

AAMC Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior (PS) Full-Length (FL) 5 Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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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 effect refers to changes in participants' behavior when they are aware of being observed?**
 - A. Hawthorne effect**
 - B. Confirmation bias**
 - C. Self-serving bias**
 - D. Demand characteristics**

- 2. Which processing type suggests careful attention to message content and quality?**
 - A. Central route processing**
 - B. Peripheral route processing**
 - C. Automatic processing**
 - D. Cursory processing**

- 3. Which combination of theories aligns with the life course approach?**
 - A. Growth model and decline model**
 - B. Potentiator model and protective model**
 - C. Predictive model and correlational model**
 - D. Behavioral model and situational model**

- 4. Intragenerational mobility primarily focuses on which aspect of social mobility?**
 - A. The social status of families over generations**
 - B. The movement of individuals within their own lifetime**
 - C. Changes in wealth distribution among various countries**
 - D. The static nature of one's societal position**

- 5. What does the term 'medicalization' refer to in psychological and social contexts?**
 - A. The classification of health conditions**
 - B. The recategorization of conditions as medical issues**
 - C. The promotion of wellness initiatives**
 - D. The improvement of public health standards**

- 6. What term describes the immediate, very brief recording of sensory information?**
- A. Short-term memory**
 - B. Sensory memory**
 - C. Long-term memory**
 - D. Working memory**
- 7. If social facilitation occurs in a study, what is the expected outcome for participants?**
- A. Worse performance when alone**
 - B. No change in performance**
 - C. Improved performance with others**
 - D. Lower motivation in groups**
- 8. What defense mechanism is the patient most likely using when expressing excessive admiration for a partner while feeling envy?**
- A. Denial**
 - B. Projection**
 - C. Reaction formation**
 - D. Displacement**
- 9. Suburbanization primarily involves the movement of which group of residents?**
- A. Low-income residents remaining in urban areas**
 - B. Middle-class residents moving to suburbs**
 - C. High-income professionals relocating to urban centers**
 - D. Immigrants settling in urban neighborhoods**
- 10. Which factor is most likely to hinder intragenerational mobility?**
- A. Job training and development programs**
 - B. A lack of access to quality education and resources**
 - C. Community support networks**
 - D. Generational wealth and inherited positions**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What effect refers to changes in participants' behavior when they are aware of being observed?

- A. Hawthorne effect**
- B. Confirmation bias**
- C. Self-serving bias**
- D. Demand characteristics**

The Hawthorne effect refers to the phenomenon where individuals alter their behavior in response to being observed. This effect was famously studied during experiments at the Hawthorne Works factory in the early 20th century, where researchers found that workers changed their productivity levels when they knew they were part of an experiment, regardless of the specific changes made to their working conditions. The key aspect of the Hawthorne effect is the awareness of observation, leading participants to behave differently than they normally would. In contrast, confirmation bias involves the tendency to search for, interpret, and remember information that confirms one's preexisting beliefs, while self-serving bias describes a habit where individuals attribute positive outcomes to their own actions and negative outcomes to external factors. Demand characteristics refer to cues within an experimental setting that inform participants about what behavior is expected, potentially leading them to respond in a manner they believe aligns with those expectations. While demand characteristics relate to behavior influenced by perceived expectations, the specific influence of being aware of observation is best characterized by the Hawthorne effect.

2. Which processing type suggests careful attention to message content and quality?

- A. Central route processing**
- B. Peripheral route processing**
- C. Automatic processing**
- D. Cursory processing**

Central route processing is a concept derived from the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion, which posits that individuals can be influenced by a message through two distinct pathways: the central route and the peripheral route. Central route processing involves a high level of cognitive engagement, where individuals focus intently on the content of the message, critically analyzing its arguments and evidence. This careful attention typically leads to more enduring attitude change because it requires thoughtful consideration and a thorough evaluation of the message's validity. In contrast, peripheral route processing occurs when individuals respond to superficial cues rather than the message's actual content. This could include factors like the attractiveness of the speaker or emotional appeal, leading to temporary attitude changes. Other options, such as automatic processing and cursory processing, suggest different levels of attentiveness and engagement that are not as focused on the quality of the content in the same way that central route processing is. Therefore, the emphasis on careful attention to message content and quality is what makes central route processing the correct answer in this context.

3. Which combination of theories aligns with the life course approach?

- A. Growth model and decline model
- B. Potentiator model and protective model**
- C. Predictive model and correlational model
- D. Behavioral model and situational model

The life course approach focuses on understanding how various factors, including social, economic, and cultural influences, shape individuals' lives over time. It emphasizes that development is not just a linear trajectory but involves complex interactions across different life stages. The combination of the potentiator model and the protective model aligns well with this life course perspective. The potentiator model suggests that certain factors can enhance or amplify the potential for certain life outcomes based on earlier experiences. In contrast, the protective model highlights factors that can buffer individuals against negative outcomes, promoting resilience. Together, these models encapsulate the idea that experiences and circumstances throughout a person's life can affect their trajectory, well-being, and the challenges they face. This dynamic interplay of factors is a core element of the life course approach, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of individual development. The other combinations do not adequately capture the multifaceted and interrelated nature of experiences over time as effectively as the potentiator and protective models do.

4. Intragenerational mobility primarily focuses on which aspect of social mobility?

- A. The social status of families over generations
- B. The movement of individuals within their own lifetime**
- C. Changes in wealth distribution among various countries
- D. The static nature of one's societal position

Intragenerational mobility refers to the changes in an individual's social status within their own lifetime. This concept emphasizes how a person's socioeconomic position can fluctuate due to factors such as education, employment opportunities, changes in income, or other life circumstances that impact their status. The focus is on the dynamics of an individual's experience, capturing how they may move up or down the social hierarchy as a result of personal decisions or external circumstances encountered throughout their life. This understanding is essential, as it illustrates how individuals might experience different levels of success, wealth, or social standing at various points in their lives, regardless of the status of their family lineage. Consequently, while intergenerational mobility looks at how social status changes between different generations of families, intragenerational mobility is concerned solely with an individual's journey and transitions.

5. What does the term 'medicalization' refer to in psychological and social contexts?

- A. The classification of health conditions
- B. The recategorization of conditions as medical issues**
- C. The promotion of wellness initiatives
- D. The improvement of public health standards

The term 'medicalization' refers to the recategorization of conditions as medical issues, indicating that certain behaviors, experiences, or conditions that may have previously been understood in non-medical terms are now viewed within a medical framework. This shift often involves defining various social or psychological issues as diseases or disorders that require medical treatment or intervention. By reclassifying these conditions, the medical community may demand therapeutic or pharmaceutical responses, effectively changing the societal perception of certain behaviors or states of being. For example, conditions such as anxiety or fatigue could be seen not just as challenges to be managed through lifestyle changes but as disorders that necessitate clinical diagnosis and treatment. This process impacts how individuals understand their own experiences and the resources available to them for addressing those conditions. While the classification of health conditions, promotion of wellness initiatives, and improvement of public health standards are important in their own right, they do not capture the essence of medicalization, which focuses specifically on the transformation of perceptions and treatments of various issues into medical concerns.

6. What term describes the immediate, very brief recording of sensory information?

- A. Short-term memory
- B. Sensory memory**
- C. Long-term memory
- D. Working memory

The term that describes the immediate, very brief recording of sensory information is sensory memory. Sensory memory acts as a short-lived storage system that holds vast amounts of sensory stimuli for a few seconds at most, capturing everything we perceive from our environment, such as sights, sounds, and smells. This initial stage of memory allows the brain to process and interpret sensory input before it either fades away or moves on to further stages of memory formation, such as short-term memory or long-term memory. Sensory memory includes iconic memory, which pertains to visual stimuli, and echoic memory, which relates to auditory stimuli, each retaining information just long enough for the brain to focus on what is important. In this context, options related to longer-term processes, such as short-term memory, long-term memory, and working memory, do not pertain to the immediate and fleeting nature of sensory memory. Each of those other types serves different functions and retains information for longer durations or in different cognitive contexts.

7. If social facilitation occurs in a study, what is the expected outcome for participants?

- A. Worse performance when alone**
- B. No change in performance**
- C. Improved performance with others**
- D. Lower motivation in groups**

When social facilitation occurs, it typically leads to improved performance on tasks in the presence of others. This phenomenon suggests that when individuals are observed or evaluated by others, particularly in simple or well-learned tasks, they are likely to perform better compared to when they are working alone. The presence of an audience can enhance arousal and motivation, which can drive individuals to perform at a higher level. This effect has been supported by various studies demonstrating that the presence of peers can elevate performance in tasks that individuals are already comfortable with. It's important to note, however, that social facilitation does not necessarily apply to all performance situations. For complex or unfamiliar tasks, the presence of others may actually hinder performance. In this context, the expected outcome aligning with social facilitation is indeed improved performance with others, as individuals tend to thrive under observation during tasks they are confident in executing.

8. What defense mechanism is the patient most likely using when expressing excessive admiration for a partner while feeling envy?

- A. Denial**
- B. Projection**
- C. Reaction formation**
- D. Displacement**

The scenario describes a situation in which a patient expresses excessive admiration for a partner while actually feeling envy towards them. This behavior aligns with reaction formation, a defense mechanism in which an individual transforms an uncomfortable or unwanted feeling into its opposite. In this case, rather than openly acknowledging feelings of envy—an emotion that might lead to conflict or discomfort—the patient compensates by excessively admiring the partner. Reaction formation occurs when a person feels emotions that are socially unacceptable or involve conflict, so they express behaviors that are contrary to those feelings. By expressing admiration rather than envy, the patient attempts to suppress the negative emotion and project a more socially acceptable attitude. This mechanism helps the individual manage feelings of jealousy or insecurity without having to confront them directly.

9. Suburbanization primarily involves the movement of which group of residents?

- A. Low-income residents remaining in urban areas**
- B. Middle-class residents moving to suburbs**
- C. High-income professionals relocating to urban centers**
- D. Immigrants settling in urban neighborhoods**

Suburbanization primarily involves middle-class residents moving to suburbs due to various factors, including the desire for larger living spaces, better housing, and perceived improvements in quality of life. This trend often arises from urban to suburban migration, where individuals or families seek a quieter environment, access to better schools, and safer neighborhoods, which are often associated with suburban areas. The economic ability of middle-class individuals to purchase or rent homes in suburban areas plays a significant role in this movement. As urban areas become more congested and housing prices rise, many middle-class families opt to relocate to the suburbs where they can afford more space and amenities, thus contributing to the development and expansion of suburban communities. In this context, it's important to understand the dynamics influencing this migration, including economic factors, social mobility, and the desirability of suburban living, which collectively define the suburbanization phenomenon.

10. Which factor is most likely to hinder intragenerational mobility?

- A. Job training and development programs**
- B. A lack of access to quality education and resources**
- C. Community support networks**
- D. Generational wealth and inherited positions**

A lack of access to quality education and resources is indeed a significant factor that can hinder intragenerational mobility. Intragenerational mobility refers to the changes in an individual's social or economic status within their own lifetime. Access to quality education is crucial because it equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and qualifications necessary to improve their job prospects and economic circumstances. Without quality education, individuals may find themselves stuck in low-paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement. Resources such as mentorship programs, professional networks, and financial support for further education also play essential roles in enabling mobility. When access to these resources is lacking, barriers to success can be reinforced, leading to stagnation of one's social or economic status. Other factors like job training and development programs or community support networks can facilitate mobility, while generational wealth may provide advantages that can lead to higher initial socioeconomic status but does not impede movement within one's own lifetime. Thus, limited educational opportunities and resources create significant hurdles that limit a person's potential for upward mobility.

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://aamcpsfl5.examzify.com>

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

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