

# Maslow's pyramid of needs

June 11, 2019

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is probably the world's most famous framework to [explain human motivation](#). As a refresher: It would suggest that you were driven to open this newsletter by a "higher level" need to achieve and build esteem, in this case, by picking up a bit of knowledge. This indicates that, at the moment, your "lower level" needs for food and safety are sated, as are your desires for love and belonging, leaving you free to gaze higher, toward "self-actualization."

Since the 1950s, when Maslow's hierarchy blew up, the framework has been associated with a rainbow-hued pyramid. Textbooks carried this graphic for years, and some still do, even though most researchers who tested Maslow's theory have found it unscientific. Though [recent evidence](#) from a large study was mixed, most studies have found the needs Maslow identified are not universal, and our requirements are not pursued in an ascending, linear fashion. One doesn't need to live in a safe environment to seek meaning and creativity. Hunger doesn't render love and belonging unnecessary.

Then why do we still refer to Maslow's pioneering hierarchy of needs, named for the late Brooklyn-born psychologist Abraham Maslow, as if it's a given truth? The visual punch of that easy-to-remember pyramid, in fact, seems to have a lot to do with its longevity, but [some scholars now say](#) that Maslow probably didn't even create it, and many feel it fails to capture the nuances of Maslow's more complex theories. Let's examine all the angles.