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# Scientific discipline

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**Potential competing interests:** Robert West undertakes consultancy and research and writes books in behavioural science.

*Formal ontological definition:* A human activity that involves systematically gathering and using data to develop, evaluate and revise explanatory and predictive models in order to increase knowledge and understanding of a topic of study.

*Comment:* A given scientific discipline (e.g., physics, communications science, meteorology, psychology and anthropology) is typically characterised both by the topic of study and the methods used to investigate it. Scientific disciplines can be subclasses of other scientific disciplines (e.g., particle physics is a subclass of physics) and they can overlap in their methods or topic of study (e.g., social psychology and sociology).