

## Criminal profiling

Watch the clip below on offender profiling (top down approach)

[The American Approach to Offender Profiling \(top-down typology\).mpg - YouTube](#)

Create a poster to demonstrate the difference between organised and disorganised offenders and then use the information to complete the 'Apply it' task at the bottom of the page

## The top-down approach

### Offender profiling

**Offender profiling** is an investigative tool employed by the police when solving **crimes**, the main aim of which is to narrow the field of enquiry and the list of likely suspects. Professional profilers will often be called upon to work alongside the police especially during high profile murder cases. Methods vary, but the compiling of a profile will usually involve careful scrutiny of the crime scene and analysis of the evidence (including witness reports) in order to generate **hypotheses** about the probable characteristics of the offender (their age, background, occupation, etc.).

### The American approach

The **top-down approach** to profiling originated in the United States as a result of work carried out by the FBI in the 1970s. More specifically, the FBI's Behavioural Science Unit drew upon data gathered from in-depth **interviews** with 36 sexually motivated serial killers including Ted Bundy (see below) and Charles Manson.

Also known as the typology approach, offender profilers who use this method will match what is known about the crime and the offender to a pre-existing template that the FBI developed. Murderers or rapists are classified in one of two categories (organised or disorganised) on the basis of the evidence, and this classification informs the subsequent police investigation.

### Organised and disorganised types of offender

The organised and disorganised distinction is based on the idea that serious offenders have certain signature 'ways of working' (often referred to as their *modus operandi*) and these generally **correlate** with a particular set of social and psychological characteristics that relate to the individual.

**Organised offenders** show evidence of having planned the crime in advance; the victim is deliberately targeted and will often reflect the fact that the killer or rapist has a 'type'. They maintain a high degree of control during the crime and may operate with almost detached surgical precision. There is little evidence or clues left behind at the scene. They tend to be of above-average intelligence, in a skilled, professional occupation and are socially and sexually competent. They are usually married and may even have children.

In contrast, **disorganised offenders** show little evidence of planning, suggesting the offence may have been a spontaneous, spur of the moment act. The crime scene tends to reflect the impulsive nature of the attack – the body is usually still at the scene and there appears to have been very little control on the part of the offender. They tend to have a lower than average IQ, be in unskilled work or unemployed, and often have a history of sexual dysfunction and failed relationships. They tend to live alone and often relatively close to where the offence took place.

### Constructing an FBI profile

There are four main stages in the construction of an FBI profile:

- Data assimilation – the profiler reviews the evidence (crime scene photographs, pathology reports, etc.).
- Crime scene classification – as either organised or disorganised.
- Crime reconstruction – hypotheses in terms of sequence of events, behaviour of the victim, etc.
- Profile generation – hypotheses related to the likely offender, e.g. of demographic background, physical characteristics, behaviour, etc.

**Apply it**      **Concepts: Ted Bundy – the classic 'organised' killer?**

Theodore Robert 'Ted' Bundy is one of the United States' most notorious serial killers. During the 1970s, Bundy is known to have raped, tortured and brutally murdered over 30 women (though the actual figure may be much higher) across seven US states.

Handsome, charming and highly intelligent – traits he used to win the trust of his victims – Bundy attended the University of Washington and later, law school, where he excelled. While a student, Bundy fell in love with a wealthy young woman from California. Devastated by their subsequent breakup, many of Bundy's victims resembled his college girlfriend, they were attractive students with long, dark hair parted in the middle. His killings usually followed a gruesome pattern. He often raped his victims before beating them to death.

After escaping police custody twice, Bundy was executed by electric chair in 1989.

**Question**

To what extent does Bundy fit the profile of the organised offender?

Click on the link below to watch the last interview with Ted Bundy before his execution

[OTed Bundy - Last Interview - Hours Before His Execution - YouTube](#)