

AAMC PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL, AND BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF BEHAVIOR (PS) FULL- LENGTH (FL) 3 PRACTICE TEST (SAMPLE) STUDY GUIDE



SAMPLE STUDY GUIDE WITH LIMITED QUESTIONS

**VISIT US ONLINE FOR
THE FULL VERSION STUDY GUIDE**

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Table of Contents

Copyright	1
Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
How to Use This Guide	4
Questions	5
Answers	8
Explanations	10
Next Steps	16

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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 – 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

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- 1. What does empathy allow individuals to do?**
 - A. Make logical decisions
 - B. Understand and share the feelings of others
 - C. Regulate their own emotions
 - D. Create emotional distance
- 2. How does cognitive-behavioral therapy assist individuals in emotional regulation?**
 - A. By promoting mindfulness techniques
 - B. By emphasizing the importance of group therapy
 - C. By changing negative thought patterns
 - D. By using medication to balance emotions
- 3. How might one define personal potential in the context of self-actualization?**
 - A. Only in terms of academic achievements
 - B. As the ability to fulfill societal expectations
 - C. As the realization and pursuit of personal growth
 - D. By achieving financial independence
- 4. Which is the most likely reason the hippocampus is more vulnerable to neuronal death during global ischemia?**
 - A. Higher action potential magnitudes in hippocampal neurons
 - B. More NMDA receptors present in hippocampal neurons
 - C. More negative postsynaptic potentials in hippocampal neurons
 - D. Faster neurotransmitter diffusion in hippocampal synapses
- 5. What does "latent learning" involve?**
 - A. The acquisition of knowledge through direct reinforcement
 - B. Learning that occurs without immediate reinforcement
 - C. Behavior that is modified through trial and error
 - D. Knowledge that is expressed immediately after acquisition

- 6. In social psychology, what does discrimination refer to?**
- A. Fair treatment based on merit
 - B. Unfair treatment based on social group membership
 - C. Equal treatment for all individuals
 - D. Favoritism toward majority groups
- 7. What are defense mechanisms in psychology?**
- A. Conscious strategies to manage social interactions
 - B. Unconscious strategies to cope with anxiety or discomfort
 - C. Techniques for effective communication
 - D. Methods to enhance self-awareness
- 8. Which neurotransmitter is implicated in the findings related to aggression and hunger in a study?**
- A. Acetylcholine
 - B. GABA
 - C. Endorphins
 - D. Serotonin
- 9. What influences does Zimbardo's research highlight that can alter behavior?**
- A. Only intrinsic personality qualities
 - B. Strict societal roles
 - C. Situational and environmental factors
 - D. Cultural heritage
- 10. What was the effect of using individual therapy sessions on the potential influence of observational learning?**
- A. It potentially increased the impact of observational learning
 - B. It minimized the influence of observational learning
 - C. It had no impact on learning processes
 - D. It enhanced the effects of group dynamics

Answers

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1. B
2. C
3. C
4. B
5. B
6. B
7. B
8. D
9. C
10. B

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Explanations

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1. What does empathy allow individuals to do?

- A. Make logical decisions
- B. Understand and share the feelings of others**
- C. Regulate their own emotions
- D. Create emotional distance

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, which is essential for fostering social connections and relationships. When individuals practice empathy, they can recognize emotional states in others, enabling them to respond appropriately and supportively. This capacity to connect emotionally plays a significant role in various areas such as communication, conflict resolution, and caregiving. The other options do not encapsulate the essence of empathy. While making logical decisions is valuable, it does not relate directly to the emotional understanding that empathy provides. Similarly, regulating one's own emotions is a different skill that may be influenced by empathic understanding but does not represent what empathy itself allows individuals to do. Lastly, creating emotional distance contrasts with the concept of empathy, as it implies detachment rather than connection to another's emotional experience. Thus, the correct answer emphasizes the core function of empathy in enhancing interpersonal understanding and emotional resonance.

2. How does cognitive-behavioral therapy assist individuals in emotional regulation?

- A. By promoting mindfulness techniques
- B. By emphasizing the importance of group therapy
- C. By changing negative thought patterns**
- D. By using medication to balance emotions

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) assists individuals in emotional regulation primarily by changing negative thought patterns. The essence of CBT is based on the understanding that our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interconnected. When individuals experience negative emotions, such as anxiety or depression, these feelings are often fueled by distorted or unhelpful thought patterns. CBT helps individuals identify and challenge these negative thoughts, replacing them with more balanced and rational thinking. This restructuring of thought patterns is crucial for emotional regulation, as it can lead to healthier emotional responses and behaviors. For instance, by recognizing a negative thought like "I will fail at everything" and challenging it to become "I may struggle, but I can succeed with effort," individuals can reduce feelings of hopelessness and anxiety. Through such changes in cognition, CBT provides tools and strategies that empower individuals to manage their emotions more effectively, leading to improved mental well-being. Options that focus on mindfulness techniques, group therapy, or medication do not address the fundamental cognitive restructuring that is central to the effectiveness of CBT in regulating emotions. Mindfulness techniques are beneficial but are often part of complementary approaches rather than the primary mechanism of CBT itself. Similarly, group therapy may provide support but does not directly target cognitive restructuring. Medication may

3. How might one define personal potential in the context of self-actualization?

- A. Only in terms of academic achievements
- B. As the ability to fulfill societal expectations
- C. As the realization and pursuit of personal growth**
- D. By achieving financial independence

Personal potential, in the context of self-actualization, is best defined as the realization and pursuit of personal growth. Self-actualization is a key concept in psychology, particularly in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where it represents the desire for self-fulfillment and the ability to realize one's capabilities, talents, and ideals. This includes not only the pursuit of personal interests and passions but also the development of a deeper understanding of oneself and one's place in the world. In this framework, personal potential encompasses various dimensions of a person's life, including emotional, creative, and interpersonal aspects, rather than being limited to a single area such as academic success or financial status. Thus, recognizing personal potential involves ongoing self-discovery and the courage to pursue paths that lead to inner fulfillment and personal growth.

4. Which is the most likely reason the hippocampus is more vulnerable to neuronal death during global ischemia?

- A. Higher action potential magnitudes in hippocampal neurons
- B. More NMDA receptors present in hippocampal neurons**
- C. More negative postsynaptic potentials in hippocampal neurons
- D. Faster neurotransmitter diffusion in hippocampal synapses

The hippocampus is particularly vulnerable to neuronal death during global ischemia primarily because it has a higher concentration of NMDA (N-methyl-D-aspartate) receptors. NMDA receptors are a type of glutamate receptor that, when activated, allow calcium ions to flow into the neuron. During ischemic events, there is a lack of oxygen and glucose which affects cellular metabolism and leads to an imbalance in neurotransmitter levels. The excessive release of glutamate, combined with the heightened presence of NMDA receptors in the hippocampus, results in excessive calcium influx. This overload can trigger a series of intracellular processes that ultimately lead to neuronal death, highlighting the critical vulnerability of the hippocampus in ischemic conditions. In contrast, the other options do not directly account for the heightened vulnerability of the hippocampus during global ischemia. For instance, the first option regarding action potential magnitudes does not specifically relate to the mechanisms of damage during ischemia. Negative postsynaptic potentials or faster neurotransmitter diffusion would not contribute to the elevated risk of neuronal death in the same direct manner as the overactivation of NMDA receptors does during periods of glutamate excitotoxicity. Thus, the presence of more NMDA receptors is the most significant factor contributing to the hippocampus

5. What does "latent learning" involve?

- A. The acquisition of knowledge through direct reinforcement
- B. Learning that occurs without immediate reinforcement**
- C. Behavior that is modified through trial and error
- D. Knowledge that is expressed immediately after acquisition

Latent learning refers to a process in which knowledge is acquired without any immediate reinforcement or obvious behavioral change. This concept was notably explored by psychologist Edward Tolman in his experiments with rats navigating mazes. In these studies, rats demonstrated an understanding of the maze layout without receiving rewards during the learning process. When a reward was introduced later, these rats quickly showed their understanding by efficiently navigating the maze, indicating that they had indeed learned the route during the unrewarded trials. This process highlights that learning can happen in the absence of direct incentives and may not be immediately observable. Instead, latent learning suggests that such knowledge can be stored and utilized when the right conditions (like reinforcement) arise. In contrast, the other options focus on characteristics that either define learning with direct reinforcement or the immediate expression of knowledge, which do not align with the characteristics of latent learning.

6. In social psychology, what does discrimination refer to?

- A. Fair treatment based on merit
- B. Unfair treatment based on social group membership**
- C. Equal treatment for all individuals
- D. Favoritism toward majority groups

Discrimination in social psychology specifically refers to unfair treatment directed at individuals based on their membership in a particular social group. This often involves negative actions or attitudes that disadvantage individuals because of characteristics such as race, gender, age, or other social categorizations. Discrimination can manifest in various forms, including verbal abuse, exclusion, or systemic barriers to opportunities. The correct answer highlights that discrimination is inherently about unfair practices that adversely affect specific groups, distinguishing it from concepts like equality or merit-based treatment. The other choices either imply fairness or equal treatment, which are antithetical to the notion of discrimination itself.

7. What are defense mechanisms in psychology?

- A. Conscious strategies to manage social interactions
- B. Unconscious strategies to cope with anxiety or discomfort**
- C. Techniques for effective communication
- D. Methods to enhance self-awareness

Defense mechanisms in psychology refer to unconscious strategies that individuals use to cope with anxiety or discomfort arising from internal conflicts or external stressors. These mechanisms serve to protect the individual from emotional pain, shame, guilt, or anxiety by distorting or denying reality in some way. They operate below the level of conscious awareness, meaning the individual is generally unaware that they are employing these strategies. For instance, someone who feels anxious about a stressful situation may engage in rationalization, thereby justifying their behavior in a way that feels more comfortable. Similarly, someone who experiences intrusive memories related to trauma might utilize repression to keep these memories out of conscious awareness. Overall, defense mechanisms are critical for emotional regulation and maintaining psychological equilibrium, allowing individuals to navigate challenging emotions and situations without becoming overwhelmed.

8. Which neurotransmitter is implicated in the findings related to aggression and hunger in a study?

- A. Acetylcholine
- B. GABA
- C. Endorphins
- D. Serotonin**

The neurotransmitter that is particularly implicated in the regulation of aggression and hunger is serotonin. Research has shown that serotonin plays a crucial role in mood and behavior. Low levels of serotonin have been associated with increased aggression and impulsivity, as well as alterations in appetite and food cravings. This suggests that serotonin not only affects our emotional state but also has significant influence over our eating behaviors, linking it closely to hunger as well. By modulating the activity of various brain regions responsible for emotion and appetite regulation, serotonin emerges as a key player in understanding the relationship between aggression and hunger. Its role in these behaviors is supported by various neurobiological studies, highlighting the importance of maintaining balanced serotonin levels for emotional regulation and healthy eating habits.

9. What influences does Zimbardo's research highlight that can alter behavior?

- A. Only intrinsic personality qualities
- B. Strict societal roles
- C. Situational and environmental factors**
- D. Cultural heritage

Zimbardo's research, particularly the Stanford prison experiment, emphasizes the significant impact that situational and environmental factors have on behavior. In his study, participants adopted roles as guards and prisoners, demonstrating how power dynamics and the context of a simulated prison environment could lead individuals to act in ways that were inconsistent with their personal values and personalities. This highlights the idea that behavior is not solely dictated by intrinsic personality traits but can be heavily influenced by the surrounding circumstances and social context. Zimbardo's findings suggest that when placed in an environment that promotes certain expectations and roles, individuals may conform to those roles, often to an extreme degree. This underpins the importance of understanding behaviors within the larger framework of social psychology, where situational factors—such as authority, group dynamics, and dehumanization—can significantly alter an individual's actions. The incorrect options do not capture the breadth of Zimbardo's findings; focusing solely on intrinsic personality qualities or strict societal roles overlooks the complexity of how situational influences can lead to behavior changes. Additionally, while cultural heritage may shape some aspects of behavior, it does not specifically address the situational and environmental contexts that Zimbardo's research aimed to illuminate.

10. What was the effect of using individual therapy sessions on the potential influence of observational learning?

- A. It potentially increased the impact of observational learning
- B. It minimized the influence of observational learning**
- C. It had no impact on learning processes
- D. It enhanced the effects of group dynamics

Using individual therapy sessions minimizes the influence of observational learning because this format provides a setting where the participant's learning and growth are primarily based on their personal experiences and therapeutic relationship with the therapist. In individual therapy, the focus shifts to the individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, which allows for self-reflection and personal insight. Observational learning, a concept central to social learning theory, relies on watching and imitating others. In an individual therapy setting, clients do not benefit from observing others in a shared environment where they could see and imitate behaviors, as they would in group therapy. Therefore, the individual nature of these sessions means that opportunities for learning through observation are limited, as individuals are not watching peers and are not in a context that promotes learning from the experiences of others. This perspective highlights the unique dynamics of individual therapy compared to group settings, where observational learning can play a significant role in shaping behavior through the modeling of others.

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Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://aamcpsfl3.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!

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