AP Psychology Learning Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide

Everything you need from our exam experts!

Sample study guide. For the full version with hundreds of questions, visit: https://appsychlearning.examzify.com

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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.

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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!

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Questions

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1. **What approach would be most effective to extinguish a puppy's habit of barking to be let inside?**
   - **A. Reward the puppy for barking**
   - **B. Ignore the crying and only let the puppy in when quiet**
   - **C. Scold the puppy for barking**
   - **D. Give the puppy a toy when barking**

2. **What are primary reinforcers?**
   - **A. Reinforcers that must be learned**
   - **B. Reinforcers that are naturally satisfying**
   - **C. Reinforcers based on social approval**
   - **D. Reinforcers that vary in effectiveness**

3. **What distinguishes labeled rehearsal from maintenance rehearsal?**
   - **A. Labeled rehearsal relies on repetition of information**
   - **B. Labeled rehearsal involves associating information with existing knowledge**
   - **C. Maintenance rehearsal is focused on understanding relationships**
   - **D. Maintenance rehearsal promotes long-term retention through connection**

4. **What occurs when a conditioned stimulus is presented without the unconditioned stimulus?**
   - **A. Generalization**
   - **B. Discrimination**
   - **C. Extinction**
   - **D. Reinforcement**

5. **What does the "law of effect" express about behaviors and consequences?**
   - **A. Behaviors are random and unpredictable**
   - **B. Favorable consequences increase behavior likelihood**
   - **C. Unfavorable consequences have no effect on behavior**
   - **D. Only positive behaviors are reinforced**

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6. Which of the following best encapsulates the law of effect?

- **A. Complex behaviors are shaped by varying rewards**
- **B. Responses followed by satisfaction are more likely to recur**
- **C. Reflexive responses can be conditioned by neutral stimuli**
- **D. All behaviors are instinctual**

7. In the context of learning theories, what does sensitization often lead to?

- **A. Decreased responses to repeated non-threatening stimuli**
- **B. Increased responsiveness to mild stimuli**
- **C. Consistent learning without emotional involvement**
- **D. Adaptation to predictable stimuli over time**

8. Which of the following can be associated with a conditioned stimulus in classical conditioning?

- **A. unconditioned stimulus**
- **B. neutral stimulus**
- **C. secondary reinforcer**
- **D. extinguished stimulus**

9. In classical conditioning, when is learning evident?

- **A. When a neutral response is ignored**
- **B. When a response is elicited by a new stimulus**
- **C. When a stimulus that initially did not produce a response begins to do so**
- **D. When unconditioned stimuli are no longer present**

10. In operant conditioning, when does the reinforcer occur in relation to the response?

- **A. Before**
- **B. After**
- **C. Simultaneously**
- **D. Randomly**

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Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What approach would be most effective to extinguish a puppy's habit of barking to be let inside?

A. Reward the puppy for barking

B. Ignore the crying and only let the puppy in when quiet

C. Scold the puppy for barking

D. Give the puppy a toy when barking

The most effective approach to extinguish a puppy's habit of barking to be let inside is to ignore the barking and only allow the puppy in when it is quiet. This method is grounded in principles of operant conditioning, specifically the concept of reinforcing desirable behaviors while ignoring undesirable ones. By consistently rewarding the puppy's silence with access indoors, you teach it that quietness leads to positive outcomes, while barking does not elicit the desired response. This approach helps break the association between barking and getting let inside, effectively discouraging the behavior over time. Consistency is key here; if the puppy learns that barking leads to getting ignored, it will eventually realize that being quiet is the more effective way to gain attention and access.

2. What are primary reinforcers?

A. Reinforcers that must be learned

B. Reinforcers that are naturally satisfying

C. Reinforcers based on social approval

D. Reinforcers that vary in effectiveness

Primary reinforcers are stimuli that are naturally rewarding and satisfy biological needs, such as food, water, shelter, and warmth. These reinforcers do not require any learning or conditioning to be effective; they are inherently satisfying. For instance, when a person is hungry, consuming food directly fulfills that need, which makes food a primary reinforcer. The other options refer to different categories of reinforcers. For example, learned reinforcers, often called secondary reinforcers, gain value through association with primary reinforcers, which is the contrast to primary ones that are satisfying on their own. Social approval represents a form of secondary reinforcement as it is dependent on social constructs and individual experiences, further emphasizing how these are not inherently satisfying. Lastly, the effectiveness of reinforcers can vary, but primary reinforcers consistently satisfy basic needs. Thus, primary reinforcers are characterized by their intrinsic rewarding qualities, making them fundamentally different from learned or less stable forms of reinforcement.

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3. What distinguishes labeled rehearsal from maintenance rehearsal?

A. Labeled rehearsal relies on repetition of information

B. Labeled rehearsal involves associating information with existing knowledge

C. Maintenance rehearsal is focused on understanding relationships

D. Maintenance rehearsal promotes long-term retention through connection

Labeled rehearsal is distinguished from maintenance rehearsal primarily because it involves associating new information with existing knowledge. This technique allows the learner to create meaningful connections between new and previously learned concepts, thereby enhancing understanding and facilitating easier retrieval of information later. By connecting new information to what is already known, labeled rehearsal taps into deeper processing, which supports better memory retention. In contrast, maintenance rehearsal typically focuses on the simple repetition of information without considering its meaning or connections to existing knowledge. This form of rehearsal may keep information active in short-term memory but is less effective for promoting long-term retention compared to techniques that involve deeper cognitive processing, like labeled rehearsal. Overall, the distinction lies in the depth of processing—labeled rehearsal emphasizes meaningful associations, while maintenance rehearsal prioritizes rote memorization.

4. What occurs when a conditioned stimulus is presented without the unconditioned stimulus?

A. Generalization

B. Discrimination

C. Extinction

D. Reinforcement

When a conditioned stimulus is presented without the unconditioned stimulus, the phenomenon that occurs is known as extinction. In classical conditioning, extinction refers to the process where the association between the conditioned stimulus (CS) and the unconditioned stimulus (US) weakens and eventually fades. This happens because the absence of the unconditioned stimulus, which naturally elicits a response, leads to a diminishing of the conditioned response that was previously triggered by the conditioned stimulus. In this context, if an individual has learned to associate a bell ringing (the conditioned stimulus) with the presentation of food (the unconditioned stimulus), presenting the bell without the food multiple times will lead to a decline in the response of salivation. Eventually, the individual may no longer salivate to the sound of the bell because the reinforcement (food) is no longer present, indicating that the learned behavior has faded. This concept is key in understanding how learning can be unlearned or diminished, illustrating the processes of behavior modification and the dynamics of conditioned responses in psychological contexts.

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5. What does the "law of effect" express about behaviors and consequences?

A. Behaviors are random and unpredictable

B. Favorable consequences increase behavior likelihood

C. Unfavorable consequences have no effect on behavior

D. Only positive behaviors are reinforced

The "law of effect" is a principle formulated by Edward Thorndike, which states that behaviors followed by favorable consequences are more likely to be repeated, while behaviors followed by unfavorable consequences are less likely to be repeated. This principle emphasizes the relationship between actions and their outcomes, highlighting that the consequences of a behavior play a crucial role in determining whether that behavior will be continued in the future. Thus, when a behavior produces a positive outcome or enjoyment, it encourages the repetition of that behavior. This concept is foundational in understanding how reinforcement works in operant conditioning, where consequences shape behavior over time.

6. Which of the following best encapsulates the law of effect?

A. Complex behaviors are shaped by varying rewards

B. Responses followed by satisfaction are more likely to recur

C. Reflexive responses can be conditioned by neutral stimuli

D. All behaviors are instinctual

The law of effect, formulated by Edward Thorndike, states that behaviors followed by satisfying outcomes tend to be repeated, while behaviors followed by unsatisfactory outcomes are less likely to be repeated. This principle is fundamental to understanding operant conditioning and learning, as it highlights the relationship between reinforcement and behavior. When a response produces a favorable outcome, the likelihood of that response being repeated in the future increases. This captures the essence of the law of effect most accurately, making it the best choice. The other options delve into different concepts. One option discusses complex behaviors being shaped by varying rewards, which relates more to reinforcement schedules and does not directly encapsulate the core idea of the law of effect. Another option refers to reflexive responses and conditioning, which align with classical conditioning rather than the law of effect. Finally, the idea that all behaviors are instinctual is contrary to the principles of learning theory, as it ignores the influence of experience and reinforcement on behavior.

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7. In the context of learning theories, what does sensitization often lead to?

A. Decreased responses to repeated non-threatening stimuli

B. Increased responsiveness to mild stimuli

C. Consistent learning without emotional involvement

D. Adaptation to predictable stimuli over time

Sensitization is a process that occurs in response to a strong or noxious stimulus, leading to an increased response to subsequent, often milder stimuli. This phenomenon is based on the idea that the initial strong stimulus heightens an organism's awareness or sensitivity to other stimuli in the environment. When an organism experiences a significant event, it may become more reactive to even slight variations or similar stimuli that follow, which can be attributed to heightened alertness and a change in baseline arousal levels. For example, if a loud noise startles an animal, it may subsequently respond more vigorously to similar, but less intense sounds. This is distinct from habituation, where repeated exposure to a non-threatening stimulus results in a decreased response. Adaptation to predictable stimuli over time is also related to habituation, as it involves a diminishing response to a commonly encountered and non-threatening stimulus. Likewise, consistent learning without emotional involvement does not relate to sensitization, which often involves increased emotional reactivity due to the association with a strong initial stimulus. Thus, in the context of learning theories, sensitization is closely linked to the phenomenon of increased responsiveness to mild stimuli following exposure to a strong stimulus.

8. Which of the following can be associated with a conditioned stimulus in classical conditioning?

A. unconditioned stimulus

B. neutral stimulus

C. secondary reinforcer

D. extinguished stimulus

In classical conditioning, the concept of a conditioned stimulus is key to understanding how associations are formed. The correct association is with a neutral stimulus. Initially, a neutral stimulus does not elicit any specific response from the subject. However, when it is repeatedly paired with an unconditioned stimulus, which naturally and automatically triggers a response (such as food causing salivation in dogs), the neutral stimulus becomes a conditioned stimulus. Once this transformation occurs, the previously neutral stimulus begins to elicit a conditioned response on its own. The reasoning for linking the conditioned stimulus with the unconditioned stimulus is essential for understanding how conditioning works, as it illustrates the process of learning through association. In this scenario, the unconditioned stimulus is what initially causes the response, while the neutral stimulus becomes conditioned through association with it. Therefore, the focus on the neutral stimulus is foundational to the mechanism of classical conditioning and how organisms can learn from their environment.

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9. In classical conditioning, when is learning evident?

A. When a neutral response is ignored

B. When a response is elicited by a new stimulus

C. When a stimulus that initially did not produce a response begins to do so

D. When unconditioned stimuli are no longer present

In classical conditioning, learning is evident when a previously neutral stimulus begins to elicit a response after being paired with an unconditioned stimulus. This process highlights how associative learning occurs; the neutral stimulus transforms into a conditioned stimulus capable of producing a conditioned response. For example, if a bell (initially a neutral stimulus) is rung before food (an unconditioned stimulus) is presented to a dog, after several pairings, the dog will begin to salivate (conditioned response) at the sound of the bell alone. This shift showcases the learning that has taken place through association, which is fundamental to classical conditioning. The other options do not accurately capture the essence of learning in this context. Ignoring a neutral response does not signify learning; instead, it indicates that no association has been made. Similarly, simply eliciting a response by a new stimulus does not necessarily reflect the learned association expected in classical conditioning, as the response could be based on other variables. Finally, the absence of unconditioned stimuli does not, by itself, demonstrate learning; it may simply reflect a lack of reinforcement for the associative behavior.

10. In operant conditioning, when does the reinforcer occur in relation to the response?

A. Before

B. After

C. Simultaneously

D. Randomly

In operant conditioning, reinforcers are used to increase the likelihood of a desired behavior being repeated. For reinforcement to be effective, it must occur after the response. This timing is crucial because the association between the behavior and the consequence needs to be clear for the learner to understand what behavior is being reinforced. When a reinforcer follows a specific behavior, it creates a connection in the learner's mind that that behavior leads to a positive outcome. For example, if a student receives praise after answering a question correctly, this praise serves as a reinforcer that encourages the student to engage in similar behavior in the future. The immediacy of the reinforcer can enhance its effectiveness, but the key point is that it must follow the behavior to create the necessary association that fosters learning. The other options, such as the reinforcer occurring before the response or simultaneously, would not establish the same associative learning mechanics that operant conditioning relies on. Random timing also disrupts the learning process, preventing the subject from understanding the direct link between their behavior and the outcome. Hence, the reinforcement occurring after the behavior is essential for reinforcing that behavior effectively.

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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://appsychlearning.examzify.com

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

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