

We all have things we want. Maybe you have a favorite food that you love and wish you could eat everyday. If you were unable to eat that food every day, you would still survive. However, you could not go entirely without food! That's because food is something we all need to survive. All humans have basic needs, such as food and water, that we must have for our survival. Some other things, such as candy or soda pop, are not necessary for survival. These things are called wants. What are some of your wants and needs?

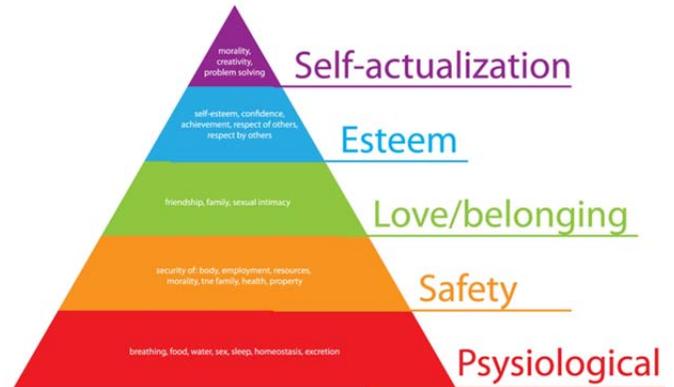
The Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) was an American psychologist. A psychologist studies how the mind works and why people behave in certain ways. Maslow is best known for his theory called the Hierarchy of Needs. His theory describes how human beings are motivated by basic needs that must be met for an individual to survive and grow. Maslow concentrated on Westerners living in the 1900s, focusing on what motivates them and helps them develop fulfilling lives.

His theories have been used by psychologists to help people achieve personal growth. Maslow's theories are even used in schools to help teachers understand how students learn. Maslow's theories also shed light on the way that ancient civilizations developed. In many ways, Maslow's theories of an individual's hierarchy of needs match the key steps in the development of ancient agricultural civilizations.

Maslow identified five levels of human needs, ranging from the basic to the complex. According to Maslow, the most basic needs are physiological, or biological: food, water, sleep, and oxygen. These basic needs have to be met before the next level can be achieved. Maslow identified that next level as safety. Once an individual's biological needs are met, he or she can then focus on finding a reliable food source, as well as a place to live that is safe and free of danger.

Maslow believed that a person must achieve basic biological and safety needs in order to move to the next level of belongingness and love needs. This level concerns a person's need to form close bonds with other people, such as with



This pyramid shows Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

family members and friends. It can also include the need to belong to a larger group, such as one's family, clan, or ethnic group.

Maslow called the next level esteem needs. Once a person reaches this level, they have a strong sense of self-worth, and they also know that they are valued and loved by others. According to Maslow, a person needs to feel that he or she has a place and a sense of belonging within a community.

The final stage of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is what he called self-actualization. At this level, a person is able to achieve his or her full potential as a human. It is important to note that a person cannot reach this stage if he or she has not met the requirements at each of the stages that come before. Therefore, if a student comes to school hungry, that student may have a hard time doing well on a test. A person cannot realize, or achieve, his or her potential if basic biological and psychological needs are not met.

The Development of Early Agricultural Societies

Understanding Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can help us understand more about how humans changed and developed. From archaeological evidence, scientists believe that humans first developed agriculture around 9000 BCE. The area that we now call the Middle East, including Syria, Lebanon, and Israel, is probably where people first planted seeds to grow food.

The people who became the first farmers were previously hunters and gatherers. They had no permanent, dependable source of food. Instead, they lived in small groups, probably family groups made up of between 20 and 30 people. They followed wild herds and ate wild plants. Somewhere around 9000 BCE, these early people found areas in the Middle East that had abundant wild food. They settled down into villages and harvested the wild crops, especially grains such as wheat and barley. They ate what they needed and saved the seeds to plant for next year's harvest. They were able to grow enough food to eat and to store.

These early people also learned to domesticate, or tame, the wild animals they once followed. By taming the wild sheep, goats, and other animals, they could have a consistent source of high-protein food, especially meat and milk. With their food supply secure, their population grew. As the population grew, the villages grew into cities. People began to interact with others beyond their own families or clans.

As the early farmers improved their agricultural practices, they increased the amount of each year's harvest. People cut back on the amount of time they spent farming as a result of a steady supply of food. They were free to explore new and different jobs and interests. Some became builders or merchants. Others became artists or religious leaders. This was the beginning of specialization, in which people worked different types of jobs and traded goods and services. The value of those goods and services led to the development of social classes, or the different levels of people in society.

Maslow's Hierarchy and the Ancient Farmers of the Middle East

In many ways, Maslow's theories of human needs and the development of early agricultural societies seem very similar. For example, at its most basic level, Maslow states that people need their biological needs met first. He recognized that humans need a steady, secure food supply, and that is what those earliest farmers provided. By growing food, the early agriculturalists, or farmers, were fulfilling that basic need for food.

As the population grew, early farmers created permanent settlements and constructed homes for themselves. They built structures to hold their grains and house their animals. These provided the safety and security that Maslow outlined as the second most basic need of people. As the settlements grew, the people often built walls around their cities to protect them from hostile outsiders.

Maslow's next need, to form close bonds with others, had most likely been achieved before the ancient hunter-gatherers became farmers. These people had built close family ties before they settled and became farmers. However, once they built permanent homes, their social groups expanded. As jobs became specialized, people organized into social classes, groups with which individuals identified. Once the villages and city-states formed, people's circle of acquaintances grew, too. They developed relationships with people outside of their families.



The ancient Sumerians developed a form of writing called cuneiform. Where do you think an intellectual development such as writing falls within the Hierarchy of Needs?

This expanded people's sense of who they were and where they belonged within society, which fulfilled Maslow's next requirement. In an early agricultural society, people developed a sense of who they were based on several factors. This could include their place within their family, their family's profession, and their family's place within the existing social structures.

The final stage in Maslow's hierarchy, self-actualization, refers to a person doing the best that he or she can do, or achieving his or her potential. Because there was a steady supply of food, some people in early agricultural societies went beyond meeting their basic needs to become builders, artists, and social leaders. People, no longer concerned with day-to-day survival and protection, could also explore and create. Early people advanced humankind by developing religion, studying astronomy, inventing writing, creating calendars, and planning cities. These advances, achieved by human potential, led to the birth of civilization.

Why do you think that Maslow's theories, rooted in Western culture of the 1900s, are also reflected in the development of early agricultural societies? Maybe it is because Maslow focused on key elements of what it means to be human. It may be that early humans, although they lived in very different times, were not so very different from people today.

After reading the passage, answer the following questions:

- 1.** How is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs arranged?
 - A.** from individual to group needs
 - B.** from scientific to cultural needs
 - C.** from basic to complex needs
 - D.** from psychological to medical needs

- 2.** What does Maslow outline as our biological needs?
 - A.** food, water, sleep, and oxygen
 - B.** food, water, and shelter
 - C.** food, water, family, and friends
 - D.** family and well-paying jobs

- 3.** What are some of the main achievements of early agricultural societies?
 - A.** They domesticated wild plants and animals.
 - B.** They relied on gathering food to feed people.
 - C.** They moved from location to location, depending on the season.
 - D.** They reached the top level of the Hierarchy of Needs before reaching any other level.

- 4.** Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a way of studying how humans can advance. How does the hierarchy apply to your life today? Use details from the passage to explain how each of the levels of the hierarchy relates to your life.