# FULL MASLOW ESSAY

Excerpts from the various Maslow essays are given in the textbook, but there are more extensive examples of the six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy here. As the levels increase, the highlighted text shows how to demonstrate the additional level in each case.

The essay is titled *‘To what extent does Maslow’s theory of human needs explain individuals’ motivation?’*

**WARNING: The same warning given in the text applies to the examples given below.**

**One word of caution about what follows: the portions of the essay written below have been written with just one purpose in mind – to give you, as a student, an illustration of what the different skills look like when put togetherin an essay.**

**The information contained in the essay is partially made up – i.e. may not be true.**

**DO NOT REPRODUCE ANY OF WHAT IS WRITTEN BELOW IN ANY ESSAY YOU WRITE: THERE IS CONTENT HERE WHICH IS COMPLETELY UNTRUE!**

## Level 1 – Knowledge

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs gives a number of levels to explain motivation.

Firstly, there are physiological needs – for example, food and drink and physical health. Secondly, there is safety and security, but Maslow said we are only motivated to fulfil all our safety needs when we have fulfilled our physiological ones. Thirdly, there is a sense of belonging with other people. Fourthly, we have esteem needs, and then finally, we are motivated to achieve our self-actualisation needs.

## Level 2 – Understanding/Comprehension

Maslow’s theory – called the Hierarchy of Needs – sets out a number of levels around which motivation takes place. The basic concept that Maslow had was to indicate that in order to reach the next level of motivation, the previous level would need to be satisfied.

The first level relates to physiological needs. These concern food and drink and physical health as well as sex and sleep. They are put at the bottom of the hierarchy because everyone will want to have these needs met. The second level relates to safety and security – which means we are secure in our situation, but we are only motivated to fulfil all our safety needs when we have fulfilled our physiological ones. The third level is a sense of belonging and community with other people. Again, Maslow said we are only motivated by this when our safety and physiological needs are fulfilled. Fourthly, we have esteem needs, where we get our sense of self-worth and value and then finally, we are motivated to achieve our self-actualisation needs.

## Level 3 – Application

Maslow’s theory – called the Hierarchy of Needs – sets out a number of levels around which motivation takes place. The basic concept that Maslow had was to indicate that in order to reach the next level of motivation, the previous level would need to be satisfied. Some examples are given below.

The first level relates to physiological needs. These are needs for food and drink and physical health as well as sex and sleep, so for example, when someone is struggling to find food, they will look hard for it. The second level relates to safety and security – which means we are secure in our situation, but we are only motivated to fulfil all our safety needs when we have fulfilled our physiological ones, so for example, someone will search for a safe place to live, once they are sure they have enough food to eat.

The third level is a sense of belonging and community with other people – for example, being part of a good team at work or feeling part of a group or a family. Again, Maslow said we are only motivated by this when our safety and physiological needs are fulfilled. Workers at Foxconn are strongly motivated by this, according to Purcell (2001). Fourthly, we have esteem needs, where we get our intrinsic sense of self-worth and personal value: someone having self-confidence will not need to seek more of that and so that need may be fulfilled, whereas someone who is seeking approval from others will always be doing so in order to develop that sense of self-esteem.

Finally, we are motivated to achieve our self-actualisation needs and a sense that anything is possible.

## Level 4 – Analysis

Maslow’s theory – called the Hierarchy of Needs – sets out a number of levels around which motivation takes place. The basic concept that Maslow had was to indicate that in order to reach the next level of motivation, the previous level would need to be satisfied. Some examples are given below.

The first level relates to physiological needs. These are needs for food and drink and physical health as well as sex and sleep, so for example, when someone is struggling to find food, they will look hard for it. This level was seen by Maslow as the most basic because without such biological needs being fulfilled, there would be no individual to motivate anyway (Johnson, 2003). The second level relates to safety and security – which means we are secure in our situation, but we are only motivated to fulfil all our safety needs when we have fulfilled our physiological ones, so for example someone will search for a safe place to live, once they are sure they have enough food to eat. This is because a feeling of contentment and personal security is seen by most employees at work as being less important than the search for food, or the need for sleep or drink etc. (McKenna, 2002).

The third level is a sense of belonging and community with other people – for example, being part of a good team at work or feeling part of a group or a family. Workers at Foxconn are strongly motivated by this, according to Purcell (2001). Again, Maslow said we are only motivated by this when our safety and physiological needs are fulfilled. Why is this need important? According to Maslow, this is because we have a human need to engage in activities with other people and to feel recognised and valued (Maslow, 1957).

Fourthly (and closely related to belonging needs), we have esteem needs, where we get our intrinsic sense of self-worth, self-identity and personal value: someone having self-confidence will not need to seek more of that and so that need may be fulfilled, whereas someone who is seeking approval from others will always be doing so in order to develop that sense of self-esteem. Again, this is necessary because without that sense of value, we may not believe that achieving our full potential is possible (or rather that we have little potential anyway). Recognition from others also acts as a catalyst for even greater achievements (Marsden, 2010).

Once we have that sense of self-esteem, Maslow argued that we are motivated to fulfill our self-actualisation needs and a sense that anything is possible, thus achieving all that we wish to and being ‘self-actualised’. This means that all that we set out to achieve has been completed. Of course, rarely do individuals achieve this, but recognising that there is more to do and that there is a challenge and personal reward in stretching further can drive behaviour in a very productive manner.

## Level 5 – Synthesis

Maslow’s theory – called the Hierarchy of Needs – sets out a number of levels around which motivation takes place. The basic concept that Maslow had was to indicate that in order to reach the next level of motivation, the previous level would need to be satisfied. Some examples are given below.

The first level relates to physiological needs. These are needs for food and drink and physical health as well as sex and sleep, so for example, when someone is struggling to find food, they will look hard for it. This level was seen by Maslow as the most basic because without such biological needs being fulfilled, there would be no individual to motivate anyway (Johnson, 2003). It could be possible that certain physiological needs may be more important at different times and some individuals seem to be able to need less sleep than others, of course, and some may wish to abstain from fulfilling certain physiological needs from time to time (e.g. Ramadan).

The second level relates to safety and security – which means we are secure in our situation, but according to Maslow, we are only motivated to fulfil all our safety needs when we have fulfilled our physiological ones, so for example, someone will search for a safe place to live, once they are sure they have enough food to eat. This is because a feeling of contentment and personal security is seen by most employees at work as being less important than the search for food, or need for sleep or drink etc. (McKenna, 2002). The importance or nature of this need may vary in the same way that physiological needs may vary: job security may be seen as irrelevant to someone whose need for a place to stay is as much of an issue. It is also possible that individuals may feel content in certain aspects of their lives (e.g. at home) but insecure in other situations (e.g. at work): in such a situation, the individual might seek another job, perhaps, but this issue also applies to the third need – that of belonging.

The value of such ideas is enhanced by recognising that Herzberg’s (1959) findings include some similar ideas. The fact that safety is included in Herzberg’s model – and even the naming by Herzberg of such ideas as ‘hygiene’ factors – goes some way to showing that such factors do indeed have an impact on motivation. It is possible to then argue that organisational cultures which seem to place less emphasis on safety might be seen as struggling to motivate their employees.

Maslow’s third need was a sense of belonging and community with other people – for example, being part of a good team at work or feeling part of a group or a family. Workers at Foxconn are strongly motivated by this, according to Purcell (2001). Again, Maslow said we are only motivated by this when our safety and physiological needs are fulfilled. Why is this need important? According to Maslow, this is because we have a human need to engage in activities with other people and to feel recognised and valued (Maslow, 1957). Taking the example given above, it is possible to imagine a situation where an individual might feel more of a sense of belonging in certain situations than in others, and so may prioritise their activities according to where they feel the highest needs are met – i.e. would start to enjoy work less and spend more time at home. Certainly, Elton Mayo’s work in the 1930s with the Hawthorne Studies indicated that group identity and a sense of belonging was a big issue for industrial psychologists, but it is true that personality theory also suggests that some are more or less inclined to need the company of others in life generally.

Fourthly (and closely related to belonging needs), we have esteem needs, where we get our intrinsic sense of self-worth, self-identity and personal value: someone having self-confidence will not need to seek more of that and so that need may be fulfilled whereas someone who is seeking approval from others will always be doing so in order to develop that sense of self-esteem. Again, this is necessary because without that sense of value, we may not believe that achieving our full potential is possible (or rather that we have little potential anyway). Recognition from others also acts as a catalyst for even greater achievements (Marsden, 2010).

Some suggest (Stephens, 1995) that you could have a sense of self-esteem without fulfilling your belonging needs – i.e. through tackling problems on your own – or even have self-esteem without fulfilling the lower-order needs (physiological or safety).

Maslow’s argument was that once we have that sense of self-esteem, we are motivated to fulfill our self-actualisation needs and a sense that anything is possible, thus achieving all that we wish to and being ‘self-actualised’. This means that all that we set out to achieve has been completed. Of course, rarely do individuals achieve this, but recognising that there is more to do and that there is a challenge and personal reward in stretching further can drive behaviour in a very productive manner. In many ways, this is a theoretical concept and the idea is often proposed that we never become fully ‘self-actualised’: if we did, there would be little which would motivate us to undertake further activity.

## Level 6 – Evaluation

Maslow’s theory – called the Hierarchy of Needs – sets out a number of levels around which motivation takes place. The basic concept that Maslow had was to indicate that in order to reach the next level of motivation, the previous level would need to be satisfied. Some examples are given below.

The first level relates to physiological needs. These are needs for food and drink and physical health as well as sex and sleep, so for example, when someone is struggling to find food, they will look hard for it. This level was seen by Maslow as the most basic because without such biological needs being fulfilled, there would be no individual to motivate anyway (Johnson, 2003). It could be possible that certain physiological needs may be more important at different times and some individuals seem to be able to need less sleep than others, of course, and some may wish to abstain from fulfilling certain physiological needs from time to time (e.g. Ramadan).

The second level relates to safety and security – which means we are secure in our situation, but according to Maslow, we are only motivated to fulfil all our safety needs when we have fulfilled our physiological ones, so for example, someone will search for a safe place to live, once they are sure they have enough food to eat. This is because a feeling of contentment and personal security is seen by most employees at work as being less important than the search for food, or need for sleep or drink etc. (McKenna, 2002). The importance or nature of this need may vary in the same way that physiological needs may vary: job security may be seen as irrelevant to someone whose need for a place to stay is as much of an issue. It is also possible that individuals may feel content in certain aspects of their lives (e.g. at home) but insecure in other situations (e.g. at work): in such a situation, the individual might seek another job, perhaps, but this issue also applies to the third need – that of belonging.

The value of such ideas is enhanced by recognising that Herzberg’s (1959) findings include some similar ideas. Of course, there has been criticism of Herzberg’s model in the same way that there has been criticism of Maslow’s ideas, but the fact that safety – and even the naming by Herzberg of such ideas as ‘hygiene’ factors – goes some way to showing that such factors do indeed have an impact on motivation. It is possible to then argue that organisational cultures which seem to place less emphasis on safety might be seen as struggling to motivate their employees.

Of course, cross-cultural research into collectivism (Hofstede, 1979) casts some doubt over the extent to which Maslow’s findings regarding the first two layers of the hierarchy can be seen as valid. There are some concerns about the extent to which his research was separated from the time and place where the research has been done. Such research suggests, for example, that in certain collectivist societies, the needs of the country might come before the needs of any one particular individual (Thompson, 2008). Certain professions (e.g. army, fire) clearly ask individuals to put themselves into potentially dangerous situations, so whilst Maslow’s ideas seem to have some relevance in certain places, there are times and situations where other factors seem to be at work.

Maslow’s third need was a sense of belonging and community with other people – for example, being part of a good team at work or feeling part of a group or a family. Workers at Foxconn are strongly motivated by this, according to Purcell (2001). Again, Maslow said we are only motivated by this when our safety and physiological needs are fulfilled. Why is this need important? According to Maslow, this is because we have a human need to engage in activities with other people and to feel recognised and valued (Maslow, 1957). Taking the example given above, it is possible to imagine a situation where an individual might feel more of a sense of belonging in certain situations than in others, and so may prioritise their activities according to where they feel the highest needs are met – i.e. would start to enjoy work less and spend more time at home. Certainly, Elton Mayo’s work in the 1930s with the Hawthorne Studies indicated that group identity and a sense of belonging was a big issue for industrial psychologists, but it is true that personality theory also suggests that some are more or less inclined to need the company of others in life generally.

There is an argument (from studies on individual personality) which suggests that personality may play a part here, and notes that those with more introverted personalities may have less need to work with others. The counter argument, of course, is that most of those who rise to success in organisations seem to have extrovert tendencies. This produces a serious dilemma, though, since it is not easy to separate out those who do well because their personalities fit the motivational strategies of an organisation, and those who do well because they are motivated individuals anyway.

Fourthly (and closely related to belonging needs), we have esteem needs, where we get our intrinsic sense of self-worth, self-identity and personal value: someone having self-confidence will not need to seek more of that and so that need may be fulfilled whereas someone who is seeking approval from others will always be doing so in order to develop that sense of self-esteem. Again, this is necessary because without that sense of value, we may not believe that achieving our full potential is possible (or rather that we have little potential anyway). Recognition from others also acts as a catalyst for even greater achievements (Marsden, 2010).

Some suggest (Stephens, 1995) that you could have a sense of self-esteem without fulfilling your belonging needs – i.e. through tackling problems on your own – or even have self-esteem without fulfilling the lower-order needs (physiological or safety). The work that has been done in this area, however, has typically used sample sizes and methodologies that don’t seem to allow for a direct comparison with these aspects of Maslow’s original work. Part of the challenge in this area, though, is that any comparable research has looked at specific elements of the model, rather than the model as a whole, and this causes problems when seeking to clarify whether the hierarchical elements of Maslow’s ideas can be said to exist today.

Maslow’s argument was that once we have that sense of self-esteem, we are motivated to fulfill our self-actualisation needs and a sense that anything is possible, thus achieving all that we wish to and being ‘self-actualised’. This means that all that we set out to achieve has been completed. Of course, rarely do individuals achieve this, but recognising that there is more to do and that there is a challenge and personal reward in stretching further can drive behaviour in a very productive manner. In many ways, this is a theoretical concept and the idea is often proposed that we never become fully ‘self-actualised’: if we did, there would be little which would motivate us to undertake further activity.