

# AP Gov - Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) Cases 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. Chevron v. NRDC concerns which aspect of administrative law?**
  - A. Deference to agency interpretations of ambiguous statutes**
  - B. Judicial review limits**
  - C. Administrative procedures requirement**
  - D. Rulemaking timelines**
  
- 2. Barron v. Baltimore held that the Bill of Rights applies to actions by which level of government?**
  - A. Federal Government Only**
  - B. State Governments Only**
  - C. Both Federal And State Governments**
  - D. Local Governments**
  
- 3. Which comparison explains the shift from Furman to Gregg regarding the death penalty?**
  - A. Furman allowed death penalty; Gregg abolished it**
  - B. Furman invalidated death penalty due to arbitrariness; Gregg allowed when fairly applied**
  - C. Both cases upheld the death penalty in all contexts**
  - D. Neither addressed death penalty**
  
- 4. Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier concerned school-sponsored publications. What did the Court hold?**
  - A. Schools cannot censor school-sponsored publications.**
  - B. School officials may regulate content in school-sponsored activities.**
  - C. Students have unlimited rights in school publications.**
  - D. Prior restraint is never permissible in schools.**
  
- 5. In Adarand Constructors v. Pena, what standard applies to racial classifications by the government?**
  - A. Strict scrutiny**
  - B. Rational basis review**
  - C. Intermediate scrutiny**
  - D. No scrutiny is needed**

- 6. Mapp v. Ohio established the Exclusionary Rule, which prohibits the use of what kind of evidence?**
- A. Evidence obtained illegally**
  - B. Hearsay evidence**
  - C. Circumstantial evidence**
  - D. Character evidence**
- 7. Public school graduation ceremonies with a prayer were addressed in Lee v. Weisman. What did the Court decide?**
- A. Prayer at graduation is permissible**
  - B. Prayer at graduation is permissible if non-denominational**
  - C. Prayer at graduation is prohibited**
  - D. Prayer at graduation is allowed if led by students**
- 8. Windsor v. United States involved the Defense of Marriage Act. What conclusion did the Court reach?**
- A. The federal government may define marriage for federal purposes.**
  - B. The federal government cannot define marriage; marriage is a state issue.**
  - C. The Court avoided ruling on DOMA.**
  - D. Marriage is an international matter.**
- 9. The Lemon v. Kurtzman decision established the Lemon Test. Which description best fits the three-pronged test?**
- A. A single-prong test for neutrality**
  - B. Three-pronged test: secular purpose, cannot advance or inhibit religion, must avoid entanglement**
  - C. An Endorsement Test-based framework**
  - D. Strict scrutiny for any government involvement with religion**
- 10. The NAACP v. Alabama decision protected which First Amendment right, deciding that membership disclosures could not be compelled absent an overriding interest?**
- A. Freedom of Speech**
  - B. Freedom of Association**
  - C. Freedom of Religion**
  - D. Right to Privacy**

## Answers

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

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## **Explanations**

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**1. Chevron v. NRDC concerns which aspect of administrative law?**

- A. Deference to agency interpretations of ambiguous statutes**
- B. Judicial review limits**
- C. Administrative procedures requirement**
- D. Rulemaking timelines**

Chevron deference says that courts will defer to an agency's interpretation of a statute it administers when the statute is ambiguous. The test has two steps: first, the court asks whether the statute is clear on the issue. If the intent of Congress is clear, the court must apply that unambiguous meaning. If the statute is ambiguous, the court moves to the second step and asks whether the agency's interpretation is a reasonable construction of the statute. If it is reasonable, the court defers to the agency's interpretation; if not, the court may reject it. This matters because it gives agencies the power to fill in statutory gaps and manage regulatory programs in line with how they view Congress's intent, shaping how laws are implemented. The other options describe related topics in administrative law (like general judicial review, procedures, or rulemaking timelines) but Chevron specifically deals with deferring to agency readings of ambiguous statutes.

**2. Barron v. Baltimore held that the Bill of Rights applies to actions by which level of government?**

- A. Federal Government Only**
- B. State Governments Only**
- C. Both Federal And State Governments**
- D. Local Governments**

Barron v. Baltimore tests how far the Bill of Rights reaches beyond the federal government. The Court held that these first ten amendments originally limited the actions of the national government, not the states or localities. In Barron's case, the issue was whether the Fifth Amendment's takings clause applied to actions by a city in Maryland; the Court decided it did not, meaning the protections of the Bill of Rights did not constrain state or local government at that time. This established the federalism pattern that the federal government alone is bound by the Bill of Rights, while state actions were free from those constraints (for now). The broader arc since then is incorporation through the Fourteenth Amendment, which gradually applied most of those rights to the states, but Barron itself centers on federal government restriction only.

**3. Which comparison explains the shift from Furman to Gregg regarding the death penalty?**

- A. Furman allowed death penalty; Gregg abolished it
- B. Furman invalidated death penalty due to arbitrariness; Gregg allowed when fairly applied**
- C. Both cases upheld the death penalty in all contexts
- D. Neither addressed death penalty

The main idea is how the Court treated arbitrariness in applying the death penalty. In Furman, the Court struck down the death penalty as it was then administered because its use was arbitrary and capable of arbitrary outcomes, often tied to factors like location or race, rather than careful standards. Gregg changed course by upholding the death penalty again, but only when states use carefully designed procedures that limit arbitrariness—such as bifurcated trials (separating guilt from punishment), and explicit aggravating and mitigating factors with guided discretion and review. So the shift isn't about whether the death penalty can exist, but about enforcing fairness through safeguards that address arbitrariness. The other options misstate the history: Furman did not permit the death penalty, Gregg did not abolish it, and both cases did not uphold it in all contexts.

**4. Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier concerned school-sponsored publications. What did the Court hold?**

- A. Schools cannot censor school-sponsored publications.
- B. School officials may regulate content in school-sponsored activities.**
- C. Students have unlimited rights in school publications.
- D. Prior restraint is never permissible in schools.

The main idea here is how First Amendment rights apply to school-sponsored publications and what authority school officials have over that content. Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier held that when speech is part of a school-sponsored program or activity, the school may exercise editorial control over what is published, as long as the censorship is reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns. In the Hazelwood case, the principal deleted two articles from the school newspaper, and the Court approved that action, ruling that the school's involvement in a curriculum-based publication allows it to regulate content and even exercise prior restraint. So the best way to capture the holding is that school officials may regulate content in school-sponsored activities. This does not mean schools must always censor, nor that students have unlimited rights in all school publications. It also shows that prior restraint isn't categorically impermissible in schools; it can be permissible when the publication is school-sponsored and the action is tied to educational objectives.

**5. In *Adarand Constructors v. Pena*, what standard applies to racial classifications by the government?**

- A. Strict scrutiny**
- B. Rational basis review**
- C. Intermediate scrutiny**
- D. No scrutiny is needed**

Racial classifications by the government are reviewed under strict scrutiny. This means the government must show a compelling interest for the policy and that the means chosen are narrowly tailored to achieve that interest, using the least restrictive approach possible. The burden is heavy: the policy must be essential to achieving a critical objective and must specifically target only what is necessary to accomplish that goal. In *Adarand Constructors v. Pena*, the Court held that this strict scrutiny standard applies to all racial classifications used by the government, at any level (federal, state, or local). It reaffirmed that race-based decisions are inherently suspect and must prove a compelling interest and tight tailoring, even when the aim is to remedy past discrimination. The upshot is that race-conscious programs face the highest level of constitutional scrutiny, and only those that are narrowly tailored to serve a compelling interest will survive. Rational basis or intermediate scrutiny would not fit because they do not impose the same demanding burden. No scrutiny would be inappropriate because the government's use of race in policy is treated as highly suspect.

**6. *Mapp v. Ohio* established the Exclusionary Rule, which prohibits the use of what kind of evidence?**

- A. Evidence obtained illegally**
- B. Hearsay evidence**
- C. Circumstantial evidence**
- D. Character evidence**

The Exclusionary Rule bars evidence obtained in violation of the Fourth Amendment from being used in criminal prosecutions. *Mapp v. Ohio* extended this rule to state courts, meaning illegally obtained evidence cannot be admitted in state trials either. That makes the description "evidence obtained illegally" the correct focus of what the Exclusionary Rule prohibits. Hearsay, circumstantial, and character evidence relate to other evidentiary rules and standards, not to the exclusion principle itself.

**7. Public school graduation ceremonies with a prayer were addressed in Lee v. Weisman. What did the Court decide?**

- A. Prayer at graduation is permissible**
- B. Prayer at graduation is permissible if non-denominational**
- C. Prayer at graduation is prohibited**
- D. Prayer at graduation is allowed if led by students**

The decision rests on the idea that public schools cannot sponsor religious activities at official school events. In *Lee v. Weisman*, the Court held that inviting a clergy member to deliver a prayer at a public high school graduation ceremony violates the Establishment Clause. The argument is that a school-sponsored prayer at graduation uses state authority to promote religion, and it places students in a position of feeling obliged to participate in a religious exercise. This coercive, official endorsement of religion means the practice cannot be allowed, even if the prayer is non-denominational or told to be optional. The ruling extends the principle seen in earlier cases that the government may not conduct religious activities in public schools. So, prayer at graduation is prohibited.

**8. Windsor v. United States involved the Defense of Marriage Act. What conclusion did the Court reach?**

- A. The federal government may define marriage for federal purposes.**
- B. The federal government cannot define marriage; marriage is a state issue.**
- C. The Court avoided ruling on DOMA.**
- D. Marriage is an international matter.**

The central idea is federalism in action: marriage is defined by the states, and the federal government must respect that state definition when determining eligibility for federal benefits. In *Windsor*, the Court held that Section 3 of DOMA, which defined marriage for federal purposes as a union between one man and one woman, imposed a federal definition that created a discriminatory two-tier system against same-sex couples. That violates the Constitution's guarantee of equal dignity to persons under the Due Process principle in the Fifth Amendment. So the federal government cannot define marriage in a way that excludes same-sex marriages recognized by states; federal recognition should align with state definitions. That's why the correct conclusion is that the federal government cannot define marriage for federal purposes; marriage is a state issue. The other choices don't fit because the Court did rule on DOMA and found the federal definition unconstitutional, and the issue is not about international matters.

9. The *Lemon v. Kurtzman* decision established the Lemon Test. Which description best fits the three-pronged test?
- A. A single-prong test for neutrality
  - B. Three-pronged test: secular purpose, cannot advance or inhibit religion, must avoid entanglement**
  - C. An Endorsement Test-based framework
  - D. Strict scrutiny for any government involvement with religion

The Lemon test is a framework for evaluating Establishment Clause cases by applying three checks to a government action. First, the action must have a secular legislative purpose—its motive cannot be to promote or favor religion. If that passes, the primary effect must be neither to advance nor to inhibit religion. If that also passes, the action must avoid excessive government entanglement with religion, meaning the relationship between government and religious institutions should remain largely separate and not become burdensome or pervasive. This combination—secular purpose, neutral primary effect, and avoidance of entanglement—is precisely what the description captures. The other options aren't a fit because the Lemon test is not a single-prong standard, and while later tests like the Endorsement Test have their own use, the classic Lemon framework is defined by those three prongs, and strict scrutiny is a different level of review not specific to Establishment Clause challenges.

10. The *NAACP v. Alabama* decision protected which First Amendment right, deciding that membership disclosures could not be compelled absent an overriding interest?
- A. Freedom of Speech
  - B. Freedom of Association**
  - C. Freedom of Religion
  - D. Right to Privacy

The main idea here is the freedom of association—the right to join with others to pursue shared interests and causes without government coercion or undue intrusion. In *NAACP v. Alabama*, the Court held that forcing the NAACP to disclose its membership lists would chill people from affiliating with the organization. Such compelled disclosure could expose members to harassment, economic pressure, or social reprisals, undermining the ability to organize and advocate. Because protecting the ability to associate is essential, the state's demand for membership details was found to violate this First Amendment right, unless there was an overriding interest strong enough to justify the intrusion. The other options don't fit as closely: the decision isn't about speech in isolation, religion, or a broad right to privacy; it centers on the protective umbrella the First Amendment casts over associational liberty.

## 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](mailto:hello@examzify.com).**

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

**<https://apgovscotuscases.examzify.com>**

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

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