

07 Obedience to Authority – Stanley Milgram “Disobedience is the true foundation of liberty. The obedient must be slaves.” Henry David Thoreau

obey the rules	_____	refuse to do sth/ refusal	_____
be obedient (to authority)	_____	rehearse (a play)/ rehearsal	_____
commit crime	_____	(film) script	_____
order sb to do sth	_____	be out of sight	_____
investigate (a case)/ investigation	_____	assume that (sth is true)	_____
label sth/sb	_____	be unconscious/ consciousness	_____
keep doing sth	_____	volunteer to do sth	_____
be involved in an experiment	_____	administer (punishment to sb)	_____
during the course of (the lesson)	_____	ignore your misgivings about the future	_____

Complete the sentences with: *obey, commit, order, investigate, label, keep, refuse, rehearse, assume, volunteer, administer, ignore.*

- 1) Most crimes are _____ by young men.
- 2) She _____ to accept that there was a problem. / She _____ to help me.
- 3) It is reasonable to _____ (that) the economy will continue to improve. / Let us _____ for a moment that the plan succeeds.
- 4) The file was _____ ‘Private’. / He was _____ (as) a traitor by his former colleagues.
- 5) The questionnaire was _____ by trained interviewers. / The teacher has the authority to _____ punishment.
- 6) The company was _____ to pay compensation to its former employees. / The officer _____ them to fire.
- 7) Today, we’ll just be _____ the final scene. / The actors were poorly _____.
- 8) He had always _____ his parents without question. / Soldiers must _____ the rules.
- 9) He _____ all the ‘No Smoking’ signs and lit up a cigarette. / We cannot afford to _____ their advice.
- 10) Jill _____ to organize a petition. / Several staff members _____ for early retirement.
- 11) Don’t _____ interrupting me! / _____ smiling!
- 12) The FBI has been called in to _____. / Police are _____ possible links between the murders.

Complete the sentences with: *obedient, involved, course, script, sight, unconscious, misgivings.*

- 1) We need to examine all the costs _____ in the project first. / We’ll make our decision and contact the people _____.
- 2) A _____ is a written text of a play, film / movie, broadcast, talk, etc.
- 3) I had grave _____ about making the trip. / I read the letter with a sense of _____.
- 4) Leave any valuables in your car out of _____. / She never lets her daughter out of her _____ (= always keeps her where she can see her).
- 5) He was always _____ to his father’s wishes.

- 6) There are various _____ open to us. / What _____ of action would you recommend?
- 7) They found him lying _____ on the floor. / He was quite _____ of the danger.

Explaining human cruelty

“Many wondered after the horrors of WWII, and not for the first time, how people could be motivated to **commit** acts of such brutality towards one another.” Stanley Milgram’s now famous experiments were designed to test obedience to authority (Milgram, 1963). What Milgram wanted to know was how far humans will go when an authority figure **(1)...** Many wondered after the horrors of WWII, and not for the first time, how people could be motivated to **commit** acts of such brutality towards one another.

But Milgram didn’t **investigate** the extreme situation of war, **(2)...** How would people behave when told to give an electrical shock to another person? To what extent would people obey the dictates of the situation and **ignore** their own **misgivings about** what they were doing?

The experimental situation into which people were put was initially straightforward. **(3)...** they **were involved in** a learning experiment, that they were to **administer** electrical shocks and that they should continue to the end of the experiment. Told they would be the ‘teacher and another person the ‘learner’, they sat in front of a machine with a number of dials **labelled** with steadily increasing voltages. This was the ‘shock machine’. The third switch from the top was **labelled**: “Danger: Severe Shock”, the last two simply: “XXX”.

During the course of the experiment, each time the ‘learner’ made a mistake the participant **was ordered to administer** ever-increasing electrical shocks. Of course the learner **kept (4)...**, and hearing the resultant screams of pain until finally the learner went quiet.

“When the participant **refused (5)...**, the experimenter – an authority figure dressed in a white lab coat – ordered them to continue.” Participants were not in fact delivering electrical shocks, the learner in the experiment was actually an actor following a **rehearsed script**. The learner was kept **out of sight** of the participants so they came to their own **assumptions** about the pain they were causing. They were, however, left in little doubt that towards the end of the experiment the shocks were extremely painful and the learner might well have been **unconscious**. When the participant **refused to** give the electrical shocks, the experimenter – an authority figure dressed in a white lab coat – **ordered them to** continue.

Results

Like the experiment, the results shocked. Milgram’s study discovered people are much more **obedient** than you might imagine. **(6)...** – they **administered** all the shocks even with the learner screaming in agony, begging to stop and eventually falling silent. These weren’t specially selected sadists, these were ordinary people like you and me who had **volunteered** for a psychology study.

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| A | he wanted to see how people would react under relatively ‘ordinary’ conditions in the lab | D | making mistakes so the teacher (the poor participant) had to keep giving higher and higher electrical shocks |
| B | to give the electrical shocks | E | 63% of the participants continued right until the end |
| C | orders them to hurt another human being | F | Participants were told |