Sociology at A-Level, especially the ability to research contemporary examples, analyse and evaluate views and theories. In line with the two year A-Level course, we will be studying: Education; Families and Households; Beliefs in Society; Crime and Deviance and Sociological Theory and Research Methods and the following tasks will support you in getting an overview of these areas.

**Independent Learning Task 1: Society**

The social world is changing. Some argue it is growing; others say it is shrinking. The important point to grasp is: society does not remain static over time; it constantly changes – through decades, centuries; and across countries, societies. Answer the following questions:

1) Give 3 different ways society has changed over the last 100yrs – think about the different areas of social life and work.
2) Why has society changed? Why are societies different?
3) Research the 3 main political parties – Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat: What are their main ideas? How are they different?
4) If you were in power, what would your first four items be on your agenda? What would you hope to do?

[https://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/parties/](https://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/parties/)


**Independent Learning Task 2: What is Sociology?**

Watch the video clip on YouTube: What is Sociology? Crash Course Sociology [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnCJU6PaCio](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnCJU6PaCio) and make notes on what you understand about Sociology.

Find the definitions for the following key sociological terms:

- Socialisation (primary socialisation and secondary socialisation)
- Norms
- Values
- Beliefs
- Culture
- Social Class
- Gender
- Ethnicity
Independent Learning Task 3: Main Sociological Theories

A theory, for our purpose, is something that explains the relationship between two or more things. A perspective can be defined as a way of looking at and seeing something. To have a perspective, therefore, means to look at something (whatever that thing might be) in a particular way. When we talk about the sociological perspective, therefore, we are talking about the particular way those sociologists, as opposed to non-sociologists, try to understand human social behaviour.

Use the internet to find out about the main sociological theories. For each one explain the main idea and concepts and the key sociologists:

- Functionalism
- Marxism
- Feminism
- Action Theories
- Postmodernism

Which sociological perspective do you agree with? Why?

The YouTube channel below is good for summaries of the main theories:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8dPuuaLjTmJ-AfB_7J1538YKWkZAnGA
https://revisesociology.com/sociology-theories-a-level/
https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/topics/group/theory-methods-key-terms

Independent Learning Task 4: Education

Research the History of Education in the UK and answer the following questions:

1) When did education become compulsory in the UK?
2) Prior to compulsory education, what were the differences in who used to receive schooling?
3) What are the oldest and newest subjects?
4) How have the methods of dealing with behaviour changed over time?
5) What are some of the major changes that have taken place in UK education in the 20th and 21st centuries?

Consider the impact of the following policies:

- Education Act 1944 (Tripartite System)
- Comprehensives 1966
- Education Reform Act 1988
- Your personal view on – what is the role and purpose of education?

https://www.schoolsmith.co.uk/history-of-education/
Independent Learning Task 5: Family

Find the definitions for the following key family terms:

- Monogamy
- Bigamy
- Polygamy
- Maternal
- Nuclear family
- Empty nest
- Empty shell marriage
- Extended family
- Kinship
- Cohabitation

Research the changing family in the UK and answer the following questions:

1) How has the family structure changed over the past 100 years?
2) How have the following policies affected the family?
   a. The Divorce Act 1969 and 1984
   b. The Paternity Act 2010
   c. The Civil partnerships Act 2004 and the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013

Independent Learning Task 6: Beliefs in Society

Using the internet, research how each of the following are represented in 4 different religions:

- Social Class
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age

Religions to look at can be:

- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Sikhism
Independent Learning Task 7: Crime and Deviance

Using the internet, research the answers to the following questions:

1) What is a crime?
2) What is deviance?
3) What are laws?
4) What is a white collar crime?
5) Moral crimes include offences such as prostitution, underage drinking and illegal drug use. Why do some people argue that such crimes are ‘victimless’?
6) What is cybercrime? Name some examples of cybercrimes.
7) What is a hate crime?
8) What do you think is more effective in reducing crime: crime prevention or harsher punishments?


Go on the following website and research crime in your area or the area near your school. https://www.crime-statistics.co.uk/postcode/ba14%200dj and answer the following questions:

1) Where does most crime take place?
2) What are the top 3 crimes/offences?
3) Why do you think that those crimes are committed in your area? Think about socio-economic issues and location.

Independent Learning Task 8: Research Methods - Questionnaires

In Sociology, data on society is collected in different way. You are going to conduct your own sociological survey and collect data on an aspect of society that particularly interests you (for example, why do people leave school for college? Why do people go travelling? Why do people drink underage? How people coped with isolation during the Coronavirus pandemic).

Questionnaires

You must design a questionnaire, with between 6-8 questions on your given area. You will need to break your topic up into smaller questions.

For example:

1) What is your age?
2) Are you male or female?
3) Did you go travelling because... (pick one)
   a. You didn’t want a job
   b. You had family abroad
   c. You wanted an adventure
4) Where did you go travelling?
5) Would you go travelling again? Yes/No

You will need to carry out your questionnaire on a range of different people. Aim to ask 5 people the same questionnaire. With social distancing in effect, please use electronic questionnaires, like:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk

google forms

Microsoft forms

Task 2: Presenting your questionnaire findings

You will need to present your findings from the questionnaire in either in a graph or a pie chart and explain what you have found.

http://www.sociology.org.uk/revgrm1.pdf

Independent Learning Task 9: Research Methods - Interviews

Interviews

You must design a set of interview questions (between 6-8) on the same area as your questionnaire (You can use the same questions or pick new ones, this is up to you).

For example:

1) Please give me 2 reasons why you decided to go travelling?
2) Did you travel alone? Why?
3) Would you go travelling again?

This time ask different people from those who completed your questionnaire. Aim to carry out your interview on at least 3 people. Interviews would normally take place face-to-face but in this time of social distancing, ask members of your household or arrange video chats with your friends.

Presenting your interview findings

You will need to draw conclusions from your interviews and explain what you have found.
Independent Learning Task 10: Research Methods – Evaluating Methods

Answer the following essay question:

What are the positives and negatives of using questionnaires and interviews when collecting data?

You will need to explain both the positives and negatives of using both questionnaires and interviews. You must also explain any difficulties you had and why, and come to an overall conclusion of which method worked best for you. You should write at least 750 words.

EXTRA Independent Learning Tasks

Other sources of information/ways to develop you sociological understanding of local, regional, national and global issues:

- BBC News
- ‘Thinking aloud’ Radio 4 podcast
- Twitter #sociology
- Panorama
- Read a range of different newspapers
- Social media

Extra reading:

- Gang Leader for a Day by Sudhir Venkatesh
- Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour by Kate Fox
- Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class by Owen Jones
- Animal Farm by George Orwell
- Lord of the Flies by William Golding
- We Should All Be Feminists by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

TV/Film:

- The History Boys (film) – Intro to Sociology
- Instant Family (film) – Family
- Outnumbers (TV series) – Family
- Waterloo Road (TV series) – Education
- McMafia (TV series) – Crime and Deviance
- The Good Place (TV series) – Sociology & Beliefs
- A Bugs Life (Film) - Marxism